

ADRIAN ROGERS

# LEGACY

C O L L E C T I O N



M A T T H E W

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

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# His Undiminished Deity

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: December 15, 2002**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 1:20–23**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Unfathomable Mystery of the Trinity
- II. The Unfolded Manifestation of the Trinity
- III. The Unchanging Ministry of the Trinity

Conclusion

## Introduction

Take God's precious Word and turn with me, please, to Matthew chapter 1. There again we're going to find the Christmas story. We have been talking about the Lord Jesus Christ under the heading, "Come, Let Us Adore Him." And we've talked about His unequalled birth. One Sunday we talked about why Jesus was born of a virgin. Then we talked about His unblemished life. Nobody—nobody—ever lived the life that the Lord Jesus Christ did. Today, we're going to be talking about His undiminished deity. We're going to be talking about the fact that this baby, this baby born so long ago, was God in human flesh.

I remember some years ago—some of you are old enough to remember—back in the sixties there was a movement among young people. Many of them had come out of the drug culture and the hippie culture. But it was called the Jesus Movement. And there were kids, many of them barefooted, many of them holding Bibles about this big, going around doing what they called Jesus yells, and they were cheering the Lord Jesus Christ, and they called themselves the Jesus Movement. Any of you remember that? Let me see your hands. You're dating yourselves. But you remember that, okay? Now, do you know the strange thing about that is this: that these kids—I'll call them kids, and I love them; I thank God for them; I never opposed the Jesus Movement; I had much rather have a young man or woman giving a cheer for Jesus than smoking pot; I never fought that; I was glad for it—many of them were unguided, untutored. But why did they call themselves the Jesus Movement in contradistinction to the churches? You talk about stolen thunder—that anyone would come along and call themselves a Jesus Movement as over against the organized church, for they operated outside of the organized church.

Now, let me say this, friend. That is an indictment to any church. Brother Whitmire

asked me a long time ago, “Pastor, it would help me if you would tell me before you preach the subject, so that I could line the music up with it.” And that’s a good idea. For example, we’re talking about Jesus, and we’ve had Christmas carols this morning, and I like to see that coalesce like that. But, folks, sometimes I don’t know far enough ahead of time what I’m going to preach to let him know. And that’s an honest confession, but it’s good for the soul. And so I just say, “Jim, listen. If you’re in doubt—you don’t know what I’m going to preach—just sing about Jesus—just sing about Jesus—and it will fit, it will match, because, listen to me. The Jesus kids missed it a tad, because any so-called Jesus Movement that is not church-centered is not a Jesus Movement. The Bible says, “To him be glory in the church” (Ephesians 3:21), amen? But let’s turn that around. Any so-called church that is not Jesus-centered is not a true church. Any church that is not Jesus-centered is not a true church.

With that in mind, let’s look at the Christmas story here, and we’re going to look in Matthew chapter 1, beginning in verse 20. It speaks about Joseph, and it says, *“While he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us”* (Matthew 1:20–23). I love that passage of Scripture.

Now, who was this child born that day? Who is this one that we call Jesus? There’s one right answer. There are many wrong answers. For example, there are those who say that Jesus was a great man. Well, beyond any peradventure, any shadow of a doubt, he was a great man, but if you just tip the hat to Jesus Christ, you’ve missed it all. H. G. Wells, the noted historian, made a list of the ten greatest men in history, and Jesus Christ was number one on that list. He talked about Charlemagne the Great, and Peter the Great, and Alexander the Great. But Jesus is more than Jesus the Great. He’s Jesus the One and Only. The late Dr. Criswell, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas, said this: “To compare the greatest men on earth like Alexander or Caesar or Shakespeare is like comparing a grain of dust to the whole universe, like comparing a molehill to Mount Everest in the Himalayas.” And I say *amen* to that.

Now some say He was a great man. Others speak of Him as a moral teacher. And He was a moral teacher, but, as C. S. Lewis says, we don’t have the option of just simply calling Him a moral teacher and moving on. Let me tell you what C. S. Lewis said—one of his greatest passages: “I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I’m ready to accept Jesus as a

great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would be either a lunatic—on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call Him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us." Those are good words, aren't they?

Now others say, "Well, you know, He's more than a moral teacher; He's a prophet, a messenger of God." The Koran of Islam says that about the Lord Jesus Christ. The Koran teaches—and I quote, "Jesus was only a messenger of Allah." No. He was more than a messenger of Allah. He is God in human flesh. Others, New Agers, say He's some sort of a mystic medium, that Jesus is a channel to know God, and so they do what they think is concourse with the Almighty through their mystic Jesus, their crystal Christ, who is but a demon imitating the Lord Jesus Christ. There are demons who call themselves Jesus.

We'd better understand who this Jesus is. Let me tell you flat out, without any stutter, stammer, apology, quibble, Jesus is God in human flesh. That's who the Lord Jesus Christ is: God manifest in the flesh. Not only is He the Son of God; He is God the Son.

That brings us to a doctrine that we need to emphasize more these days than ever before—and that is the doctrine of the Trinity. Now I want you to see in this passage that we've read the Holy Trinity. For example, if you look here in Matthew chapter 1, verse 20: "*Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of*"—now, underscore this if you don't mind marking in your Bible—"*the Holy Ghost...*"—underscore that—"*the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son...*"—underscore that—"*a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet*"—underscore "*the Lord*" (Matthew 1:20–22). And there you have the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—God in three persons.

Look up here and let me tell you something. We're going a little deeper than normal this morning. The doctrine of the Trinity is the great Christian distinctive—the great Christian distinctive: one God in three persons. Now to misunderstand this is to lead to heresy, whether it be the heresy of the Jehovah's Witnesses, whether it be the heresy of Islam, whether it be the heresy of Unitarianism, or whether it be the heresy of some other group. If you miss the Trinity, you have missed the meaning, the message, of the Bible, that God is a God of three in one, and one in three. Our Jewish friends—and this

church loves Israel—our Jewish friends miss the message. In their emphasizing the unity of God, they fail to understand that even the Hebrew Bible teaches that this God, the God of the Bible, is a triune God. And we're going to show you that from the Word of God. Now our Jewish friends believe that Yahweh, Jehovah, is God, the one God, the Lord. And they are right. He is God the Father. But in the Bible there is also God the Son.

Now, let me show you how God the Father is described in the Bible. What is the most holy name for God in the Old Testament? It is The Great I AM. If you don't mind putting something in your margin, put Exodus chapter 3 and verse 14: "*And God said unto Moses...*"—now Moses is saying, "Lord, if I've got to introduce you to these people, who shall I say that you are? Who are you?"— "*And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM*" (Exodus 3:14)— "*I AM THAT I AM*"—not "I was"; not "I will be": "I AM the Great I AM. There never was a time when I was not. I AM THAT I AM." That is the holy, mystical, wonderful name of Jehovah God. Now, remember, that's how God showed Himself to Moses. Have you got it?

Now the Pharisees had Jesus on the grill; these Pharisees in whom the milk of human kindness had curdled, these Pharisees who were envious of the Lord Jesus Christ, actually sneered at Jesus. They insinuated that He was born of fornication. And Jesus had spoken of Abraham, and here's what they said—and put this down—in John chapter 8, verses 56 and following. Jesus is speaking to those Jewish Pharisees, and here's what He said to them: "*Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?*" Now, listen to this, and don't miss it: "*Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily...*"—now, folks, when Jesus says, "*Verily, verily,*" you listen. Listen: "*Jesus said... Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am*" (John 8:56–58). Did you catch that? What is the great, holy name of God in the Old Testament? He is The Great I AM. They said, "Have you seen Abraham?" He said, "Before Abraham ever got here, I AM." There never was a time when He was not Jesus the Son of God. After this the Bible says, "They took up stones to stone Him" (John 8:59). Because why? They didn't miss the message. It was blasphemous to them that He would so identify Himself with The Great I AM. God the Father is God, God the Son is God, and God the Holy Spirit is God.

Now in this Christmas story we see the Holy Spirit who overshadows Mary. He was the One who caused the pregnancy in Mary. He also is God, because Jesus is the Son of God according to the flesh. "Pastor Rogers, don't you agree with others that the Holy Spirit is just an influence emanating from God?" No, the Holy Spirit is a person. Never speak of the Holy Spirit as *it*. Don't talk about me, and say, "It wore a dark suit this morning." The Holy Spirit is a person who feels, who wills, who acts, who lives, who can

be abused. The Bible says, “*Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption*” (Ephesians 4:30). You can’t grieve an influence; you can only grieve a person. And you can only grieve a person who loves you. The neighbors’ kids will vex you; your own children will grieve you, amen? You can only grieve somebody who loves you.

Let me give you a Scripture proof text here speaking of the deity of the Holy Spirit. Acts chapter 5, verses 3 to 4—there were some people named Ananias and Sapphira who had lied to the apostles and to the early church—and here’s the Scripture: “*But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost,*”—underscore the phrase “to lie to the Holy Ghost”—“*and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?*”—now, notice this. Listen carefully. He’s already said, “You’ve lied to the Holy Ghost,” and then listen—“*why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God*” (Acts 5:3–4). Did you catch it? “Why did you lie to the Holy Ghost? You lied to God.” The Father is God. The Son is God. The Holy Ghost is God. One in three, three in one.

*Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!  
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!*

—REGINALD HEBER

You’ve sung it so many times. Do you know what you’re singing?

Three things we’re going to notice this morning.

## **I. The Unfathomable Mystery of the Trinity**

First of all, I want us to think about the unfathomable mystery—the unfathomable mystery—of the Trinity. Now we’ve already shown you the Trinity in the Christmas story; but look, if you will, in 1 Timothy 3, verse 16. We referenced this last Sunday. “*And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness*” (1 Timothy 3:16). God was manifested in the flesh. You say, “Pastor Rogers, I don’t understand it.” Well, hip, hip, hurrah. I’m glad you don’t understand it. I’m glad I don’t understand it. I’m glad nobody understands it, because it can’t be understood; it must be believed. I wouldn’t have any confidence in a God that I could understand. John Wesley said, “How can a worm understand a man?” How can we understand God? How can the finite know the infinite? How can we unpick the mysteries of the Holy Trinity? It’s not given to us to understand; it is given to us to believe. It is a mystery. It goes beyond logic. It goes beyond philosophy. It goes beyond science. It goes beyond mathematics. Don’t think that you’re going to have to cram God into the little suitcase of your intellect in order to understand Him.

There are many things in the natural realm you don’t understand. You don’t

understand how out of the muck and the mire of dirt a beautiful flower can grow. But there are other things that you don't even begin to understand. Which of you understands infinity, something that never ends, like space? Who in this building can understand eternity, something that never begins and never ends? Our minds just stop, because everything we know has a beginning and an ending. Everything we know has a starting place and an ending place. But there is infinity. There is eternity. These things, very frankly, are beyond us. We don't try to prove the Trinity. You'll never prove the Trinity. Throw away your test tubes, put away your computer and your slide rule, bow down in the dust, open the Bible, and say, "I believe it, because God settles it in His Word." No, this is an unfathomable mystery; but it is nonetheless true. We don't have to understand everything.

You know, people race their theological motors to try to illustrate the Trinity, and they say, "It's like this; it's like that." We try to compare God to something. Well, there's only one God, so there's nothing to compare Him to.

A girl had a boyfriend, but she went out with another boy one night, and she confessed to her boyfriend, "I went out with Henry, and Henry kissed me." He said, "He did? I'll teach him." She said, "You couldn't teach Henry anything."

You can compare one kiss with another kiss, but you can't compare God with anything, because there is no other God. Let me give you a verse. Put it down—Isaiah 40, verse 18: "*To whom then will ye liken God?*" (Isaiah 40:18). Don't ever make the mistake of saying God is like this. To whom will you liken God? One kiss may be different or like another kiss, but there's only one God—one God. Now we see reflections of His Trinity in everything—reflections, but not proofs. Time and space: that makes our universe. Time is what? Past, present, future. Space is height, width, and depth. All belong together. Each is distinguishable, but all are inseparable. You can't have a past without a present, you can't have a present without a future, and you can't have a future without a past. Each are distinguishable, but all are part of one. And yet they are distinguishable. And yet they are inseparable. It's not a proof of the Trinity, only a reflection. Space: height, width, depth. You can't have height without width; you can't have width without depth; you can't have depth without height. Each is distinguishable. All are inseparable. Why? Because they are reflections of the great God who made everything: God in three persons. And this is the unfathomable mystery.

Now sometimes—sometimes—we use false analogies. Someone may say, "Well, it's easy to understand. It's like Pastor Rogers. He is Joyce's husband, he is my pastor, and he is Angela's grandfather." No, we're not. That's called modalism. It's not God acting in three ways; it is God in three persons. Well, you say, "Pastor Rogers, I don't understand that." Yes, that's true. Isaiah 55, verses 8 and 9: "*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are*

*higher than the earth...*—by the way, how high is that?—“*as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts*” (Isaiah 55:8–9). A wise man said, “Don’t try to explain the Trinity: you’ll lose your mind. Don’t deny it: you’ll lose your soul.” How do we know it? By divine revelation, as we open the Word of God, the only knowledge we have of the Most High, as He discloses Himself to us.

## **II. The Unfolded Manifestation of the Trinity**

Now, here’s the second thing I want you to see. I want you to see, not only the unfathomable mystery, but I want you to see the unfolded manifestation of the Trinity. If God is a triune God, then you would expect Him to manifest Himself, which indeed He has done. You see, again, in our scripture, Matthew 1, verse 22, “*Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet*” (Matthew 1:22).

Now God has given us the Old Testament prophecies, and there He unfolds these things. We see them. Now Muslims claim to believe the Old Testament. Jews believe the Old Testament. Jehovah’s Witnesses claim to believe the Old Testament. Why don’t we go to the Old Testament and see if we can find the Trinity there? Well, we do on the front door in the first verse—Genesis 1:1: “*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*” You say, “Pastor, I see no Trinity there.” Well, stay with me. The Hebrew word for God there is *Elohim*—*Elohim*—and it is a plural noun. *Eloh* is the singular appellative for God, the single name for God—*Eloh*. And then if you add the *im* to it and make it *Elohim*, then that pluralizes it. For a *seraph* is one angel; *seraphim*, angels. A *cherub* is one angel; *cherubim*, more angels. It is the plural noun. But this plural noun could be translated, “In the beginning Gods...” Well, we know there’s only one God, yet the Holy Spirit inspired Moses to write down *Elohim*, Gods, plural. But then, almost in bad grammar, except for divine inspiration, He uses a singular verb: “Gods—*Elohim*—created the heaven and the earth.”

Now, what is this? It is God acting as a unity, the triune God. With that in mind, remember that the baby of Bethlehem was the One who created the manger and the very stable in which He was born. John 1, verses 1 to 3—remember it said now, “*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*” (Genesis 1:1)—“Gods.” Now, listen to this—John 1:1–3: “*In the beginning was the Word...*”—that’s the Bible name or description of Jesus—“*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,*”—okay now, wait a minute—“*and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him*”—without whom? Without Jesus—“*was not any thing made that was made.*” Do you see it? Nod your head. Just let me know. Are you awake? Hello!

Okay now, listen. What I’m trying to say is this: that the babe of Bethlehem is the

mighty God of Genesis 1. Nothing was made without Him. You see it in the creation of the world. You see it in the great commandment that God gave to Israel. There is a commandment that God gave to Israel. Every orthodox Jew knows it by heart. It's called the *Shema*. Here it is—Deuteronomy 6, verses 4 to 5: *“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD...”*—the Jews use this as the prime proof text for the unity of God—*“The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might”* (Deuteronomy 6:4–5). The word *LORD* is a translation of the word *Yahweh*, or *Jehovah*: “Jehovah is one Lord,” or, “The Lord our Elohim is one Lord”; “Jehovah our Gods is one Lord”; “Yahweh our Elohim.” Don't drop out on me now. What I'm trying to show you is this: that even in this great confession of Israel, here we have the Trinity; we have reflections of the Trinity here.

Now when he says, “Jehovah our Elohim is one Lord,” he uses a word for “one,” *echad*, which means, “one”—not a singular “one,” but a plural “one.” You say, “How can you have a plural ‘one’?” Well, let me give you other places where this word is used. In Genesis chapter 2, verse 24—when the Bible speaks of husband and wife coming together, the Bible says, *“They [two] shall be”—echad—“one flesh”* (Genesis 2:24). Now, are they two or one? The answer is yes. All right, let me give it to you again. In Genesis 11 and verse 6, at the Tower of Babel, God said, *“The people is one”* (Genesis 11:6). All of these? Yes, but one. The same word that's used here: *“The LORD our God is one LORD”* (Deuteronomy 6:4). Look at it here in Numbers chapter 13 and verse 23: *“one cluster of grapes”* (Numbers 13:23)—many grapes, yet one cluster. What it is, is a plural unity. And when it says, *“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD”* (Deuteronomy 6:4), it's saying, “Jehovah our Elohim is one Jehovah.” Has that got you scratching your head? Good. I'm happy.

Now you say, “But we don't learn about God's Son until we get to the New Testament.” No, you're wrong. You learn about God's Son in the Old Testament. Look in Daniel chapter 3, verse 25. Nebuchadnezzar looked into the fiery furnace, and he said, *“Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God”* (Daniel 3:25). Who walked with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego through that fiery furnace? Jesus did. Look in Proverbs 30 and verse 4—here's a question for the ancients: *“Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?”* (Proverbs 30:4). His name is Jehovah, and His Son's name is Jesus. That's the answer: God has a Son.

And what is God's purpose with His Son? Read in the Old Testament, in Psalm chapter 2, verses 6 and 7—here's what the Almighty says: *“Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me,”*—Jesus is



speaking—*“Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee”* (Psalm 2:6–7). Now, folks, I’m talking Old Testament here. And then what about our Christmas verse, Isaiah chapter 9 and verse 6? *“Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.”*—the child born is the babe of Bethlehem; the Son given is the everlasting Jesus—*“and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor...”*—now, hold this right now—*“his name shall be called...The mighty God”* (Isaiah 9:6). Whose name? The baby. You’re calling that baby the Mighty God? Isaiah the prophet did. *El Gibbor*. that’s the name. *El Gibbor*. *“The mighty God.”* Do you know what *El Gibbor* literally means? “The God-man.” That’s Isaiah chapter 9, verse 6—700 years before Jesus Christ is born: “the God-man.”

Now the Jehovah’s Witnesses will tell you, “Well, that’s not Jehovah God.” Well then, look in Isaiah chapter 10, verse 21: *“The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God”* (Isaiah 10:21). And there, beyond the shadow of any doubt, it’s talking about Jehovah. And yet Jesus is called Jehovah. Therefore, in the New Testament, when we come to the miracle story of the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, it’s no amazement to us that we see God the Spirit and God the Father and God the Son coming together in this wonderful Christmas story. And the same Gospel of Matthew, that begins, in Matthew chapter 1, speaking of the Holy Trinity, concludes, in Matthew chapter 28, giving the Great Commission to the Church. And listen, beginning in Matthew 28, verse 19—Jesus is speaking: *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”* (Matthew 28:19). When we baptize people, we baptize them with a Trinitarian formula: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Listen to me. Look at me. That would be blasphemous, if Jesus Christ is not God, to put Himself on the same plain, to include the Holy Spirit—and it said, “Baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost”—if Jesus is not co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father. Have you got it? Nod your head.

### **III. The Unchanging Ministry of the Trinity**

All right now, let’s move to the third and final thing. I want you to see the unchanging ministry of the Trinity. Now it is a mystery—a mystery manifested. But why all of this fuss about it? “Pastor, what difference does it make?” Well, your destiny rides on it—your destiny rides on it. Listen again—Matthew chapter 1, verses 20 and 21: *“But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins”* (Matthew 1:20–21).

The Holy Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—works together in your salvation. You are selected by the Father: He loved you before you were ever born. You were saved by the Son. You are sealed by the Spirit. All together, this is the way you're saved. That's the reason the Apostle Paul said, in 2 Corinthians 13, verse 14, "*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all*" (2 Corinthians 13:14). God loves you. Jesus saved you. The Holy Spirit empowers you. That was the blessed benediction that Paul gave to that church.

## Conclusion

My time is gone, but George Duncan of England told a story to a friend who passed it on to me. He said back in the Second World War there was a man, a Britisher, very wealthy, who had a son. And that son got in the Royal Air Force, the RAF. He was shot down in flames and died, and left this man, whose wife had previously died, immensely wealthy with no relatives, no other descendants. This boy was lost in the battle for Britain. There came a time when the man himself died, and he wrote a will. His will said that his estate was to be sold and given to various charities. And he said, "My art collection is to be auctioned off." He had an incredible art collection. Sotheby's was going to do the auctioning. The people came from all over, art collectors.

Because it was a valuable collection, they were salivating with the opportunity to bid on it. And the auctioneer, the executor, said, "First of all, we're going to auction one painting." It was there on a tripod. They unveiled it. It was a painting of a man. It was the wealthy man's son, the son who died. Few, if any, out there knew the boy. It was not a well-known artist. To them it was more or less valueless. And nobody bid. But one man, who was an old friend of the family, who knew the boy and had seen him grow up, thought it would be nice to have a painting of that lad—"I knew him. I watched him. I loved him"—and he bid on it. There were no other bids.

The auctioneer said, "Do I hear any other bids? Very well, it is sold to this individual." And then he said, "The auction is over." They said, "No, there are other paintings." He said, "No." He said, "I was forbidden to tell you this, but it has been written in the will that whoever buys this picture gets with the picture the entire collection. Whoever gets the son gets all the rest."

Friend, I want to tell you, God has a Son, and when you get Jesus, you get it all. You get it all when you receive Jesus.

*I've tried in vain a thousand ways  
My fears to quell, my hopes to raise;  
But all I need, the Bible says, is Jesus.*

*My soul is night, my heart is steel,  
I cannot see, I cannot feel,  
For life, for light, I must appeal to Jesus.*

*He died, He lives, He reigns, He pleads,  
There's love in all His words and deeds,  
All—All the guilty sinner needs is Jesus.*

*Though some will mock, though some will blame  
In spite of sin, in spite of shame,  
I'll go to Him, because His name is—what?—JESUS.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

*“Thou shalt call his name JESUS:”—Jesus—“for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). The God-man. El Gibbor. Don't you love Him? What a Savior!*

# God's Answer to Man's Loneliness

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: December 19, 1999**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 1:22–23**

## Outline

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## Introduction

**W**ould you find Matthew chapter 1, please, and look with me in verses 22 and 23 in just a moment. But may I say that there's a strange thing about Christmas. For many, it is the happiest time of the year; and for others, it may be the saddest and the loneliest season and time of the year. You know, loneliness is a genuine malady; and it becomes even more evident to some people when it seems to them that everybody else is having a wonderful time except themselves. And they get depressed. They feel so alone away from friends and family and loved ones. And it is a statistical fact that suicides increase this time of the year. Drunkenness increases this time of the year. Family fights increase this time of the year. Depression comes to the surface this time of the year.

Now the irony of all of that is this: that our Lord came to be with us that we would never be lonely again. Look in these verses. Now Matthew is commenting on the birth of

Jesus, and he says, “*Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us*” (Matthew 1:22–23).

Now, just underscore that, if you don’t mind writing in your Bible: “*God with us.*” He came to earth to save us. Yes, He did. But, beyond that, He is God’s answer to man’s loneliness.

Now, three things I want to lay on your heart about this loneliness this morning.

## **I. Loneliness Is a Common Fact**

First of all, loneliness is a common fact. Now it’s much more common than you may realize. You may think, “Well, only a few people are lonely.” Thomas Wolfe, who is a famous novelist, said—and I quote: “Loneliness is far from being a rare and curious phenomenon. It is the central, inevitable fact of human existence.” Now that’s a big statement. He says it’s not just rare; it is a central and inevitable fact. And Dr. Paul Tournier, who is a famous Swiss psychologist, had this to say. He said that, “Loneliness is the most devastating malady of the age.” Now that’s a big statement: “the most devastating malady of the age.” And again, Dr. Abraham Maslow, famed research analyst, estimates this amazing thought. Listen to this. Here’s a direct quote from this man: “The truth is that the average American citizen does not have a real friend in this world.” That’s what he said. Right or wrong, if he would even say such a thing, we know that we’re dealing with a real, definite experience. And many of those who name the name of Jesus, those who follow the Lord, may be afflicted with loneliness. I was looking at a verse over in Psalms—Psalm 25, verse 16—and the Psalmist said, “*For I am desolate and afflicted*” (Psalm 25:16). That’s just another way of saying that he was lonely.

Now, what is loneliness? Well, I want to say that mere solitude is not loneliness. Solitude is good. Have you ever wanted to just get off by yourself? I do sometimes.

I heard of a preacher who said, “I don’t want to go to heaven because there will be no parting there; I want to go because there will be no meetings there.” Just to be alone sometimes, that’s good.

And many of us don’t want to get off in solitude. Why? Because we have to look God and ourselves in the face. It’s good to have solitude. Many times Jesus would withdraw Himself from the crowds and get alone by Himself. That is a wonderful, wonderful thing. You can be alone without being lonely, right? So we’re not talking about solitude.

We’re not talking about being lonesome. There’s a difference between loneliness and lonesomeness. If you are a traveling salesman, you may be lonesome for your family when you’re away from them. Or when you’re away at school, you may be

lonesome; that is, wanting to be back with your loved ones. That's fine. That's wonderful.

I heard about a little boy who said to his friend in school—he said, “Things are awful at my house.” He said, “My mother is in the hospital, and me and Daddy and Billy and the twins are at home alone all by ourselves.” Well, he was just lonesome for Mama. And we can be lonesome for people. That's not what we're talking about.

We're talking about something worse than that. It is loneliness. And loneliness is not being merely isolated from people. As a matter of fact, you can be lonely in a crowd. That's perhaps the worst loneliness. You may be here today surrounded by thousands of people in this worship service, and very, very lonely. I think Thoreau said, “A city is a place where hundreds of people are lonely together.” People all around you, but yet lonely. In the big cities, for example, cities like Memphis, you have Lonely Hearts clubs. They flourish. Singles bars, computerized dating services. People get on the chat room in the Internet. Why? Because they are lonely. You see, loneliness is not isolation; it's insulation. You can be surrounded by hundreds, thousands, and be lonely.

What are we talking about? Loneliness is feeling unneeded, uncared for, unwanted; maybe even unnecessary. You feel like you're just insulated from all those 'round about you. Every person has three great emotional needs. You do. I do. These gentlemen do. The choir does. If you say that you don't, I believe you'll not be telling the truth. You have a need, a desire, to love and to be intimate with other people—a desire to love and to be intimate with others. You have a desire to be understood, somebody who knows you and really understands you; and you have a desire to be needed and to be wanted. You have a desire to love and be loved and be intimate with someone. You have a desire for someone to understand you. And you have a desire to be needed and to be wanted. And if those desires are not met, then you're going to be lonely.

Now people are lonely for a number of reasons. I've listed about six reasons today that people are lonely. And your loneliness may be a result of one of these, all of these, or some of these.

#### **A. People Are Lonely Because They've Been Rejected in the Past**

One of the reasons that people are lonely is they've been rejected in the past; somebody has done them wrong. Maybe a husband, a wife, has walked off from you. Maybe children have rejected you. Maybe parents have rejected you, and you feel hurt, and you have inner wounds that have never been healed; and those wounds are there, and you're afraid now. You're afraid to make any kind of relationship, because you've been hurt so badly.

Mark Twain said one time, “If a cat sits on a hot stove, he'll never sit on a hot stove again.” And then he said, “As a matter of fact, he won't sit on any stove again.” If you've

been hurt, you're just afraid to try again. And that's one reason that people are lonely.

### **B. People Are Lonely Because They Have a Poor Self-Image**

Another reason is that some people just have such a poor self-image. They have a basic insecurity. They don't see themselves as worthy of having friends. They don't see themselves as worthy of being loved. And they're afraid to reach out, because they're afraid that no one will reach back. They have this deep-seated insecurity. They can't accept others and be accepted by others because they've never really accepted themselves as God has accepted them.

### **C. People Are Lonely Because They've Gone Through Pain and Suffering**

Another reason, another cause, is sometimes people have gone through pain and suffering, such pain and such suffering—maybe the loss of a child, the loss of a mate—they feel nobody else can understand—“People just don't know how much I've been hurt”—and they close themselves off.

Joyce and I were talking the other day about a very wonderful person, a member of this church, who suffered the loss of a mate; and it was so devastating that person has just closed up shop, won't even come to church anymore. Because of the deep hurt, they feel that nobody can understand it. Job, who was hurt so much, said, in Job chapter 7 and verse 16, *“Let me alone; for my days are vanity”* (Job 7:16). And sometimes people, when they have hurts—deep hurts—they just go into a shell and they become lonely.

### **D. People Are Lonely Because They Are Self-Centered**

You know one of the big reasons for loneliness is—this is not a very pleasing thing, but I'm going to say it—so many self-centered people are lonely. They're all wrapped up in themselves, and they turn their lives inward. And they just put up sort of a plexiglass shield of self-sufficiency around them, and they become so brittle, and they shut others out. No life is so empty as a self-centered life, and no life is so centered as a Christ-filled life. But these people are self-centered.

C. S. Lewis was a brilliant man. I don't agree with everything C. S. Lewis says, but one thing he said was incredible. He talked about self-centered people, and here's what he said. He said, “To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact you must give it to no one... Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket...of your selfishness... It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable.” Maybe you're that way. Maybe you've just kind of locked yourself up. But you're receiving the loneliness that comes with that self-centeredness.

### **E. People Are Lonely Because of Sin**

You know, sometimes your sin and the fruit of your sin can make you lonely. You become a person that is hard to live with. Cain killed Abel, and then he said, “I am a vagabond upon the earth” (Genesis 4:14). Love builds bridges. Sin builds walls. Maybe you’ve done something terrible and horrible, and that sin has separated you. Now, not all loneliness is the result of a sinful lifestyle. I want to be clear about that. But maybe that’s the cause of your loneliness.

### **F. People Are Lonely Because of a Depersonalized Society**

I’ll tell you one of the reasons for loneliness today, I believe, is just the way we have depersonalized society. We live in strange world today. Have you noticed that we’re just becoming a lot of numbers? You go to buy something, and you put a piece of plastic down on the counter, and the clerk picks up the plastic, does some things, wraps your stuff, hands it to you. Your eyes never meet his or hers. You sign. You go out.

I go to the Atlanta Airport quite often. They have those great big escalators. You get on that thing. You go down, you know, and you go up. I look at those people. They look like sausages in a factory. And you come to this thing, and it says, “Step away from the door. The door is now closing.” “Somebody is blocking the door.” You know, you get a car, and now your dashboard talks to you: “You’re running out of gas, stupid.” It’s an amazing thing that we’re looking for somebody to know that we are real. We live in a society that is just being depersonalized. We’ve lost our roots.

The average person now moves fourteen times in his lifetime—the average American. That’s something. When I was a kid, everybody grew up in the same neighborhood. Nobody moved. We stayed there. We knew one another. Now, how do we see our neighbor? He’s driving in his garage. We’re driving in our garage while we’re letting down the garage door. That’s it! Many of us don’t even know the names of our neighbors. I daresay that most of the people in this building today could not give the names of three families to your right and three families to your left. That’s an amazing thing. Now some of you could. But we just simply have become so isolated. And we’re afraid. Crime is out there on the streets. And so, what do we do? We go in and lock our doors with triple bolts, put bars on the window. The criminals roam the streets, and we are incarcerated behind bars at night. That is the fact of our age. And no wonder this eminent Swiss psychologist said, “the most devastating malady of our age.”

## **II. Loneliness Is a Crippling Force**

Now, here’s the second thing I want to say. Loneliness is a crippling force. It is a crippling force. Now we’re not just talking about something incidental. Again, the man said it is a devastating malady.



### **A. It Cripples You Emotionally**

Loneliness may cripple you emotionally. There are few hurts that are deeper than loneliness. This Christmas season there will be people sitting at home whose hearts will be crushed. They imagine everybody else is having a wonderful Christmas but them. One report that I read in doing research on this message said that eighty percent of psychiatrists' patients say that they sought help because of loneliness—eighty percent. Now if that's anywhere near true, that's an amazing thing. It cripples us emotionally.

### **B. It Cripples You Physically**

Let me give you another statistic. It cripples you physically. Another survey pointed out that fifty percent of heart patients were lonely and depressed before they had a heart attack—fifty percent. Physically, there can be a loss of appetite, or maybe overeating. Have you ever seen a lonely person in a restaurant overeating? Watch, you'll see a lot of them sitting there eating to make up for this loneliness.

### **C. It Cripples You Spiritually**

It can cripple you spiritually. As I say, people become spiritual dropouts. They don't come to church, because they are closed up in themselves, and they cut themselves off from the very thing they need.

## **III. Jesus Is God's Answer to Man's Loneliness**

I must rush past that point to get to the third and final point—and I want to spend a little more time on it. I've said that loneliness is a common fact. It is a crippling force. But here's the third thing—and I really want to zero in on this: that Jesus is God's answer to man's loneliness. Loneliness may be a conquered foe because of the little baby that was born here in Bethlehem so long ago—"on Bethlehem morn," as we just heard. You see, His name, the name of that baby, is Emmanuel. And what does Emmanuel mean? "God with us." Now that's so important.

Let me tell you how Jesus can help your loneliness like no other person can. One of the reasons that Jesus is God's answer to man's loneliness is that He knew loneliness like nobody else has ever known loneliness. When the prophet Isaiah prophesied about this baby that would come into the world, the prophet Isaiah said, in Isaiah chapter 53 and verse 3, "*He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not*" (Isaiah 53:3). Jesus was rejected. Again, let me give you another verse—John 1, verse 11. It speaks of Jesus: "*He came unto his own, and his own received him not*" (John 1:11). Jesus was rejected.

Think about His birth. No room in the inn. He was born in a stable. Think about His crucifixion. They couldn't even let Him die inside the city walls. He died outside the

gates on a garbage heap. He died alone between heaven and earth on that cross. His disciples forsook Him. He's there alone, and He has to bow His head and cry, *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"* (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34). Even God the Father had to turn His back upon God the Son when God the Son was bearing the sin of the world, because God is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity" (Habakkuk 1:13). I'm saying that Jesus knew loneliness. Jesus knew rejection. Jesus knew betrayal.

Now, what does that mean to you? Well, put in your margin Hebrews chapter 4 and verse 15: *"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities..."*—you say, "Nobody knows how I feel." Jesus knows—Jesus knows. Friend, He has been there. He was rejected, despised, cast off—*"we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin"* (Hebrews 4:15).

Now, here's the wonderful thing. How can Jesus, Emmanuel, help you? Remember the quote I gave you where the psychologist said, "The devastating fact is that the average American has not one friend in this world"? Well, let me tell you how you can have one friend. Let me tell you how you can have a friend. Put this down—John chapter 15, beginning in verse 12. Jesus said, *"This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends,"*—"ye are my friends"—*"if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you"* (John 15:12–15). Have you ever thought about that—I mean, really dwelt about that? I meditated on this verse all night last night. I would wake up thinking about this verse: *"I have called you friends"*—a friend of Jesus.

Now, listen. If you were listening, in the introduction of this message I told you that human beings have three basic needs. One is to love and be loved: someone that we can be intimate with. Now Jesus meets that need. He is someone that I can love, someone that loves me. I am totally intimate with the Lord Jesus Christ. He knows things about me that even Joyce doesn't know. He is a friend who knows my heart. He knows all about me. Secondly, we said that we have need of somebody who can understand us, somebody who knows the hurts, the wounds, the joys, the victories, the needs, the frustrations. Jesus understands.

I love the prophecy of our Lord in Psalm 139, verses 1 through 4: *"O lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising; thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether"* (Psalm 139:1–4). Jesus meets that need. He knows me. He understands me.

And then, we all have a need to be needed, to be desired, to be wanted. Listen to me. Forget anybody else is here. I'm talking to you up there in the balcony, or down here, over here, over here, or back here. He loves you personally and individually. He does not love all of us; He loves each of us. He is as much your friend as if He had no other friends in the world. He is your own personal Savior. Jesus meets that deep need.

I was thinking, in preparing this message, about Zacchaeus, that little man who lived in Jericho, where I've visited so many times. And he was so short. He was a tax collector. He was a man who really was an outcast. Nobody would have anything to do with Zacchaeus. And he climbed up in a sycamore tree to see his Lord. You know the story. You sang it as a child: "Zacchaeus was a wee little man." You remember the story. He's up there in the sycamore tree, and Jesus comes along, and Jesus says, "Zacchaeus, come down, for I must abide in your house today" (Luke 19:5). Do you know what had to go through that man's mind? Now all of the crowd is there; I mean, the crowd is there so great that Zacchaeus can't even get near Him. So you know there was a great crowd there. And out of that crowd, He says, "Zacchaeus!" Zacchaeus had to say, "He knows me! He knows me!" Did you know He knows you? I mean, He knows your name. And then He says, "Zacchaeus, come down." You know what he had to think? I know what he had to think: "He wants me. He's asking me to come. He wants me." And then He says, "Zacchaeus, I must needs abide at your house today." And he's saying, "He needs me. He needs me. I mean, He needs me? He wants me?"

I can tell you today without any stutter, stammer, fear, apology, hesitation, He knows you; He wants you; He needs you. You! Just say, "He's talking to me." Just say that: "He is talking to me." What a friend we have in the Lord Jesus Christ! You see? And thank God about this. He is "*a friend that sticketh closer than a brother*" (Proverbs 18:24). He will never leave you. He said, in His Word, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). And He sends the Holy Spirit, who is Christ in the Christian, to be with us always. And the Apostle Paul said, "*For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Romans 8:38-39).

Thank God for all of the wonderful things that we have in friendship with Jesus, our Emmanuel, who is God with us. No wonder the songwriter said,

*I've found a Friend, O such a friend!  
He loved me ere I knew him;  
He drew with the cords of love,  
And thus He bound me to Him.*

—JAMES G. SMALL

Now let me tell you what friendship with Jesus will do for you: the Emmanuel factor.

### **A. Friendship with Jesus Elevates You**

First of all, friend, I'll tell you what it will do. It will elevate you—it will elevate you. Have you ever listened to people who kind of namedrop, that they know somebody important? They'll say, "Well, you know, the other day when I was visiting with Congressman So-and-So, or the other day when I was *da-da-da-da*," and they just drop names. You know, namedroppers. Well, that's probably not a good thing to do, except there's one name I always enjoy dropping—and it's Jesus—it's Jesus—and let people know. Hey—and don't misunderstand what I'm trying to say, but we're tight—we're tight, we're tight. I love Him, and He's real. That elevates me. I mean, what could be said more to elevate an individual than to say, "Let me tell you who my friend is"? Let me tell you, my friend—my friend—is Jesus, the One who made the universes. That friendship elevates.

### **B. Friendship with Jesus Enlarges You**

I'll tell you something else that friendship does. Not only does it elevate, but it enlarges. Let me tell you the secret of friendship. When you have a friend, then the friends of that friend becomes your friends. Did you ever notice that? When you meet a friend, when you have a new friend, then the friends of that friend become your friends. And that's the reason we're here together, because we're all friends of Jesus, and we're friends to one another. That's why, folks, this church is called "a family of friends": because there is one friend whose name is Jesus, and we wouldn't be here together without Him, isn't that true? Choir, you wouldn't be up there. You wouldn't be there. You wouldn't be there. I wouldn't be here without Him. But His friendship enriches. His friendship enlarges. You see, no brother in Christ is a mere acquaintance to me. No sister in Christ is a mere acquaintance. They are a friend, because they're a friend of Jesus, and Jesus is a friend of mine.

### **C. Friendship with Jesus Enriches You**

I'll tell you something else about friendship with Jesus. Not only does it elevate us, and not only does it enlarge us, but friendship with Jesus enriches us. Now, notice what Jesus said in this passage of Scripture. He said, "You know, I don't call you servants; I call you friends, because," He says, "the servant doesn't know what his master does" (John 15:15). What's the difference between a servant and a friend? A servant is not necessarily told why; he's only told what: "Just do it!" "Why?" "Because I said so." "Do it!" But Jesus calls us friends. You see, the slave is told what; the friend is told why. When we become friends to Jesus, we get in the inner circle, and we learn some sacred secrets.

Let me give you a great verse. It's a wonderful verse. Put it down, and then you go back to it later on—Luke chapter 10, verses 23 and 24. We're talking now about this

friendship that enriches. Now, listen to this: *“And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately,”*—now, just underscore that: *“privately”*—*“Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: for I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them”* (Luke 10:23–24). Now, who is He talking to?

Fishermen, tax collectors. And He says, “Listen—listen. Come over here. I want to tell you something. The things that you’re seeing, the things that you’re hearing, kings and prophets have wanted to know. You’re going to get in on some things that old Solomon didn’t know about. You’re going to learn some things that the prophet Isaiah didn’t know. Kings and prophets won’t know what you’re going to know, because you’re my friends. The servant doesn’t know what his master does, but the friends know.” And Jesus said, “Henceforth, I call you my friends” (John 15:15).

This friendship: it elevates; it enlarges; it enriches. His name is Emmanuel, which is, “God with us.” How blessed we are to have Jesus for a friend! Would you agree? Hallelujah! Hallelujah! You see, God, through the Holy Spirit, whispers sacred secrets into our heart.

There’s an illustration I’ve used several times, but it’s so applicable here. A student in college was challenged by an agnostic professor about the Bible, and he said to his class, “The Bible is a bundle of blunders. It’s a book of ancient mythology. It’s no longer applicable to today’s age.” And he said, “I have read the Bible, and it doesn’t make sense to me.” And one student, who was bold enough to speak up for Jesus, said, “Pardon me, sir, but may I say this to you: that the Bible is God’s love letter to His friends. If you don’t understand it, it’s because you’ve been reading somebody else’s mail.”

There it is, you see. Jesus is the One who opens these things, and He says He’s hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, and He has revealed them unto babes (Matthew 11:25; Luke 10:21). Jesus’ friendship will enrich your life. “As iron sharpens iron, so a man’s countenance sharpens the countenance of his friends” (Proverbs 27:17).

Jesus is real to me. I don’t say that boastfully; I say it thankfully. Jesus is not somebody I know about; Jesus is somebody I know. He is a friend that sticks closer than a brother (Proverbs 18:24).

## Conclusion

Now as we come to the close of the message, I remind you again—listen, listen—Jesus loves you. Not just all of us; He loves each of us. Now you need a friend, but you can never have Jesus Christ as your friend until He’s your Lord and Savior. You need more than friendship with Jesus. You need your sin forgiven. You need to receive Him into

your heart and into your life. And when He becomes your friend, it is your duty and your privilege to introduce your Friend to the rest of your friends, and to say,

*I've found a friend, O, such a friend!  
He bled, He died to save me;  
And not alone the gift of life,  
But His own self He gave me.*

And then, all of us ought to say,

*Naught that I have mine own I call,  
I'll hold it for the Giver,  
My heart, my strength, my life, my all  
Are His, and His forever.*

—JAMES G. SMALL

*“They shalt call his name Emmanuel”* (Matthew 1:23). But just a few verses before that, Matthew reported that the angel said, *“Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins”* (Matthew 1:21). Now, listen. You cannot say that, “He is with me,” until “He has saved me.” *“Call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.” “Call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us”* (Matthew 1:23).

# The Loneliest Night of the Year

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: December 24, 1980**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 1:23**

*“Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.”*

MATTHEW 1:23

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## Introduction

I want to speak tonight on “The Loneliest Night of the Year.” I believe that Christmas Eve for so many people is the loneliest night of the year. And that’s so amazing, because we think of Christmas as the time when everybody’s happy. We think of Christmas as the time when the house is filled with family and friends and food and fun. But, you know, there are a lot of heartbroken people tonight—a lot of them! Did you know that at Christmastime there are more suicides, more drunkenness, more fights, more despair? Anybody who does counseling, like a pastor does, or anybody who deals with any of the social agencies knows that for so many people Christmas is a time of heartache and sadness.

I’ve tried to figure that out, and I believe it’s because people are told they’re

supposed to be happy. And they look within and they see that they're not happy. They're supposed to have friends, and they look around them, and even the friends that they have seem to be so surface. And somehow it just reinforces that sadness that they live with the rest of the year; but in the season when everybody's supposed to be so happy, it seems like it's worse than ever before. And, you know, the irony of the whole thing is this: that Jesus came to earth, suffered, bled, and died, rose again, reigns on high, that we might never ever be lonely again. I was reading the Christmas story, and I was interested to note again in Matthew chapter 1, verse 23, what the Bible says about the Lord Jesus Christ: *"Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."* (Matthew 1:23)

Now, if you're watching this program tonight, and you're looking in on Bellevue's services, we want to tell you again how happy we are to have you. This is the family night at Bellevue. We're just kind of taking it easy. We're not trying to be spectacular at all, but just to enjoy the things of God. But it came to our hearts and our minds that many of you tonight might be very lonely. So I want you to stay with us. I want to share with you some good news. I want to share with you the truth that Joyce was singing about just a little while back: how to be cured from your loneliness. And this is not just some slap on the back or some words of maudlin sentimentality. I want to talk to you about something that is tried and proven.

I heard of an old lady who marked in her Bible, and someone found her Bible, and she had so many places that were marked and underlined and stained with tears and all of these things, like people who have a Bible that they love so much. But by some verses she had "T" and "P"—just "TP." And someone said, "What does that mean?" And she said, "It means tried and proven—tried and proven."

Well, I want to talk to you about something that's not sentiment, something that has been tried and proven, as we think about this matter of loneliness.

## **I. The Curse of Loneliness**

And, first of all, I want you to think with me about the curse of loneliness. You know, about ten years ago Janis Joplin, who was a very famous young lady, a singer that a certain strata of people loved to hear, on October 4, 1970, in Los Angeles, she was found dead in her beautiful apartment. And as they went into the apartment, they found the heroin there; they found the fresh needle marks on her arm. This young lady who had, in a way, a portion of the world at her feet was found dead under tragic circumstances. A friend of hers reported that Janis Joplin said to her just hours before her death these words—and I want to quote them—she said, "When I am not on the theater stage, I just lie around and watch television and feel very lonely." And here she



was, twenty-seven years of age, talented and wealthy and praised, and yet: “I sit around and watch television and feel very lonely.” Thomas Wolfe, one of the greatest novelists of all ages, once wrote these words: “Loneliness, far from being a rare and a curious phenomenon peculiar to myself and a few solitary men, is the central and inevitable fact of human existence.” He said it is the central fact, and it is inevitable that all people are lonely. And I think of the great historian, H. G. Wells, who said on his sixty-fifth birthday, “I am lonely. I am lonely and alone.”

And, you see, popularity doesn't remove loneliness. The fact that people like to be with you does not necessarily mean that you are not going to be lonely. In 1808, many years ago, a man came into the office of Dr. James Hamilton in Manchester, England. And this man was so distraught. He looked like he had some physical malady, but the doctor examined him and could find no physical malady. He said, “Sir, what is wrong with you? You tell me.” And the man said, “I am depressed. I am distressed.” He said, “I can find no reason for wanting to live. And if you cannot help me, I'm going to take my life.” And the doctor said, “I believe that you're just lonely. I believe that you're just all wrapped up in yourself. What you need to do is to get outside of yourself. You need to start enjoying life.” And Dr. Hamilton said, “There's a circus in town, and one of the most famous clowns of all time is there: Grimaldi.” And he said, “I want you to go to the circus and buy a ticket, and go in and watch Grimaldi. He'll make you laugh.” And the doctor said, “I just believe if you can laugh, that will help you.” The man looked at the doctor and said, “Doctor, don't jest with me. I am Grimaldi.” He was the clown making everyone else laugh.

And I believe that there are some of you here tonight and some who perhaps are sharing these services on television, and you may be the life of the party, but down inside you're lonely, you're empty. You're like Janis Joplin. You're like H. G. Wells. You're like Grimaldi the clown. You're saying this: “There's something missing. There is a deep and abiding loneliness.” You can be a Christian and be lonely if you get out of fellowship with God. In Psalm 25, verse 16, the psalmist said, “*I am [lonely] and afflicted.*” (Psalm 25:16)

I heard one time of a man who said to his mother, “I just don't want to go to church.” She said, “But you ought to go to church.” He said, “Well, I just don't want to go.” She said, “Why not?” He said, “Well, all the people there, they're unfriendly to me. They won't speak to me. And the deacons in that church said they don't like me. They just snub me. And the staff members, I don't seem to be able to get along with them. I just don't want to go.” She said, “Now, dear, go on to church. You ought to go. It will do you good. And, after all, you are the pastor.”

Now you can be a Christian and be lonely. You can be up to your ears in church work and be lonely. You look around. You can be in a crowd and be lonely. Did you

know that the loneliest people sometimes are in the biggest cities? The big cities—the big cities—are the places of the Lonely Hearts Clubs. The big cities are the places of the single bars or the singles bars. They are the places of the computerized dating services and the encounter groups. I'm talking about in the big cities. A city like Memphis, Tennessee, is often filled with lonely people. There is the curse of loneliness. And Dr. Paul Tournier, the eminent Swiss psychiatrist, has called loneliness “the most devastating malady of this age”—“the most devastating malady of this age”—loneliness, the curse of loneliness.

## **II. The Cause of Loneliness**

And then I want us to think for a little bit about the cause of loneliness. Why are people lonely?

### **A. Our Three Emotional Needs as Humans**

Well, you know, when God made us, when God created us, He engineered us that we have three basic emotional needs.

#### **1. We Need Someone to Love**

First of all, we need someone to love, someone to share those intimate things with, someone just to open our hearts to, someone that's so near and so close that we can share the little things as well as the big things.

#### **2. We Need to Be Understood**

But not only do we need someone to love, but we're also engineered that we have a need to be understood. You know, it's a terrible thing when you think, “Nobody knows. Nobody cares. Nobody understands the way I feel. Nobody knows what's happening to me.”

#### **3. We Need to Be Needed**

But not only do we need someone to love, and not only do we need someone to understand us; but we have a third need: We need to be needed—we need to be needed. We want to be wanted. We want to be appreciated. Our self-esteem demands that somehow there be someone who says, “You are important. You're so important that I need you; and without you my life is incomplete.”

### **B. Why Those Needs Aren't Met**

And yet, in spite of these three needs, it seems like everything is engineered so that many people never have these needs met.

#### **1. A Depersonalized Society**

We're so depersonalized today. Everybody is a number rather than a name. And Madison Avenue had done a pretty good job at Christmastime teaching us to love things

and to use people rather than using things and loving people.

## **2. Mobility**

But we just live in an age where we're so mobile, also. You know, we're picking up roots and we're moving, and we're packing and unpacking, and moving and packing. I read this statistic the other day, that the average person moves fourteen times now in America—fourteen times in his lifetime. And it's tough to move. Someone said, "Moving three times is as bad as being burned out." And we move fourteen times in our lifetime.

## **3. Death**

And we see that many of us have had the icy fingers of death to come into our home and take away some loved one—someone so near and so precious. Even today I've dealt with two families who've had loved ones taken by death. And, thank God, both of those loved ones were Christians. They've gone to heaven, and we thank God for that. I think about the Singing Christmas Tree and the message of the Singing Christmas Tree, "Going Home for Christmas," and two of our congregation have already gone home for Christmas. Perhaps they didn't realize that they were going home for Christmas; but they have. And they've left behind some people, and the people that they've left behind can have that awful heartache—that awful loneliness—because it seems like there are so many things that seem to bring that loneliness into our heart.

## **4. Sin and Selfishness**

And then, let me tell you another thing that can cause loneliness: Not only the depersonalization of society, and the mobility of society, and sometimes the invasion of death; but did you know that your own sin and selfishness can make you lonely? Some people are so wrapped up in themselves that they have become so lonely. They're wondering why they're not having a good Christmas—and do you know what they think Christmas is? They think that Christmas is unwrapping presents. Friend, the joy of Christmas is wrapping presents—wrapping presents. It's more blessed to give than it is to receive. (Acts 20:35) And there are so many people who are sitting around waiting for someone to love them, when the Bible says, "*He who would have friends must show himself friendly.*" (Proverbs 18:24) And these people have become so selfish and so wrapped up within themselves.

## **III. The Cure for Loneliness**

Well, we thought a little bit about the curse of loneliness—as Mr. Tournier says, "the most devastating malady of our age." We've thought about the cause of loneliness—that we have these basic needs, and so many are not having these basic needs met; so many don't have anyone to love; so many don't have anyone to share with, someone who understands them; and so many don't feel needed, or wanted, or appreciated at all.

So, let me talk to you for just a few moments about the cure for loneliness. I want to tell you again that it's wrapped up in the Lord Jesus, whose name is Emmanuel—Emmanuel—Matthew 1, verse 23: *"They shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."* (Matthew 1:23) You see, Jesus alone is the cure for being alone. Jesus alone is the cure for loneliness. And I'll tell you why this is. Has it ever dawned upon you that Jesus knew more loneliness than any other person who ever lived? I believe the most lonely person who ever walked Planet Earth was a man named Jesus of Nazareth. He was lonely because no one really, really understood Him.

As a matter of fact, I was reading in the Psalms, and in Psalm 102—you might want to mark it in your Bible some time—Psalm 102 is what we call a messianic psalm. That is, it's one of the psalms that prophesies and tells about the Lord Jesus Christ. That is, the psalmist is speaking as though he were Jesus, and the words of Jesus and the thoughts of Jesus are put into the psalm. And here's a very interesting verse that struck and gripped my heart as I prepared my heart for this message. In Psalm 102, verse 6, Jesus says, *"I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of the desert. I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top."* (Psalm 102:6–7) Jesus was talking of Himself. The psalmist here is prophesying of the Lord Jesus Christ like a sparrow alone on a housetop. Jesus knew what loneliness was.

You see, all of these Old Testament ceremonies, and all of these Old Testament sacrifices, and all of these Old Testament celebrations, were about the Lord Jesus Christ. Can't you imagine Jesus standing on the edge of the crowd and seeing those people go through their rituals and their celebrations and knowing it was all about Him, and yet they did not know Him? For the Bible says in Isaiah chapter 53 and verse 3, speaking of Jesus, *"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not."* (Isaiah 53:3) Oh, the loneliness of Jesus, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, despised, rejected of men! And the Bible tells us in John 1, verse 11, that, *"He came unto his own, and his own received him not."* (John 1:11)

Not only, dear friend, was He born outside the inn that night in the stable, but He died outside the city walls on a garbage heap. He had to be buried in a borrowed tomb. The loneliest man that ever lived was the Lord Jesus Christ. And when Jesus died, He died alone. And how my heart was touched again as I thought of the Lord Jesus as He was there upon that cross being crucified, as He cried out, *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"* (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34) And God the Father had turned His back upon God the Son, because God the Son had taken the sin of the world upon Himself. And the Bible says that the Father is *"of purer eyes than to behold [iniquity]"* (Habakkuk 1:13) Jesus took my sin. And because He took my sin, He suffered my loneliness. And Jesus died between heaven and earth suspended on a cross. His

disciples fled and forsook Him. The mob railed at Him. And God the Father turned His back, and Jesus died alone. Even when David died, David could say in the words of the twenty-third psalm, *“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me.”* (Psalm 23:4) But Jesus couldn't say that. Jesus had to say, *“My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?”* Jesus walked that lonesome valley all by Himself.

The loneliest man that ever lived was Jesus Christ. He knows loneliness. And, therefore, the Bible tells us in Hebrews chapter 4 that we don't have a high priest who cannot feel what we feel. He's touched with our infirmities. (Hebrews 4:15) He knows. He cares. And if you're lonely tonight, I want to tell you there is One who knows what it's like to be lonely. And He was lonely, that you need not be lonely. He came to take our loneliness from us by suffering it for us in our place. And so the cure for loneliness is the Lord Jesus, who is Emmanuel, who is God with us.

And how does He meet our loneliness? Remember what we said that man's three basic needs are?

#### **A. Jesus Is Someone to Love**

First of all, man needs someone to love. That's Jesus—that's Jesus. I want to tell you something. It may sound corny; I hope it doesn't. But I love Jesus. I love Him. I really do. He means more to me than I could put into words. And I'm so grateful that I have someone, if friends were to forsake me, family were to leave me, there's someone that I can love.

#### **B. Jesus Is Someone Who Understands**

But, secondly, not only is He someone to love; but, friend, He is someone who understands. You say, people don't understand. I want to tell you, He understands. He knows all about you. I was reading in Psalm 139, beginning in verse 1, *“O lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.”* (Psalm 139:1–4) He understands your heartache. He understands your fear. He understands your loneliness. He knows, dear friend. He understands. *“There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.”* (Proverbs 18:24)

#### **C. Jesus Is Someone Who Values You**

But look. Not only is He someone to love. And not only is He someone who understands. But did you know that He values you? He wants you; He needs you. Did you know that in a sense He's incomplete without you? He so desires you. Oh, the Bible speaks of the Lord Jesus in the Song of Solomon, which is a love song, and it's put as

though Jesus is the suitor, the bridegroom, seeking His bride. And I just love that phrase in Psalms that says, *“The king greatly [desires] thy beauty.”* (Psalm 45:11) Did you know there’s a hunger in the heart of the Lord Jesus for you? There really is.

I was thinking about this, and I was thinking about Zacchaeus. Do you know who Zacchaeus is? Remember we used to sing that in Sunday School: “Zacchaeus was a wee little man, and a wee little man was he”? Zacchaeus was that tax collector who was despised also; they hated him. Zacchaeus had a big house, but he was so lonely. People hated Zacchaeus. He was short of stature. But he’d heard about the Lord Jesus, and I imagine there was such a void and an emptiness in Zacchaeus’ heart that he thought perhaps Jesus could meet his need. He had a hunger to know about Jesus. He ran out ahead of the crowd, and the people were so tall Zacchaeus couldn’t see over them. So he climbed up into a sycamore tree, and he’s looking out of that sycamore tree, and here comes the Lord Jesus and the mighty crowds. And Jesus stops underneath that sycamore tree, and He looks up and He says, “Zacchaeus!” And the first thought that Zacchaeus surely had was, “He knows me! He knows me!” And then, He says, *“Zacchaeus...come down.”* And Zacchaeus surely had another thought: “He wants me! He wants me!” And then, Jesus said, *“For...I must abide at [your] house.”* (Luke 19:5) “Why, He needs me! He needs me! He knows me! He wants me! Why, He even needs me!” And the Bible says, *“He made haste, and came down.”* (Luke 19:6)

Are you out on a limb without Him? Are you? Well, I want to tell you something, dear friend. You may be like Zacchaeus tonight and thinking that there’s nobody who knows you—Jesus knows you—there’s nobody who wants you—Jesus wants you—there’s no one who needs you—Jesus needs you. He *“is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother,”* (Proverbs 18:24) and He’ll never leave you. *“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers...nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (Romans 8:38–39)

## **Conclusion**

Now I want to just look right here into the camera for a moment, and I want to talk to you. If you’re up late at night tonight when this is going to be replayed, I want to tell you with all of the sincerity of my heart there’s someone who wants you very much this Christmas, and I want you to give your heart to Him. I want you right now just to say to Him, “Lord Jesus, if you know me, and if you want me, and if you need me, you can have me. I give you my heart. Come into my heart, Lord Jesus.” And I promise you, He really will. And this Christmas can be so very special. We need never ever be lonely again.

# Twentieth-Century Wise Men

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: December 14, 1986**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 2:1–11**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Wise Men Will Seek Him
- II. Wise Men Will See Him
  - A. The Ministry of the Spirit
  - B. The Message of the Scriptures
  - C. The Miracle of the Stars
- III. Wise Men Will Serve Him
  - A. Gold Speaks of His Sovereign Dominion
  - A. Frankincense Speaks of His Sinless Deity
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Conclusion

## Introduction

I want to speak to you today on this subject: “Twentieth-Century Wise Men.” You know, the Bible says that wise men are not always great. That is, there is a kind of wisdom that is not wisdom at all; it’s the wisdom of this world. I may be speaking to some Ph.D.’s today, and for you, Ph.D. may stand for “phenomenal dud,” if you don’t know Jesus. You may be a great entrepreneur or a great businessman. You may be an engineer. You may be a nuclear physicist. You may be a physician, a lawyer, a great businessman, or a gifted artist; but if you don’t know Jesus, then you’re not truly wise.

Now I want you to find out what the Bible has to say about real wisdom here, and I will begin reading in Matthew chapter 2 and verse 1: *“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod, the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod, the king, had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where the Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea; for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah: for out of thee shall come a Governor that shall rule my people, Israel. Then Herod, when he had privately called the wise men, inquired of*

*them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshiped him; and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts: gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.” (Matthew 2:1-12)*

These were wise men. Jeremiah chapter 4, verse 22, spoke of that generation, and the Bible says: *“they [were] wise to do evil, but to do good they [had] no knowledge.”* (Jeremiah 4:22)

Omar Bradley, a great American general, once said, “We’re living in a time when our achievement, our knowledge of science, has gone far beyond our power to control it. We have too many men of science and too few men of God. We brought about brilliance without wisdom, power without conscience; we’re living in a time of nuclear giants and spiritual pygmies.” That’s well said: “nuclear giants and spiritual pygmies.” What is real wisdom? I want to give you three things that I see about wise men today, and see if God’s Holy Spirit does not bear witness with your spirit that these are the marks of the “Twentieth-Century Wise Men.”

## **I. Wise Men Will Seek Him**

Number one: Wise men will seek Him. Wise men will seek Jesus. Now in verses 1 and 2 we read that *“there came wise men from the east...saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we...are come to worship him”* (Matthew 2:1–2). They were seeking Him.

Do you know the mark of wisdom? Do you know how to determine wisdom? Just tell me what you see, tell me what motivates you, tell me what is the consummate ambition of your life, and I can tell you clearly whether you’re wise or not, just by what you seek. You know, the Apostle Paul said, over in Philippians chapter 1, verse 21—he summed up his life; he put it in a sentence—he said this: *“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”* (Philippians 1:21) Could you put your life into a sentence like that—*“For to me to live is Christ?”* What he meant was, the source, the substance, the subject, and the satisfaction of his life was Christ. *“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”* Paul was facing the headman’s axe; he was in a prison when he said that, and he said that is my life: *“For to me to live is Christ...”*



Now, today, I want to ask you, what does it mean for you to live? I want you to take that sentence, “For to me to live is...” and then I want you to take the word *Christ* out, and then just put a blank spot there; and then, I want you to take your pen—your invisible pen—out of your pocket, and I want you to write on an invisible piece of paper, so that your neighbor can’t read it, and I want you to fill in the blank. Now, listen. There’s only one thing I ask of you: be honest. I mean, be judgment day honest: don’t put down anything that you don’t mean. After all, only you know what you’re putting down: you and God.

“For to me to live is...”—and put it in one word. “Oh,” you say, “it can’t be put in one word.” Oh, sure it can! Think about it, boil it down, and distill it: what more than anything else motivates you? Put it down. For many Americans, it would be money, right? “For to me to live is...money.” Now if that’s what motivates you, then put it down: “For to me to live is money.” “Oh,” you say, “no, that’s truly crass. I don’t want money. I just enjoy what money can buy.” Fine, a man said, “I don’t want to be a millionaire; I just want to live like one.” Fine, okay, put it down there: “For to me to live is possessions and things.” “Oh,” you say, “no, no, it’s not things. I just want to enjoy life.” Oh? Okay, put it down there: “For to me to live is pleasure.” “Well,” you say, “you make it sound so bad, pastor. I mean, I enjoy being with people. I like to love people—my family and my kids.” Fine, put it down: “For to me to live is friends and family.” Write it down. “Well,” you say, “it’s more than that. I mean, I want my life to count for something. I want my life to make a mark.” Wonderful. Put it down: “For to me to live is fame, influence, and work.” Be honest. What one thing would you write?

Now, you listen to your pastor. If you wrote anything but Jesus, then you’re not wise. You’re not wise; because, you see, it’s only when you say, “For to me to live is Christ” that you can say, “for me to die is gain.” Suppose you wrote money. For when you die, you’re going to leave it. Suppose you wrote pleasure. There are no fun and games in a Christ-less grave. Suppose you wrote family. One of these days, you’re going to kiss them all goodbye and die. Suppose you wrote fame. Well, the mossy fingers of time and the gnawing tooth of decay are going to pull down your monuments. Listen. The only way that you can say, “For to me to die is gain”—and you’re going to die—is for you to say, “For to me to live is Christ.”

Now, listen. Wise men seek Him. They seek the Lord. Do you seek the Lord? I mean, is that the burning ambition of your heart and of your life? You say, “Well, I come to church.” I’m not talking about that. You think about these men: they came from the east. Do you know where the east was? They’re talking about Babylon. That was 300 miles across the Syrian desert: distance and difficulty. Now the Christmas cards picture them coming on camels. I don’t know how they came, but I know how they didn’t come:

they didn't come by airplane, by bus, by automobile, nor by motorcycle. I know where they didn't stay: they didn't stay in the Holiday Inn. Difficulty, distance, and danger.

Why, it was the time of King Herod, who was a king that was insane with jealousy and rage. Herod had murdered his mother. Herod had murdered his wife, Mariamne. Herod had murdered his three sons. Augustus Caesar said that it was safer to be Herod's pig than to be Herod's son. In the Greek language, the word *pig* and the word *son* sound almost alike, and he's making a play on words. "Safer to be his pig than it was to be his son." When Herod was sick and about to die, he had a number of the most prominent citizens arrested, and gave orders that, when he died, they also would be killed. Do you know why he did that? He said that he wanted some tears shed when he died. That's the kind of man that Herod was. And these men, in the face of that danger, said, "We have come to seek Jesus Christ."

Wise men will seek Him. In spite of distance, danger, and difficulty, they'll seek Him. What does that say to these folks who are members of *Bedside Baptist*? They get their religion through the tube, through the radio, through the tape, or through the book—if everything is comfortable and just right. "Be careful, pastor, that we have an easy place to park." "Be careful, pastor, that we've got a soft seat to sit on." "Don't let the light glint in my eyes, pastor." "Don't make it uncomfortable for me, or I may not come." Wise men will seek Jesus. With all of their heart they will seek the Lord. It's wise to worship. "*Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we...are come to worship him.*"

## II. Wise Men Will See Him

Secondly, wise men that seek Him will see Him. Look in verse 11—what a wonderful, wonderful verse that is! Look at it here chapter 2 and verse 11: "*And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary, his mother, and fell down, and worshiped him*" (Matthew 2:11). It's worth seeking Him, because, friend, when you seek Him, you will see Him. You know, there's a wonderful verse in the Bible—it's in Jeremiah chapter 29 and verse 13: "*And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart*" (Jeremiah 29:13)—"*ye shall seek me, and find me.*" They searched for Him, they found Him, and they saw Him.

Now, you listen. There were three things that brought these wise men to Jesus, and the same three will bring you to Him today. Number one, there was the ministry of the Spirit; number two, there was the message of the Scriptures; and, number three, there was the miracle of the star. That's what brought these men to Jesus.

### A. The Ministry of the Spirit

First of all, there was the ministry of the Spirit. Well, you say, "Pastor, I don't read

anything there about the Holy Spirit.” It’s there. Now, true, the Bible doesn’t say anything about the Holy Spirit in this verse, unless you look carefully beneath the surface. But what it does say is this: *“There came wise men from the east...saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we...are come to worship him”* (Matthew 2:1–2).

Now, listen. The Bible says, *“God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth”* (John 4:24). Who put that desire to worship Jesus in their hearts? The Holy Spirit. Do you know why we seek Him? Because He first sought us, isn’t that true? We love Him because He first loved us. Do you know why I love the Lord Jesus? Because God, in grace, and God, in mercy, put a desire in my heart to seek after Him. By nature, in our flesh, the Bible says, *“There is none that seeketh after God”* (Romans 3:11), *“no, not one”* (Romans 3:10), and that would have included these wise men.

They didn’t come to Him because they were so intellectual. Don’t get the idea that because they were smarter than other men they came. Oh, no! Because they were wise and in that wisdom said that they were yielded to God, God the Holy Spirit could work in their hearts and draw them to Jesus. Do you have a desire to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him? Do you find something drawing you to God? That, my friend, is Someone: He’s the Holy Spirit. Thank God for the ministry of the Spirit. Hallelujah!

### **B. The Message of the Scriptures**

Now, listen. Not only was there the ministry of the Spirit: that’s not enough. There was something else: there was the message of the Scriptures. The wise men said, *“Where is he that is born King of the Jews?”* They needed something else to guide them, to help them. Well, they opened the Bible, and in verses 5 and 6 of this chapter we find a principle. God may not give you a star; it may be a friend, it may be a song, it may be a message, or it may be a sermon. Whatever it is, God will do what is necessary to bring the man to Jesus who is seeking Him. I believe that with all of my heart. For the man who is seeking God, God will move heaven and earth.

### **C. The Miracle of the Stars**

You know, the stars have to obey our Lord. Over there in the Old Testament, in the book of Judges—Judges chapter 5, verse 20—the Bible says, *“The stars in their courses fought against Sisera”* (Judges 5:20). Sisera was a general. He had an army, and in that army he had 900 chariots. You can’t even imagine 900 chariots. But he was going into war against God’s people, and God sent such a tremendous rainstorm that his chariots were bogged down, and he was defeated. Now, later, when they wrote a song to celebrate the victory, one of the stanzas in that song says, *“The stars in their*

*courses fought against Sisera.*” You see, *Star Wars* are not new: *“The stars in their courses fought against Sisera.”* And his kingdom came tumbling down—Herod’s kingdom came tumbling down; for Herod stumbled over the stars.

Listen to me—listen. *The whole universe is against the man who’s against God. And the whole universe lines up behind the man who seeks God.* Whatever is necessary, God will do it to get that hungry heart which seeks after Him to Jesus. If you want Him, God is a God of might, and God is a God of miracle. I believe that some of you are here this morning by divine appointment, because you’ve been seeking the Lord. Thank God for the miracle of the stars. The star was there to guide the wise men, and what it tells me is that, whatever is necessary, God will guide that hungry heart that wants to know the Lord Jesus Christ. *“And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart”* (Jeremiah 29:13).

### **III. Wise Men Will Serve Him**

Now the third and final thing—listen: first thing—wise men will seek Him; secondly, those who seek Him will see Him; and, thirdly, those who seek Him, and those who see Him, will serve Him. As night follows day, they will serve Him. I want you to look again in verse 11, if you will: *“And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary, his mother, and fell down, and worshiped him; and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh”* (Matthew 2:11). Oh, there’s so much ignorance today: so many people think that this is just something incidental! Oh, no, it’s something fundamental! There’s such a deep significance!

I heard about a little boy who said that the three wise men brought gold, frankincense, and mermaids. Gold, frankincense, and myrrh: these were not trinkets; these were treasures. They opened their treasures. This was something they had planned. This was something they had brought. This didn’t happen by happenstance. Why those three things? Because they are highly symbolic, and they teach us something about the service to our dear Lord.

#### **A. Gold Speaks of His Sovereign Dominion**

Now gold was a gift that was fit for a king. Gold speaks of His sovereign dominion. You see, verse 2—they said, *“Where is he that is born King of the Jews?”* (Matthew 2:2). He was a king, and the Bible speaks of kings wearing crowns, and they were crowns of gold. Psalm 21, verse 3: *“Thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head.”* (Psalm 21:3) Now when they brought gold, they were saying, *“We recognize that this little baby is the King of the Jews. He’s destined to reign. He has sovereign dominion.”*

Have you recognized His dominion? You're not wise if you haven't. Have you bowed to Him and said, "Lord, I crown you." "Well," you say, "how are you going to crown Him?" You might crown Him the way they did—which was with gold. If all of your wealth is not under His control, then you've not recognized Him as King—as your sovereign King. He has a right to all that you own. You say, "It's mine." Well then, keep it, and die, and go to hell. If He's not Lord of everything you have, then He's not your Savior. His throne is not a duplex. He requires your absolute surrender to His lordship. He's the King. He's the King. It is His sovereign dominion. How am I going to serve Him? I'll serve him with my wealth.

### **A. Frankincense Speaks of His Sinless Deity**

Secondly, not only did they bring gold, but they also brought frankincense. And as the gold speaks of His sovereign dominion, the frankincense speaks of His sinless deity—of His sinless deity, because, not only is He King; He is also God. "Well," you say, "how does frankincense speak of his deity?" Well, in this time, and in the Old Testament, they worshiped the Lord by burning incense—frankincense. Now incense was sweet perfume, so that, when it was burned, it would go up in smoke; and it pictured a sweet perfume rising up into the nostrils of God. It was an emblem—a symbol—of worship; and the Bible tells us that frankincense was to be used in the worship of God alone.

Now Exodus chapter 30, verse 37, reads, "*And as for the perfume which thou shalt make, ye shall not make to yourselves according to the composition thereof: it shall be unto thee holy for the LORD*" (Exodus 30:37). That type of frankincense was only for God. These wise men were wise, because, do you know what they said? "Not only does our wealth belong to Him, as He's the King; but our worship also belongs to Him. He's God—He's God."

Is He your God, or do you have an idol? Do you have an idol? You say, "No, I don't believe in idols." Anything that you love more than God is an idol. Anything that you fear more than God is an idol. Anything that you serve more than God is an idol. How are you going to serve Him? Serve Him with all that you have: your wealth belongs to Him. How are you going to serve Him? Serve Him with all that you are: your worship belongs to Him.

### **B. Myrrh Speaks of His Sacrificial Death**

But not only did they bring Him gold, and not only did they bring Him frankincense; but they also brought Him myrrh, and that myrrh speaks of His sacrificial death and indicates that He was going to die, because myrrh was used to embalm the dead. Do you remember that Jesus was crucified, and that the Bible speaks of how they went

about embalming Him, in John 19, verse 39? *“And there came also Nicodemus, who at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight”* (John 19:39)—myrrh, to embalm the body of Jesus.

## Conclusion

Here was a baby that was born to die. Are you listening? He is a king, and they brought Him gold. He’s God, and they brought Him frankincense. He’s a Savior, and they brought Him myrrh. Sovereign dominion, sinless deity, and sacrificial death. And because He is a king, He has my wealth. Because He’s God, He has my worship. And because He died, He has my witness. All that I am, all that I have, and all that I do, belongs to this One: that’s wisdom. That’s what a wise man will do, and I wonder, are you really wise? Do you understand that this baby was born to die?

They said—if you’ve been reading the newspaper, then you’ve probably read this—that they can’t put a cross on that building down there in Jackson, Mississippi. People have said, “That’s too religious.” Well, they were both right and wrong. They were right when they said that it is indeed a symbol of Christmas: it does indeed speak of Jesus specifically. In my estimation, they were wrong to take it down. But that doesn’t make a whole lot of difference. I don’t depend on lights on buildings to get the message out. Friend, if those of us who love Him and serve Him would tell the story, then we wouldn’t be worrying about whether a building is going to be lighted up.

I want to tell you something—you listen to me: It is the cross, not the cradle. The cross: that’s the central emblem of Christianity. But thank God for the cradle, the cross, and the crown. He died, He rose, and He’s coming again. Wise men will worship Him.

Let’s go back to our sentence, “For to me to live is...” Are you willing to say, “My wealth, my worship, and my witness will come to Him; I see Him as the sovereign dominion, as the sacred, sinless deity, and as the suffering Savior; I see Him, and I give all to Him?” Wise men will seek Him; wise men that seek Him will see Him; and, wise men that seek Him, and see Him, will serve Him with all that they have. Are you wise? I say, are you wise?

# The Gifts of the Wise Men and Our Gifts to Jesus

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: December 22, 1991**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 2:1–12**

*“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews?”*

MATTHEW 2:1–2

## Outline

Introduction

- A. The Barrier of Distance
- B. The Barrier of Difficulty
- C. The Barrier of Danger
- I. The Gold: His Sovereign Dominion
- II. The Frankincense: His Sinless Deity
- III. The Myrrh: His Sacrificial Death

Conclusion

## Introduction

Take God’s Word and turn with me, if you would, please, to Matthew chapter 2. There we have the story of the visit of the wise men and the gift that they brought to the Lord Jesus. Do you have difficulty finding just the right gift for just the right person? Have you ever thought about the gift that you may give to the Lord Jesus this Christmas season? I think we can take a lesson from the wise men. And today we’re thinking of this subject: “The Gifts of the Wise Men and Our Gifts to Jesus.” Matthew chapter 2, verse 1: *“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, and thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that*

*shall rule my people Israel. Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary His mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.” (Matthew 2:1–12)*

Now we all know the story of the wise men. But there is much about these wise men that we do not know. For example, we're not certain that there were three wise men. There may have been more. There may have been three. We sing the song, "We Three Kings of Orient Are," but there may be have been more. We know that there were three categories of gifts that are listed. There may have been more gifts. We don't know, really, what country these wise men came from. They came from the East. I think, most likely, they came from Babylon. And I'll tell you why I believe that they came from Babylon. In Babylon there was a great prophet, a man of God whose name was Daniel. And Babylon, of course, is to the east. It's our modern Iraq. It was there that young Daniel was taken captive, and it was there that Daniel taught. And in Babylon there were wise men, magi. As a matter of fact, the book of Daniel tells about them. And these magi had their lives saved by Daniel. And obviously, they would have listened to the teaching and the preaching of Daniel, and it was Daniel who prophesied a coming Messiah.

There's a lot that we do not know. We don't know, for example, what the star was that led them. The Bible says that there was a star. But the word *star* is not used in a literal sense; it's used in a symbolic sense. And it has the idea of something bright and shining, not necessarily used in the definite sense that we use the word today. I personally believe that it was not a star like the stars that you will see tonight when you go out and look. I believe it was the Shekinah glory of God in the heavens. I believe it was the same kind of Shekinah glory that shone round about those shepherds in the field where the Bible says, "*And the glory of the Lord shone round about them.*" (Luke 2:9) I believe it was just God's great Shekinah glory that was there in the sky leading these wise men. But I wouldn't argue with you about it. If you want to argue something else, that's your privilege. What I'm simply saying is, there is a lot that we do not know, but there are some things that we wonderfully, wonderfully know. And we know this: that these men were called wise men, and they were wise because they sought the Lord



Jesus to worship Him.

I think there is not a one of us who has not heard that slogan, “Wise men still worship Him.” And may I say, it wasn’t easy for them to worship Him. They had a lot of barriers to overcome.

### **A. The Barrier of Distance**

For example, there was the barrier of distance. If you’ll look in verse 1, the Bible says they were wise men from the East. Now if indeed they came from Iraq, modern Iraq, to Jerusalem, even today that would be a great trip. But these are men who have come a great distance, perhaps about three hundred miles, just to worship the King of kings, the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **B. The Barrier of Difficulty**

Not only was there the barrier of distance; there was the barrier of difficulty. I want to remind you in this day there were no planes, no trains, no automobiles. There were no hotels. There were no restaurants. There were no superhighways. Over rough terrain they came.

### **C. The Barrier of Danger**

Not only was there distance; and not only was there difficulty; there was literal danger. When they got there, they faced ol’ King Herod. Herod was a murderous old man. And he loved to kill people. He was the one who killed all of the little babies. But before he killed those little babies, he had already murdered his wife. He had already murdered his mother. He had already murdered his sons. He was the one who murdered all the little babies under two years of age. And as a matter of fact, when Herod died, he knew he was going to die, and just before he died, he said, “Get some of the best known citizens of our land, and when I die, put them to death, because if they don’t shed any tears for me, maybe they’ll shed some tears for them. And I want there to be some tears when I die.” And so he had people killed just because he himself had died. He was a hateful, hellish, murderous old man. And these wise men were in danger from Herod himself.

So what I’m trying to say is that with great, great difficulty they came to worship the Christ child. You see, the word *worship* means “worth-ship.” Why are you here? Why did you come? Because you felt it was worth it to give honor and glory to the Son of God. I cannot imagine these who have a take-it-or-leave-it attitude toward worshipping the Lord Jesus Christ. In America today, I think the biggest cult is the cult of the comfortable: those who don’t want to be disturbed if the weather is not right, or if guests come, or if there is some other problem, why then, they don’t seem to be able to make it to worship. And I don’t want to brag on you being here, because, dear friend, it’s a

privilege that you could be here. It's a privilege that I can be here. Thank God for the joy of worshipping Him. These wise men sought the Lord Jesus Christ out in spite of distance and danger and difficulty. They came to worship Him.

Now when they worshipped the Lord Jesus—and we're going to get into the heart of the message, the gifts of the wise men—they brought Him three kinds of gifts. I want you to look at it right here in the Word of God. In Matthew chapter 2 the Bible says that they brought to the Lord Jesus very special gifts. Verse 11: *“And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts;”*—first of all—*“gold, and,”*—secondly—*“frankincense and”*—thirdly—*“myrrh.”* (Matthew 2:11)

I want to ask you a question. If God the Holy Spirit engineered the entire thing—and He did—and if God wrote the Bible—and He did, and there's only so much that can be put in the Bible—do you think that it is just by happenstance that it is recorded in God's Word that gold and frankincense and myrrh were brought to the baby Jesus? Not at all! As a matter of fact, there is an incredible thought that is given here, and a great inference as to what Adrian should bring to Jesus this Christmas season, and what you should bring to the Lord Jesus. My gifts and your gifts must be like the gifts of the wise men of old.

Now I want us to see what these gifts are, and what they represent, and what they speak of.

## **I. The Gold: His Sovereign Dominion**

For example, they brought to Him gold. And gold is a gift that would be presented to a king. Gold was the most precious metal of that day. And in Bible times, and even today, gold is symbolic of royalty. And, you see, when these wise men came to the Lord Jesus Christ and presented to Him gold, what they were saying is that He is a king. I believe that they had learned that the baby that would be born was a king. They learned it from the prophet Daniel. In Daniel chapter 9 and verse 25 Daniel had called the baby that would be born *“Messiah the Prince.”* (Daniel 9:25) And the word *prince* means “king, ruler, sovereign.” And when they brought gold, they said, “We recognize His sovereign dominion.”

Have you done that? Have you recognized His sovereign dominion? Isaiah chapter 9 and verse 7: *“Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice henceforth even for ever.”* (Isaiah 9:7) This child, this baby that we're talking about, He is King of kings; He is Lord of lords. Now the question comes this Christmas: Will you offer to the Lord the submission that is due to Him?

*Because He is your king, it is not enough for you to tip your hat; you must bow your knee.*

When these kings came to the baby Jesus, they did not cuddle Him. They did not play games with Him. These powerful kings from the East bowed the knee in obeisance to Him, and they recognized that indeed He is a King. Look in verse 2. They said, *“Where is he that is born King of the Jews?”* (Matthew 2:2) Look in verse 6: *“For out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.”* (Matthew 2:6) We worship, my dear friend, heaven’s King. Have you given Him the submission that is due to Him as a King? Have you?

I have a preacher friend out in Arizona. He thought one day that he would give a lesson to his congregation, so he said to them, “You know, we’ve had some Secret Service men from Washington, from the White House, they’ve been here to talk with me. And they told me that the President of the United States is going to be in our city, and because the President of the United States is going to be in our in our city on a weekend, he’s going to be in a church to worship, and they have chosen our church, and the President of the United States is going to come and worship with us next Sunday. And because of that, we want to be ready.” So he said to the choir director, “I want you and the choir to practice. I want you to have the very best musical rendition that you can possibly have.” Then he said to the custodian and to the ushers, “We want this place to be spotless. We want it to be immaculate next Sunday. We’ve got some places in the carpet that need to be patched and cleaned. I’m going to ask that all of us be dressed and on our best behavior this Lord’s Day.” And he gave the ushers very special instructions. And he gave the custodial staff very special instructions. Then he spoke to the church hostess and said, “We want to have the flowers just right,” and so forth.

Oh, what a rush of excitement was going through the congregation as he described all of the things they were going to do because the next Sunday the President of the United States was going to be there to worship with them! The people were thrilled. And then he said, “Now, folks, I want to tell you something. The President of the United States is not coming. He is not coming. I made all of that up. There have been no representatives of the White House here to see me. We’re going to have services as usual next Sunday.” But then he said this: “Why would the choir sing such a special number if the President is going to come? Why would we try to have the house so clean and all of us be so alert if the President is going to come, and yet Sunday by Sunday we do not do our very best because the King of kings is here?” Do you see what he was saying to them? Do you see what he taught them? He said, “You know, Jesus Christ is here every Lord’s Day.” *“Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”* (Matthew 18:20) Isn’t it strange that we do not recognize and

reverence His kingdom and His right and authority to rule over us?

You know, after that pastor made that disclaimer, there were many people who did not hear the rest of it. All they heard was the President was coming. When he said, “That was just an illustration; that’s not really going to happen,” they never heard that. All week long the phone was ringing: “When is the President going to be there? Are there going to be reserved seats?” People who had been away from church for months, and some for years, showed up that next Sunday because the President was going to be there. How we hold in rank and how we hold in esteem men rather than the King of kings!

I was in Washington a while back and had the opportunity to go in and speak with the President for a while. And what a great honor that is when that might happen! And it was the time when the President was coming the next day to Memphis, Tennessee, for a program here called “A Thousand Points of Light.” I spoke with him for a few moments in his office, and I said, “You’re going to my city tomorrow.” He said, “That’s right, I am.” He said, “Why don’t you come and ride to Memphis with me on Air Force One?” “Why,” I said, “Mr. President, that would be a thrill. That would be an honor. I would love to do that. But I didn’t come prepared to spend the night. I have a plane that’s going back this afternoon.” “Well,” he said, “if you can arrange it, I’d love to have you,” and gave me a card, and said, “If you can go, call this particular person.” I put that card in my pocket.

Do you know what I did, folks? I went to the Holiday Inn and made a reservation. I went out and bought a toothbrush. And I’ll tell you why. You don’t get those kinds of invitations every day. I don’t. You may. I don’t. And that was one of the great thrills of my life: to ride in that airplane, to sit in the office with and talk with and fellowship with the President of the United States.

But, you know, I thought to myself after that, and I said, “Adrian, you called home. You canceled appointments. You made another reservation. You went out and bought some toiletries and everything just so you could spend a few moments with that man.” And, friend, I would do it again. But that’s not the point. I thought to myself, “Adrian, how much difficulty are you willing to go through? How much are you going to rearrange your schedule? How much time do you set aside? How much time do you make, Adrian, for the King of kings and the Lord of lords?” And my heart smote me that I am more impressed sometimes with the men of this world than I am with heaven’s King.

My dear friend, He is King of kings. He is Lord of lords. And one day, Ronald Reagan, and George Bush, and Johnny Carson, and Madonna, and Bob Sorrell, and Scotty Shows, and Adrian Rogers, and every human being who’s ever lived, will bow their knee to Jesus Christ. He is King. He is King. And they said, “*Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have...come to worship him.*” (Matthew 2:2) What can I give Him today?

## II. The Frankincense: His Sinless Deity

My dear friend, I can recognize His sovereign dominion. The gold represents that sovereign dominion. But what about the frankincense? If the gold represents His sovereign dominion, the frankincense represents His sinless deity. “Well,” you say, “Pastor Rogers, I don’t see anything there about deity. It just simply says, ‘*frankincense.*’” May I tell you, dear friend, that if gold was a gift fit for a king, frankincense was used to worship Almighty God.

I want you to take your Bible now and I want you to turn with me to the book of Exodus and look with me in Exodus chapter 30, and we’re going to begin in verse 34. Now you’ll see that it was not by happenstance that frankincense was given to the Christ child: “*And the LORD said unto Moses, Take unto thee sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum; these sweet spices*”—now, watch this—“*with pure frankincense:*”—that’s underscored in my Bible: “*pure frankincense*”—“*of each shall there be a like weight: and thou shalt make it a perfume,*”—take these spices, mix it with frankincense, and make a perfume—“*a confection after the art of the apothecary, tempered together, pure*”—now, watch this next phrase—“*and holy: and thou shalt beat some of it very small, and put of it before the testimony in the tabernacle of the congregation, where I will meet with thee: it shall be unto you*”—now, notice this phrase—“*most holy. And as for the perfume which thou shalt make, ye shall not make to yourselves according to the composition thereof: it shall be unto thee holy for the LORD. Whosoever shall make like unto that, to smell thereto, shall even be cut off from his people.*” (Exodus 30:34–38)

What is God saying? God is saying that frankincense is the base of this holy incense that is most holy. It is to be given to God. And that incense, as it would rise up out of the tabernacle in the Old Testament, and the temple, speaks of the prayers, the worship of the saints, that goes to Almighty God. What did these wise men recognize? Why were they indeed wise as they were wise? They brought gold, and they recognized His sovereign dominion. And then, they brought frankincense. They recognized His sinless deity: Jesus Christ is God of very God.

May I say, dear friend, that they worshipped the Lord Jesus. I want you to look, if you will, in verse 11. Go back now to Matthew chapter 2 and look with me in verse 11. I want you to see something very significant. There are many today who do not give to the Lord Jesus the worship that is due to His name. They do not worship Him. But look, if you will, in verse 11—Matthew chapter 2 and verse 11. The Bible says after they brought these gifts that they “*worshipped him.*” (Matthew 2:11) Do you see it? They “*worshipped him.*” Underscore that. They “*worshipped him.*”

“Well,” you say, “what’s important about that?” The Bible says, “*Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only*” (Matthew 4:10; Luke 4:8)—“*him only.*” Now, friend, if

Jesus is not the Lord God, this is the ultimate blasphemy. Nobody should worship anything or anybody except God Himself. They “*worshipped him.*” Why? Because this baby was God. The Bible says in 1 Timothy chapter 3 and verse 16, “*And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.*” (1 Timothy 3:16) Isaiah chapter 9 and verse 6 says it clearly: “*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder,*”—that’s the gold: “*the government shall be upon his shoulder*”; that’s His sovereign dominion. But it goes on to say—“*and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God*” (Isaiah 9:6)—that’s frankincense. That’s the frankincense. You see, my dear friend, He was not only born a king; He was God, and very God, in human flesh.

How wise were these wise men? Now whether they understood all of this or not, I don’t know. But I do know that God the Holy Spirit impelled them to make these gifts, and God the Holy Spirit recorded these gifts. Now you say, “Well, I don’t believe that Jesus Christ is God, but I do believe that He was a good man.” Well, Jesus Christ said, “*There is none good but one, that is, God.*” (Matthew 19:17) And if Jesus Christ is not God, Jesus Christ is not good, by His own words. Somebody wrote these words:

*If Jesus Christ is a man,—  
And only a man,—I say  
That of all mankind I cleave to him,  
And to Him will I cleave alway.  
If Jesus Christ is a God,—  
And the only God,—I swear  
I will follow Him through heaven and hell,  
The earth, the sea, and the air.*

—RICHARD WATSON GILDER

Those are good words. They sound good. But, my dear friend, if Jesus Christ is a man, and only a man, I won’t cleave to Him. I will repudiate Him. I will disown Him. I will not worship Him. I will not honor Him, because if Jesus Christ is a man and only a man, He is a fake, a fraud, and an impostor, for He Himself is claiming to be God. Jesus Christ Himself said of Himself, “*Before Abraham was, I am.*” (John 8:58) And that’s the most sacred name for Deity, and Jesus claimed it for Himself.

What shall I give the Lord Jesus this morning? What shall I give the Lord Jesus? Because He is sovereign dominion, I give Him my will. Because He is sinless Deity, I give Him my worship. Worship Him! Worship Him! Fall down! Fall on your face! I hadn’t intended to say this, but I’ve not been on my knees before my Lord this morning; I’ve been on my face before Him. And I don’t say that to say, “Well, big deal!” I’m just saying, dear friend, He is God. He is God. You want to say, “What shall I bring my Lord today?” Oh, my dear friend, bring Him gold: His sovereign dominion. Bring Him

frankincense: His sinless deity. He is God of very God. Fall down and worship Him. Wise men did a long time ago. They didn't tuck Him under the chin, and cuddle Him in their arms, or play games with Him. They fell on their faces before Him.

There has never been another like the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus was the God-man. Have you ever thought how unique the life of the Lord Jesus is—how absolutely unique? And, you know, Jesus never withdrew or modified anything that He ever said. Many things He said were hard to understand, but He never said, "I made a mistake." I would like to restate that. Jesus never ever apologized for any of His actions. Many things they didn't understand, and some people got angry with Him, but He never one time apologized. Jesus Christ never ever sought advice from anybody. Moses had his seventy elders. Solomon, the wisest man that ever lived, had his advisors. Jesus never asked advice from anyone. Jesus Christ never justified anything that He did. When He was late—seemingly late—when Lazarus died, He never gave any explanation. When He was asleep on the back of a ship, when the ship was about to sink, He never did justify His actions to anybody. Jesus Christ never asked forgiveness. Not one time did He ask for anybody ever to forgive Him or for God ever to forgive Him. Why? Because He was sinless. Jesus Christ never asked anyone to pray for Him. He asked the disciples to watch and pray, and he told them to "*pray, lest ye enter into temptation,*" (Mark 14:38; Luke 22:46) but He never asked anyone to forgive Him. He never corrected Himself.

And yet He was not arrogant. He was meek and mild. Jesus Christ did not have any strong points. In order to have strong points, you have to have weak points. He had no strong points or weak points. He was the most perfectly balanced individual who ever lived.

Robert Clark has rightly given this assessment of Jesus' character. He says there was "meekness without weakness, tenderness without feebleness, firmness without coarseness, love without sentimentality, holiness without sanctimoniousness, lowliness without lowness, truth without error, enthusiasm without fanaticism, passion without prejudice, heavenly-mindedness without forgetfulness, carefreeness without carelessness, service without servility, self-exaltation without egotism, judgment without harshness, seriousness without somberness, and mercy without softness." I love that. That's the Lord Jesus. No strong points; no weak points. He is God of very God, and yet God in human flesh.

### **III. The Myrrh: His Sacrificial Death**

Now they brought Him a third thing. Not only did they bring Him gold—His sovereign dominion; not only did they bring Him frankincense—His sinless deity; but they also brought Him myrrh. Now, what was myrrh? Myrrh was also a gum-like substance that

was very valuable, and it was used to embalm the dead. Can you imagine bringing to a little baby something that would be used to embalm the dead? Why? Because not only did they recognize His sovereign dominion; not only did they recognize His sinless deity; but, my dear friend, they recognized His sacrificial death. They recognized that this little baby was born to die.

Let me give you some scriptures. Turn to Mark chapter 15 and verse 22. You're in Matthew; just fast-forward to Mark chapter 15 for a moment and see what happened when the Lord Jesus Christ is on the cross—Mark chapter 15 and verse 22: *“And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull.”* Bloody Golgotha: that's where Jesus died. *“And they gave him to drink wine mingled with”—what?—“myrrh: but he received it not. And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take.”* (Mark 15:22–24)

Myrrh was used as a narcotic to dull pain. But Jesus, that He might taste of death for every man, refused the taste of that myrrh there upon the cross. But I want you to look now in John. Just keep on going to the Gospel of John—John chapter 19. Turn to John chapter 19 and look with me in verse 38: *“And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus, which at first came to Jesus by night,”*—now, watch it—*“and brought a mixture of...”*—what?—*“of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then they took the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.”* (John 19:38–40) This was the manner of the Jews to bury someone. What did they use to bury someone? It was their manner; it was their custom, to bring myrrh.

## Conclusion

Now I don't know whether the wise men understood all of this or not, but I know the Holy Spirit knew it. I know this is not by accident in the Word of God. I know that of everything that could be listed here is gold and frankincense and myrrh: sovereign dominion, sacred deity, and sacrificial death. That's what they brought to the Lord Jesus.

Do you know that the Bible never records the early church celebrating the birth of Jesus? Did you know that? I don't think it's wrong to celebrate the birth of Jesus. The Holy Spirit of God recorded it in the Bible. And I mean we have all of this Scripture. The birth of Jesus is very important. It gives us an opportunity to preach and to teach and to worship. That's fine. But we don't ever have any record that the early church was told to remember His birth. We're told to remember what? His death. The real Christmas tree is



this: He in His own body bare our sins on the tree (1 Peter 2:24)—that tree a bloody cross, not decorated, but stained with the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the more carnal a Christian is, the more that Christian will make of the birth of Jesus, and the less he'll make of the death of Jesus. I'm not against remembering His birth, because He had to be born in order to die. The Bible records the birth of the Lord Jesus. But these wise men at His birth were there remembering that one day He would die upon the tree. No wonder heaven's choir came down to sing with heaven's King! He came down to save. He was born to die. And how clever of the devil to substitute the celebration of His birth for the memorial of His death!

What will I give Jesus this Christmas season? I must close. Because of His sovereign dominion, I'll give Him my wealth: all that I have belongs to Him. Because of His sinless deity, I'll give Him my worship: I'll fall on my face before Him. And because of His sacrificial death, I'll give Him my witness: I want the world to know that He died for me. My wealth, my worship, and my witness belongs to my Lord this Christmas season. And so does yours.

# The Wisdom of Christmas

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: December 16, 2001**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 2**

*“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.”*

MATTHEW 2:1–2

## Outline

### Introduction

- A. The Wise Men Sought Him in Spite of Distance
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## Introduction

Find the Christmas story, please, in Matthew chapter 2, and we're talking today about Christmas wisdom. This time of the year, we need a lot of wisdom. I need wisdom. What am I going to get Joyce? Now, that's difficult for me, really. I mean, every year I go through this thing, and I put it off and put it off, until all of a sudden, I reach the deadline and have to run down to Walgreen's at eleven o'clock on Christmas Eve. Do you know what John Cameron told me—a member of our church, kind of, in a way; my mentor almost; a dear friend, beloved brother, who was on the pulpit committee that brought me

here? I get little gems of wisdom from John Cameron from time to time, and he told me one time—he said, “Now pastor, if you want to know what to get your wife for Christmas, here’s the way to do it: just tell her you’re going to get her something she doesn’t want, and she’ll quickly tell you what she does want.” Now, that’s a lot of wisdom. You know, it works. I’ve tried that. I said, “Now Joyce, I’m going to get…” She says, “No, no, no.” I said, “Well now, you’d better tell me what you do want.” And, that’s about the only way I can squeeze it out of her.

And, I want to talk to you about some wisdom that goes far beyond these mundane things and this worldly type of wisdom I’ve been sharing with you. I want to share with you some supernatural wisdom—how you can have some wisdom in your Christmas.

Now, let’s read this story here. I want to read right through all twelve verses here:

*“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men”—now, just underscore that: “wise men”—“from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all [of] the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also”—of course, you know what he wanted to do was not to worship Him but to kill Him, as you can tell by reading more scripture. And—“When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.” (Matthew 2:1–12)*

Now, there’s a lot that we don’t know about these wise men. For example, we don’t know how many there were. Some say there were three because there were three types of gifts. Maybe so, but maybe not. The Bible doesn’t say with specificity. We certainly don’t know they rode on camels. They may have. Some scholars say they probably rode Arabian horses. We really don’t know. We really don’t know what country they came from. Most likely, however, they came from Babylon. A lot of things that we

don't know about these men we don't have to know because if we had to know, the Bible would have told us with specificity. But, we do know this: that they were wise, because the Bible says they were "wise men." (Matthew 2:1) The biblical word for that is *magi*. These were men who were students of Scripture. They were students of prophecy. They were students of the stars in the sky. And, most likely, if they were from Babylon, they were students of the prophet Daniel, because Daniel spent a great deal of time in Babylon. And, Daniel himself was a great, great prophet, and very wise.

Now, there's something else we don't know: we don't know exactly what that star was. Now, there are some astronomers that say, "Well, it was a supernova, or some alignment of the planets that caused at that particular time excessive brightness in the sky." That's impossible that it could have been something like that, for this reason: it moved, and it led them, so you could not have some supernova, some star like that. Others say, "All right then, it was a comet." No, it couldn't have been a comet because a comet just flashes across the sky and it's gone. And, it couldn't have been a comet that would have stayed up there for months as these men traversed that distance of about three hundred miles from Babylon, or wherever it was in the East, where they first saw the star.

What was it? Eversheim, who is a Messianic Jewish scholar, says that the word *star* has a number of meanings in the Bible, and it comes from a root that literally means "brilliance"—"brilliance, light." And, most likely, what this brilliance was, this aura, this thing in the sky, was the Shekinah glory of God. And, when you think about it, that makes perfect sense because the glory of God has already led people in the Old Testament. For example, what led the children of Israel through the wilderness? A pillar of fire by night, a pillar of cloud by day. (Exodus 13:21) That was what they called the "Shekinah glory of God," that effulgence of God that had a physical manifestation of God's glory.

And, of course, it could move—it did move. It guided them through the wilderness. When Solomon dedicated the temple, what happened? The Shekinah glory of God came into the Holy of Holies. And, before the Babylonians invaded Israel, Ezekiel the prophet tells about that Shekinah glory, how it departed from the temple. He said it came out of the Holy of Holies to the threshold there of the temple. (Ezekiel 10:18) And then, later on it moved from the threshold of the temple; it moved on to the gate, the Eastern Gate, and Ezekiel saw it. (Ezekiel 10:19) And then, he saw that glory as it moved on to the Mount of Olives and went on up and disappeared. (Ezekiel 11:23) What I'm trying to say is that the glory of the Lord could be seen as a brilliance. Ezekiel described it.

As a matter of fact, when those shepherds were in the field, what shone around them? The glory of the Lord. And then, they went, and it came over the place where the

young child lay. So, I think that what happened—and it’s a wonderful story—is that the glory of God appeared to these wise men there in the East and that glory of God led them there to that place, that house where the young child was. For example, look in Luke chapter 2, verse 9; just write it down. *“And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.”* (Luke 2:9)

Now, there are some things we may not know about all of the details. We know everything we need to know because if we need to know any more, the Bible would tell us. But, we do know this: that these men were exceedingly wise men. Why? Because they sought out the Lord Jesus Christ to worship Him. Look up here, and let me tell you something now. My precious friend, listen to me: the wisest things you could ever do at Christmastime, or any other time, is to worship Jesus. Now, I hope that doesn’t fall flat. I hope you don’t miss that. Friend, that is the bottom of all bottom lines. That is the wisest thing that anybody could ever do, is to simply to worship the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, there are a lot of people who want the joys of Christmas without the worship of Jesus. Impossible! Impossible! Now, you may have a giddy time, but you’re never going to know the joys of Christmas until you learn to worship the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **A. The Wise Men Sought Him in Spite of Distance**

I want you to see that these men were so interested in worshipping the Lord Jesus Christ that they did this in spite of great difficulty. The Bible says in verse 1: *“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to...worship him.”* (Matthew 2:1–2) If Babylon, that’s a distance about three hundred miles. There was the difficulty of distance. Friend, a three-hundred-mile trip today, if you’re riding in a fine automobile, may tire you out. Can you imagine what a trip would have been like in that day—the difficulty of a trip like that?

#### **B. The Wise Men Sought Him in Spite of Discomfort**

And, there was not only the distance, but the discomfort. They were not riding in an air-conditioned automobile. There were no trains, no planes, no motels. This is rugged terrain. As a matter of fact, you’re seeing a lot of that rugged terrain on television today. They’re coming over that kind of inhospitable terrain to worship the Lord.

And, very frankly, those of you who are watching on television, this is a rainy day in our city today. And, I hate to tell you this, but there are some folks not here today because it’s raining. One morning, Joyce and I—it was about 5:30 in the morning—and a thunderclap hit, and she said, “Adrian, did you hear that?” I said, “What?” She said, “Ten thousand Baptists just rolled over and went back to sleep.” I mean, you know, difficulty. Here these guys came to worship the Lord in spite of difficulty. I’m amazed at what will keep some people out of the house of God. And, I go turn on my television. I

see up there in Green Bay, and the Green Bay Packers playing on television, and there are guys out there without their shirts on, full of embalming fluid, in the snow. You don't know what I'm talking about when I say, "embalming fluid." I hope you don't. Well, I hope you do. I hope you know. But, I hope you don't know by experience. All right. Now, I mean, these guys are out there—I mean, bare-chested—rooting for people pulling a football up and down a pasture. And yet, people say, "Well, you know, it's raining. We couldn't come this morning."

### **C. The Wise Men Sought Him in Spite of Danger**

Now, here were men—they wanted to worship the Lord in spite of distance, in spite of discomfort, and in spite of danger. There was old Herod the king. He was the one who had all the little boy babies murdered later on, that pussyfooting politician. He said, "Tell me where He is, that I might come and worship Him." (Matthew 2:8) He didn't want to worship Him; he wanted to murder Him. He tried to murder the baby Jesus. He'd already murdered a couple of wives. He'd murdered three sons. As a matter of fact, Herod, who was so hated, had arranged that when he died, there were some prominent citizens—he had a list of them—they were all to be put to death the day he died. You know why? He wanted there to be some tears the day he died so he had a list of people. I mean, that's the kind of a man that Herod was. And, these wise men, since that was his jurisdiction, had to deal with him. In spite of distance, in spite of discomfort, in spite of danger, they sought to worship the Lord Jesus Christ.

I wonder, does worship mean that much to you? Or, do you have sort of a take-it-or-leave-it attitude? The Bible says, "*[You] shall seek [for] me, and find me, when [you] search for me with all your heart.*" (Jeremiah 29:13) God have mercy upon our half-hearted worship! Say "amen." I mean, if He's worth anything, He's worth everything. *Worship* means "worth ship." That's where we get the word *worship*: "worth ship." What is Jesus worth to you? I believe the biggest cult in America is the cult of the comfortable: we just want to take it easy. Jeremiah 29, verse 13: "*And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all of your heart.*" (Jeremiah 29:13)

Now, how did these wise men find the Lord Jesus? I want you to listen, because our message today is going to have two points: number one, how they sought Him; and number two, what they brought Him. Okay? How they sought Him, and number two, what they brought Him.

### **I. How They Sought Him**

Now, first of all, I want you to see how these wise men sought the Lord Jesus Christ—how they sought Him. Verse 1 says, "*Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men...to Jerusalem.*"

(Matthew 2:1) There were three things that helped them to find the Lord Jesus. And friend, if you're listening through television, or if you're here today without Christ, let me tell you how you can seek the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **A. The Ministry of the Spirit**

First of all, there was the ministry of the Spirit. What put in the hearts of these men to seek the Lord Jesus? The Holy Spirit. The Bible says of our human flesh, *"There is none that seeketh after God...no, not one."* (Romans 3:11–12) Now, there are a lot of people in the realm of church growth today who say we need to have seeker-sensitive services—that is, the people coming seeking God. Friend, the Bible says, "No man seeks God—none, not one." (Romans 3:11–12) You say, "Well, I sought Him." The only reason you sought Him is because He first sought you. Listen, friend, when God got you, you were running from God. The only reason God got you is He can run faster than you can. I mean, *"there is none that seeketh after God...no, not one."* (Romans 3:11–12) *"We love him, because he first loved us."* (1 John 4:19) It is God who put the desire in our heart to seek Him. It was God who put the desire in the heart of these wise men to seek the Lord God. Worship is a desire planted in the hearts of men by the Holy Spirit.

And, I want to tell you today, God is seeking you. You say, "How do you know?" Well, the Bible teaches, *"The Lord is...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."* (2 Peter 3:9) The Bible says Christ is that light that lights *"every man that cometh into the world."* (John 1:9) And, I can tell you with authority today that Jesus is seeking you. And, I don't believe it's incidental or accidental that you're in this service today, or listening by television or tape. God is seeking you—and by the dear Holy Spirit of God. If you will listen, there's a still, small voice in you that is inclining your heart to worship Him. You can stultify and smother that voice, if you will; but God is reaching out to you through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. And, the Holy Spirit and the bride say, "Come; come to Jesus." (Revelation 22:17)

### **B. The Message of the Scripture**

There's a second thing that enabled these wise men to seek Him: not only the ministry of the Spirit, but there was the message of the Scripture. Look in verses 2 through 6 of this same chapter. And, the Bible says, *"Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and the scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born"*—now, that's a strange thing: "Where's the Messiah going to be born?" He brings the high muckety-mucks in there, the priests and the scribes. "Tell me where He's going to be born"—*"And they said unto him, In*

*Bethlehem of Judaea*—now, how did they know that?—“for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.” (Matthew 2:2–6) It’s very plain. The Bible prophesied in minute detail things about the Lord Jesus Christ, and one of these was His birthplace. These men had the Word of God. They had not only this prophecy from Micah chapter 5 and verse 2 that tells that Jesus Christ would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2); but if they came from Babylon, they also had the prophecies from the prophet Daniel who told in Daniel chapter 9, in that remarkable prophecy, the time that Jesus would come as the Messiah (Daniel 9:24–27)—these wonderful prophecies.

Now, I want to tell you something else: if you want to find Jesus this Christmas season, not only is there the ministry of the Spirit; there’s the message of the Scripture. Open the Bible and read. Listen. Many of these people missed His first coming because they simply did not read, believe, or obey the Scriptures. We don’t have any record, for example, that these scribes and these priests went down there to worship Him. That’s amazing. They knew where He was; they knew about it, but they still didn’t go. We don’t have any record that Herod went. That’s amazing. There was the message, the plain message.

You can hear me preach today and believe it intellectually and miss it altogether. Did you know that? Isn’t it amazing that there are unbelieving believers—that they never really ever act on what they say they believe? And, by the way, as the Scriptures clearly and plainly delineated His first coming—listen to me carefully—the Scriptures clearly and plainly delineate His Second Coming. And, there are some who missed His first coming, and there are some who are going miss His Second Coming for exactly the same reason. They’re not listening to the ministry of the Spirit and the message of the Scripture.

### **C. The Miracle of the Star**

But now, there was a third thing that led these men, these wise men, and that was the miracle of the star. The Shekinah glory of God was leading them step by step. “Well,” you say, “when God appears to me in Shekinah glory, I will follow Him.” Friend, God knew what was necessary for those people in that day at that time. Listen carefully to me: when you set your heart to find God, when you want to know Him, whatever it takes, whatever is necessary, God will get that to you that you might know Him. That may not be a miracle of a star. It might be some other kind of a miracle. It might be that God will send some messenger to you. It may be that you will hear the urging of a next-door neighbor. I don’t know what kind of a star God will send to you, but God will reveal His glory to you.



Now, if you don't want the Lord, God's not going to lead you, God's not going to guide you. I don't even find any record that the star appeared to Herod at all, for example. Why? Herod didn't want to know the Lord. I've often said, *some people can't find God for the same reason a thief can't find a policeman: they don't want to know.* They don't seek God. You get serious about seeking God—listen to me—you get serious about seeking God, I promise you on the authority of the Word of God, He'll reveal Himself to you—whatever's necessary. If you want to know Him, you can know Him.

## II. What They Brought Him

So, these men were wise, number one, in how they sought Him. They were wise, number two, in what they brought Him. Now, what did they bring Him? Well, the Bible says that they brought Him gold, frankincense, and myrrh. (Matthew 2:11) Now, is that just incidental? No, it's fundamental. Why these three specific gifts? Why are these things mentioned in the Scripture? I remind you that *"all scripture is given by inspiration of God."* (2 Timothy 3:16) There's nothing there that is not important, properly understood.

### A. Gold: His Sovereign Dominion

So, the gold, number one, speaks of His sovereign dominion. Now, look in verse 2: *"Where is he that is born"*—what?—*"king of the Jews?"* (Matthew 2:2) And then, look in chapter 2, verse 6: *"Thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor"*—that means "a ruler"—*"that shall rule my people Israel."* (Matthew 2:6) It is obvious, beyond any equivocation, that these wise men knew that that child was a king. If you want to have wisdom this Christmas, you're going to understand the same thing: just as we sang, "He is Lord. He is Lord. He is risen from the dead, and He is Lord." You see, when they brought gold, gold was the most precious metal they knew. In that day it was used to signify a king. They made their crowns of gold. The Bible speaks of crowns of gold. Daniel said that Messiah would be a king. He speaks in Daniel 9, verse 25 of *"Messiah the Prince."* (Daniel 9:25) Isaiah the prophet said in Isaiah chapter 9, verse 7 that He was to be King. Listen to this: *"Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."* (Isaiah 9:7) That little baby is King.

Now, you'll never, never, never know the meaning of Christmas until you crown Him King. Have you done that? The angel said to Mary in Luke 1, verse 33: *"And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."* (Luke

1:33) When you deal with Jesus, you're dealing with Sovereignty, and He is worthy of our tribute. When you come to an earthly king, whether an earthly king or even a government, you pay tribute. Jesus said, "*Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's.*" (Matthew 22:21; Mark 12:17; Luke 10:25) I'll guarantee you, when income tax comes around, unless you're a dirty crook, you're going to pay your taxes. You render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's.

I want to ask you a question: Have you rendered to Jesus the things that are His? Do you realize that He is King of kings and Lord of lords? Have you taken the crown from your head and put the crown upon His head? Do you say, "Lord Jesus, I surrender my gold to you. I pay tribute to you. I do homage to you. I bow my knee to you"? Have you done that? I say, have you done that? In everybody's heart there's a throne. When self is on that throne, Christ is on the cross. When Christ is on that throne, self is on the cross. And, everybody's in one of those two categories today. These men were wise because they recognized His sovereign dominion. "*Where is he that is born King of the Jews?*" (Matthew 2:2)

### **B. Frankincense: His Sinless Deity**

All right, look at the second thing: not only did they bring to Him gold, but they brought to Him frankincense; and frankincense speaks of His sinless deity. Not only is He King; friend, He is God. You say, "Well, what does the frankincense have to do with this?" Well, look again in verse 11. It says, "*They [brought] unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense and myrrh.*" (Matthew 2:11)

What is frankincense? Frankincense is one of the ingredients in a sweet perfume that was used in the tabernacle and the temple for one purpose: the worship of God. As a matter of fact, God said in Exodus chapter 30 that it was not to be used for any other purpose. It is sacred, to be used for Almighty God. (Exodus 30:37–38) Now, not only did they worship Him, therefore, as King, but they worshipped Him as God. As a matter of fact, the Bible says they came and worshipped Him. Look in chapter 2, verse 11: "*When they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him.*" (Matthew 2:11) You remember that scene there in the Singing Christmas Tree when those wise men come, and they get on their knees, and they bow on their faces to Him, and those little boys backing away from Him would not even turn their back to Him, and it's depicted there, as the child is there, and they're on their faces before Him, giving Him glory? Now, will you listen to me? If that child is not God, that's the ultimate in blasphemy, that anybody would worship a two-legged creature who is not God.

Why? If He's not God, He has aided and abetted the greatest crime of the centuries, and that is enticing people to idolatry. The Bible says we're to worship God. We're to

have no other gods before us. (Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 5:7) In the book of the Revelation, an angel appeared to John so awesome, so glorious. John, when he was stricken in awe with this particular angel, John fell to his face to worship him. The angel said, “Hey, wait! Get up! Don’t worship me!” The angel said, “Look, if you do it, we’ll both be in trouble. You’ll be in trouble for doing it; I’ll be in trouble for letting you do it. Worship God.” (Revelation 19:10)

One of Jehovah’s (false) Witnesses comes and knocks on your door—you ask him this question: “Do you worship Jesus?” Well, he’ll say, “We venerate Jesus.” “No, no, do you worship Jesus?” “Well, we admit…” “No, no, do you worship Jesus?” Do you want to get him stammering and tongue-tied? You see, he’s between a rock and a hard place. If Jesus is not God, they have no business worshipping Him. And, if Jesus was worshipped in the Bible, and they don’t, they’re not doing what the Bible teaches. You see, either He’s God or He’s not God.

Now, my friend, when they came and they worshipped Him, and they brought that frankincense, which was a sweet perfume to be used for God only, and they bowed down and they worshipped Him, they were saying not only is He One of sovereign dominion—He’s a king—but He’s One also of sinless deity: He is God. Now folks, if there’s a message that needs to be preached in this day and this age, that’s the message.

Sometimes the Muslims say, “Oh, we believe in Jesus.” Oh, they believe in Jesus as a prophet. We believe in Jesus as God, a very God. Paul told Timothy, “*Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.*” (1 Timothy 3:16) You’ll never know Christmas as you ought to know Christmas until you see, friend, His sovereign dominion, ’til you see His sinless deity. We sing that Christmas carol, “What Child Is This?” Let Isaiah answer that question—Isaiah 9, verse 6: “*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.*” (Isaiah 9:6)

### **C. Myrrh: His Sacrificial Death**

Now, thirdly, not only did they bring to Him gold, and not only did they bring to Him frankincense, which was that sweet perfume to be used for God only, but thirdly, they brought to Him myrrh. Now, what is myrrh? Look again at chapter 2, verse 11: “*And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense and myrrh*”—“*and myrrh.*” (Matthew 2:11)

What is myrrh? Well, when Jesus died on the cross for our sins, one of the things

they offered Him to drink was myrrh. It was a bitter herb. Put in your margin “Mark 15, verse 23”: *“And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not.”* (Mark 15:23) When they would bury the dead, one of the spices they used, the bitter spices to embalm the dead, was myrrh. That’s a strange thing to give a baby that’s just been born—something bitter, something used to embalm the dead. Now, whether these wise men knew with precision what they were doing, I have no knowledge. But, I know this: that God the Holy Spirit was working in the whole thing. And, here you have a prophecy—a prophecy not only of His sovereign dominion, not only of His sinless deity, but of His sacrificial death. They gave Him myrrh. This was a baby that was born to die. They anticipated, they recognized, His death upon the cross.

## Conclusion

### A. Be Wise in How You Seek Him

Now today, you can make much of Christmas. And, everybody loves Christmas. We get together, we eat, we give presents, the lights are beautiful, and a little baby—who can’t get excited about a little baby? But, you know something? In the Bible, we find no record that the early Church ever celebrated Christmas. I don’t think it’s wrong to celebrate Christmas, but the early Church had a memorial, not to remember His birth; they had a memorial, the Lord’s Supper, to remember what? His death. The more carnal a person is, the more they will make of His birth, the less they will make of His death. Oh, they love the cradle! They don’t love the cross. And, that same crowd—that same giddy crowd—that will be dancing around the cradle on Christmas Eve will be in a drunken stupor on New Year’s singing “Auld Lang Syne.” They don’t see this baby as a sovereign King. They don’t see Him as sinless Deity. They don’t see Him as the sacrificial Savior who’s going to die a death—an ignominious death—on the cross.

Would you like to worship Jesus with wisdom this Christmas? Thank God that this baby was born to die. You know, He was the only One who ever chose to die. No man ever else has chosen to die. You say, “What about those men who are suicide bombers?” They don’t choose to die. They were going to die anyway. All people are going to die. The only thing they did was to choose the time of their death. All people are going to die. I’ve told you before, there’s a new statistic on death: one out of one people die. You’re going to die. Jesus was the only One who chose to die. He said, *“No man taketh [my life] from me, but I lay it down of myself.”* (John 10:18) He didn’t have to die because there was no sin in Him. *“The wages of sin is death.”* (Romans 6:23) He didn’t have to die. He could never have died unless He willingly, voluntarily, vicariously laid down His life upon that cross. *“No man taketh [my life] from me...I lay it down of myself.”* (John 10:18) That baby was born to die. He was born a naked baby; He died a naked man upon a cross. The painters have been kind to Him and at least have put a

loincloth on Him. No—my dear Savior, stripped of His clothing, nailed, writhing in pain, naked upon a cross. From the time He was a child, He had the shadow of a cross. Do you want to be wise this Christmas? Friend, you be wise like these men in the way they sought Him.

## **B. Be Wise in What You Bring Him**

You be wise like these men in what they brought Him.

### **1. Your Wealth Belongs to Him**

The gold tells me—are you listening?—your wealth belongs to Jesus. Don't get the idea you've done Him a wild favor if you give Him a dime out of a dollar. Friend, the whole dollar is His. He just lets you use it. It's all His. You don't believe that, do you? Friend, it is all His. *"The earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof."* (Psalms 24:1) So, your wealth belongs to Him. Does that turn you off? It turned a rich young ruler off one time, and He went away sorrowful. He's King. He's sovereign. Your wealth belongs to Him.

### **2. Your Worship Belongs to Him**

I'll tell you something else: He's God, and your worship belongs to Him. You need to fall on your face before Him, make Him Lord of lords and King of kings.

### **3. Your Witness Belongs to Him**

And, I'll tell you a third thing: He is Savior, and your witness belongs to Him. You need to receive Him and then go tell it on the mountains, let everybody know that Jesus is the Lord of lords and the King of kings. And, if we believe what we believe, this Christmas message, in these pregnant days in which we live, we're going to tell the world there is a Savior born who is Christ the Lord.

That would be a wise Christmas, wouldn't it? To seek Him the way these men sought Him, to bring to Him what they brought to Him, to recognize who He is and say, "Lord, my wealth, my worship, my witness is yours, Lord Jesus; with every inch, every ounce, every nerve, every sinew, every fiber, as much as in me is, Jesus, you are Lord." Are you afraid to do that? Don't be. You want to have a real Christmas? You say, "Pastor Rogers, you're making it tough this morning." No, I'm not. *"His commandments are not grievous."* (1 John 5:3) I'm making it joyful. I'm telling you how to have a real Christmas. I'm telling you how to make the joys of Christmas burst aflame in your heart and in your life. We serve a wonderful Savior, do we not? We really do. I'm so glad to know the Lord Jesus Christ, and I want you to know Jesus.†

# When Bankruptcy Becomes a Blessing

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: July 26, 1992**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 5:1–9**

*“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*

MATTHEW 5:3

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Spiritual Beggar and His Bankruptcy
  - II. The Spiritual Beggar and His Brokenness
    - A. The Discovery of Our Situation
    - B. The Dependency of Our Situation
    - C. The Declaration of Our Situation
  - III. The Spiritual Beggar and His Blessedness
- Conclusion

## Introduction

Take God’s Word and be finding Matthew chapter 5 as we begin today a wonderful journey through the Sermon on the Mount. And I think all of us have read the Sermon on the Mount and have enjoyed it. But we’re going to look at it, I trust, in a new and a fresh way and be blessed as we study in the months to come this wonderful, wonderful passage of Scripture. And today we’re going to start with that part of the Sermon on the Mount that we call the Beatitudes. Someone has called these Beatitudes “the attitudes that ought to be”; and I’m going to call them is “the keys to the kingdom”—the Beatitudes. And what they are, really, is a blueprint for happiness. What they are, are foundation stones for building your home and your life. Really, what they are, they are the keys to the kingdom.

I begin reading in Matthew chapter 5, verse 1. And it speaks of the Lord Jesus and it says, *“And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: and he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.*

*Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.*” (Matthew 5:1–9) The attitudes that ought to be—these wonderful Beatitudes!

I’ve heard that a big dog saw a little dog chasing his tail. Said the big dog to the little dog, “Why are you doing that? The smaller dog said, “Well, I have been studying philosophy, and I believe that I have mastered philosophy. I believe that I have discovered the answer to the problems of the universe. I have discovered what a dog’s deepest need is. The deepest need of a dog is happiness.” And he said, “I have also discovered that happiness lies in a dog’s tail. That is why I am chasing my tail.” He said, “If I can ever apprehend that tail, if I can ever lay hold upon my tail, then I shall be a happy dog.” The old dog, who was wiser, said, “I, too, have studied philosophy. And I, too, have thought and pondered about these things. And in some ways I agree with you. I, too, think that it is a good thing for a dog to be happy. And I, too, believe that, to some degree, happiness lies in a dog’s tail. But I have made a discovery: The more I chase my tail, the more it runs away from me. But when I forget about chasing it and go about my business, it always comes after me.”

Now, my dear friend, so it is with happiness. The more we pursue it, the more it runs away from us. But when we go about our business, it comes after us. But, my dear friend, happiness, is not in a dog’s tail, even for a dog.

But for those of us who know the Lord Jesus Christ, there is happiness, there is joy—that’s what this word *blessedness* means. It’s a word almost hard to be translated. It could be described as “to be full of joy.” It could mean “to be congratulated.” The Greek word *makarios* means “to be self-contained, to have what you need within you.” And we call it *blessedness*.

And so we are going to be thinking about a blueprint for blessedness, laws for living, attitudes that ought to be. And the first one is found in verse 3: “*Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*” (Matthew 5:3) This is the first key to the kingdom: “*Blessed are the poor in spirit.*” Now, notice in all of these Beatitudes Jesus Christ is talking about what we are, not primarily what we have.

Now we have a world today that puts the emphasis primarily upon what you have. “Blessed are those that have wealth.” “Blessed are those who have strength.” “Blessed are those who have power.” “Blessed are those that have knowledge.” “Blessed are those that have prestige.” “Blessed are those who have popularity.” You know the big *b*’s—the bucks, the brains, the beauty, the brawn—those are the things that people think bring happiness. Blessedness—a lot of people have those things that don’t have joy; they don’t have blessedness. Jesus here is putting an emphasis not primarily on what a man has, but what a man is. “*Blessed are...*”—and then He describes character qualities. And the very first of these character qualities is a character quality called

poorness of spirit.

So I want us to think about this number one key to the kingdom: poorness of spirit. And what is he talking about? Well, He's really talking about being a beggar. He's saying, "Blessed are the beggars."

Now there are several words in the Bible for "being poor." One word is a word that just speaks of poverty like the widow that put her two mites in the offering plate. Do you remember that story? The widow's mite? She was poor. But at least she had two mites. She had something to give. That's one word for poverty that's found. But that's not the word that's found here. The word that is found here does not speak of that kind of poverty. It's another word. It's a word that means "a beggar, a man that has absolutely nothing." It's a word that was used in Luke chapter 16. You remember the story of the beggar that was at the gate of the rich man, named Lazarus, and the dogs came and licked his sores, and he ate the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table? That is, he was absolutely, totally, completely destitute. That's the word that's used here: a beggar—not just a poor man, but a person whose absolutely, totally, devastatingly impoverished. And Jesus called such a one "blessed." *"Blessed are the poor in spirit."* "Blessed are the beggars."

Now, who are these blessed beggars? I mean, what is all of this? The world wouldn't say that's the way to be blessed—not at all! Well, three basic things I want you to see with me today as we look at this passage of Scripture.

## **I. The Spiritual Beggar and His Bankruptcy**

And first of all, I want you to see the spiritual beggar and his bankruptcy. What does Jesus Christ mean when He says, "Blessed are the beggars"? "Blessed are the beggars; blessed are the bankrupt": what is what is the meaning of this? Well, let me say right away Jesus is not talking about financial poverty. Jesus never said it is a blessing to be financially poor. Don't ever get that into your head. The Bible never puts a premium on being financially poor.

Now the Bible teaches we ought to have compassion for the poor. The Bible teaches we ought to help the poor. The Bible teaches we ought to give to the poor. The Bible teaches that many times poor people are rich in faith. But never any place does the Bible teach that material poverty, as such, is a blessing. If Jesus Christ is talking about the blessedness of financial bankruptcy, then it is our job to make everybody on this earth poor and to get poor ourselves. I mean that would be our responsibility: to immediately divest ourselves of any wealth, and to help everybody else to do the same thing, and just have one world of poor people, so everybody could be blessed.

Does that make sense to you? Do you think that is what Jesus Christ was teaching? Not at all! Jesus Christ had many friends who had material blessings. So He is not



talking about financial poorness here. He is not talking, either, about a person being poor-spirited. He said, *“Blessed are the poor in spirit,”* but He doesn’t say, “Blessed are the poor-spirited”—that is, a person all hung over, sort of a milquetoast type of person. You know, you’ve seen them. You know: “I’m just no good. Poor me!” You know, what some people call “humility,” I call “poor posture.” That’s not what our Lord is talking about. When He says, *“Blessed are the poor in spirit,”* not the poor-spirited, He’s not talking about some outward expression, going around with a face as long as a saxophone, looking like a cruise director for the Titanic. That’s not what He’s talking about, either. As a matter of fact, Jesus Christ said, “When you fast, wash and anoint your face so you don’t appear to other people to be fasting”: (Matthew 6:16–18) “I’m fasting.” That’s not the way. He’s not talking about that. He’s not talking about a person being poor-spirited.

What is He talking about? *“Blessed are the poor in spirit.”* Our human nature is made of body, soul, and spirit. With your body, you have physical life. With your soul, you have psychological life. And with your spirit, you’re to have spiritual life. With your body, you know the world beneath you. With your soul, you know the world around you. With your spirit, you know the world above you, the spiritual world. *“God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”* (John 4:24) But before a person can enter into the kingdom of heaven, he must first of all admit that in his spirit, in the realm of the spirit, no matter how much he may have in the material realm, no matter how much he may have in the psychological or soulish realm, in the spiritual realm, he is absolutely, totally, bankrupt and a beggar before God. If he doesn’t see that, he will never ever get into the kingdom of heaven. Not just that he is spiritually poor, but that he is spiritually a beggar; that he is bankrupt.

When you come to Jesus Christ, you do not strut into His presence. The very word for “beggar,” the very word for “poor,” comes from a root word which means “to cringe and to cower, to shrink back.” There are no peacocks in heaven. He’s talking here about a person who is totally, completely, devastatingly bankrupt, to the point of being reduced to being a beggar. And when he comes to God, he must say, “In my hand no price I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling.” That’s where it begins. That’s the reason that this character quality is put first: *“Blessed are the poor in spirit.”*

Now you’ll see some people who will sit in the congregation like this and they will say, “Well, yeah, Pastor, that’s right. I’m not perfect. But I’m not as bad as some other people.” And I say, dear friend, you are not yet bankrupt. You are not yet bankrupt. When you have that attitude—“Yeah, yeah, I know I’m not perfect; yeah, I’ve got my faults; but on the other hand, Pastor, there are some pretty good things about me”—friend, you’ve never seen yourself; you’ve never discovered what the Bible says, that even your righteousness is as filthy rags in the sight of a righteous and a holy God.

(Isaiah 64:6) Were going to see later on in this Sermon on the Mount that Jesus Christ said, *“Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”* (Matthew 5:20) And they were better outwardly than any man, woman, boy, or girl in this building today.

## **II. The Spiritual Beggar and His Brokenness**

All right, so what we’re talking about now is the spiritual beggar and his bankruptcy. But now I want you to think about the spiritual beggar and his brokenness, because, you see, brokenness follows bankruptcy. And what is the brokenness, the broken behavior that follows?

### **A. The Discovery of Our Situation**

Well, first of all, a man must discover and admit just who he is. Many people have never really seen this. For most people, their greatest need is to see their need. Most people sit in churches on Sunday morning in their glad rags, heady, haughty, and high-minded, thinking they’re doing God a wild favor by being there. It’s true. I mean, most of the people—I’ve said it before—are egomaniacs strutting to hell, thinking they are too good to be damned. But there must come a discovery. And you know how that discovery comes? That discovery comes, my dear friend, when we see just who God is and then we understand who we are.

For example, Simon Peter. Simon Peter was naturally an aggressive man. Simon Peter was a take-charge type of fellow. Simon Peter, the big fisherman, you know, he was always giving his opinion. Of course, he was frequently wrong, but never in doubt. Somebody said about the only time he ever opened his mouth was just to exchange feet. He was putting his foot in his mouth all the time. But Simon Peter one day had a glimpse of the majesty, the glory, of Jesus Christ. And then, do you know what he said? He said, *“Depart from me; for I am a sinful man.”* (Luke 5:8) He finally saw his bankruptcy.

Isaiah the prophet—what a great man was Isaiah the prophet! And if you read the book of Isaiah chapter 5, he is thundering woes against this sin, and woes against that country, and woes against this people: *“Woe is you!” “Woe is you!” “Woe is you!”* (Isaiah 5:18–23) Then you come back and see Isaiah chapter 6, where he said, *“I also saw the Lord, high and lifted up, sitting upon the throne,”* and then he said, *“Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the Lord.”* (Isaiah 6:1, 5) Isaiah had poorness of spirit.

I remember reading in the Bible about a woman who was a Syrophenician. That is, she was a pagan woman; she was from Phoenicia. And Jesus happened to be there in that place, and this Syrophenician came to Jesus Christ. She had a daughter that was

demon-possessed, and she wanted Jesus Christ to heal her demon-possessed daughter. And Jesus Christ, in order to bring her to a point of brokenness of spirit, said something that sounds awfully cruel to her. She said, “Lord, have mercy on me.” And Jesus said, “I haven’t been sent to you. I have come to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Jesus said, “Is it reasonable that we would take bread from the children and give it to dogs?” (Matthew 15:22–26) And in effect, He was calling her a dog. And that doesn’t sound very good, coming from Jesus—I mean, that He would call her a dog. And here He used the word for “dog” that meant “household pet.” “You don’t take the food off of the table and give it to the dog; you give it to the children.” Jesus said, “I have come to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

And that Syrophenician woman, you would think that she would have gone off in a huff, and said, “I’ve never been talked to such a way in all of my life. Some religious leader He is! I thought He was a man of compassion.” She didn’t say that. Do you know what she said? She said, “You’re absolutely right.” She said, “That’s the truth, Lord. But even the dogs get the crumbs that fall from the table.” And when she used the word *dogs* this time, she didn’t use the same word Jesus used. She used the word that meant “scroungy, back-alley cur; mangy dog; ravenous back-alley dog.” That’s the way she described herself. Jesus’ heart was broken. He said, “Woman, great is your reward. You are going to have exactly what you ask.” (Matthew 15:27–28)

What happened to this woman? The same thing that happened to Simon Peter when He saw the Lord; the same thing that happened to Isaiah when he saw the Lord; the same thing that happened to this woman when she saw the Lord: they became poor in spirit. They became beggars in the sight of a righteous and holy God. And these beggars in the sight of a righteous and holy God got exactly what they wanted.

The Apostle Paul—if there was ever a man that was hard for him to see himself as bankrupt, it was the Apostle Paul. The Apostle Paul, first of all, he had the right birth. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. Secondly, he ran in the right society. He was a Pharisee. Thirdly, he had the extra accouterments of being a Roman citizen. Next, he had the best education that money could buy. He was educated at the feet of Gamaliel. And he would have today the equivalence of a triple Ph.D. He was fluent in many languages. He was a world traveler. He had been keeping the Jewish laws with an exactitude that was amazing. But one day he caught a glimpse of Jesus Christ. And he said, “All these things that I had counted gain, I now count as loss. I took them from the assets side of the ledger, and I put them on the liabilities side of the ledger. All these things I was depending upon,” he said, “I count them”—are you listening?—“as dung,”—excrement: that’s what I count them as—“that I might gain Christ.” (Philippians 3:8) Spiritually bankrupt—I mean, totally, totally, totally a beggar in the sight of God!

Now, friend, you talk about something that knocks the legs out from underneath

human pride—that does, doesn't it? I mean, there are a lot of people listening to me today saying, "Well, I'm not going to go that route. Who does He think He's talking to? I'm a pretty good guy." Well, you and all of the rest of the pretty good guys are going to go straight to hell until you see yourself as a beggar in the sight of a righteous and a holy God. *"Blessed are the poor in spirit."*

## B. The Dependency of Our Situation

Now when he discovers this, then he gets a different dependency. You stop depending upon the things that you used to depend upon. You don't depend upon your natural birth, your pedigree, what your parents may have been. You may be from the finest family in this city, but that's not going to count at the Judgment. God has children, but He has no grandchildren. You have to be born again.

You may depend upon your position in life. When you die, they may have a big funeral for you—a lot of Cadillacs, and Mercedes, BMWs parked out in front. They may stand up and eulogize you and say, "Here lies one of the finest citizens in this city. He did *this*; a man of prestige, a man of influence." But your soul will be in hell before the undertaker hears you're dead, if that's what you're depending on—if you're depending upon your money, your wealth. Billy Sunday said, "You can't take it with you. And if you could, it would melt where some of you are going."

What are you depending upon? Education and knowledge? You say, "Well, I'm not here to listen to some narrow-minded preacher. I am erudite. I am a learned person." Well, you may be. And thank God for your education. Get all you can. But I'll tell you something, friend. *I had rather be in heaven saying my ABCs than in hell spouting philosophy.* I'm telling you, dear friend, Jesus Christ—not Adrian Rogers, Jesus Christ—said, "Blessed are those who are spiritual beggars who have come to this place."

Maybe you have personality and ability and you've always gotten through. I mean, there are some people that are just blessed with a sweet personality, like ol' Bob over here; just a sweet personality, and you always get through. I mean, you just know how to meet folks, but that's all you've got. Dear friend, try flashing that big smile at the Judgment Seat. Give God a right hand and slap Him on the back. See if that's going to get you thorough.

Muhammad Ali, when he was in his prime—I mean, when he was at the top—got on an airplane, sat down, and the stewardess said, "Fasten your seatbelt." He said to her, "Superman don't need no seatbelt." She said to him, quick as a flash, "Superman don't need no airplane either."

I don't care what you've gained, my dear friend. I don't care who you are. I don't care what your ability. When a man sees what he is—bankrupt in the sight of God—then he

ceases to depend upon all of these other things that cannot help him or do him any good whatsoever. Look here in Matthew chapter 5 and verse 20: *“For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”* (Matthew 5:20) Well, exceeded how much? Well, I’m glad you asked. Look in verse 48: *“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”* (Matthew 5:48) That’s how much it exceeds it: *“Be ye therefore perfect.”* Is there anybody here who would stand up and say, “I’m as perfect as God”? Absolutely not! But that’s the standard that God demands. And the standard that God demands can only be met through the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ as the righteousness of God is imputed to you. Do you understand that? But you’ll never know that righteousness; you’ll never have that perfection that is given through the Lord Jesus Christ, until first of all you understand exactly what you are in the sight of a righteous and a holy God.

Now, look. What most of us need to do is to stop measuring ourselves by some false standard. Do you know what most of us like to do? We like to find somebody else that we’re better than. Generally, it’s a hypocrite in the church. Every now and then somebody says, “Oh, I don’t want to go to church. There are so many hypocrites in the church.” Do tell. There have always been hypocrites in the church. One of the twelve apostles was a hypocrite. My dear friend, you had better not lie down in the gutter and stretch yourself out alongside some hypocrite and say, “I’m longer than he is.” You measure yourself by the standard of Almighty God. *“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”*

You folks who say, “Well, I’m just as good as those folks down there at the church,” you had better start saying, “I’m just as bad as those folks down there at that church.” And all of us, we are beggars in the sight of a righteous and a holy God until we lay our pride in the dust.

### **C. The Declaration of Our Situation**

You see, my dear friend, there is the discovery of that situation. And once we discover it, then we stop depending upon the things that we’ve been depending upon. And not only is there the discovery of it, and the dependency that comes from it, but there is the declaration that follows it. We lay our pride in the dust.

I was in Los Angeles one day and I saw a man who was by a garbage can there. I saw a man stick his head in the garbage can and begin to eat—not lifting the food out. I’ve been in places in the country where I’ve seen beggars sitting at a gate, lifting up a trembling hand and pleading. I’ve seen mothers holding little babies gnawing at dry breasts and saying, “Please, for the baby.” It breaks my heart every time. I can’t stand it. But, my dear friend, I’ll tell you, there’s one thing about these folks. They’ve lost any

sense of shame.

You say, “Well, you know, I’d like to be a Christian, but I’m not going to go down there in front of all of those people and let them know that I need Jesus.” Then, go on to hell. You’re so rotten proud. You’ve never come to the place where you’re bankrupt in the sight of a righteous and a holy God. You don’t want to be seen as a person who needs God and can’t do anything for himself. Blessed and bankrupt: *“Blessed are the poor in spirit”*—not just the impoverished; the beggars in the sight of a righteous and a holy God.

### **III. The Spiritual Beggar and His Blessedness**

Oh, my dear friend, let’s move on quickly and talk, last of all, about the spiritual beggar and his blessedness. We’ve talked about the spiritual beggar and his bankruptcy. We’ve talked about the spiritual beggar and his brokenness. Now, let’s look at his blessedness.

You say, “Boy, if I ever heard a downer message, this is one this morning.” Well, let’s move, then. This is not a downer; this is an upper. Jesus is not saying, “This is the way to misery.” Jesus is not saying, “This is the way to devastation.” My dear friend, Jesus is saying, “This is the way to blessedness.” *“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”* Why is it such a blessing?

Well, number one: It’s the only way you’ll ever get to heaven. You see, Isaiah 57, verse 15: *“For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”* (Isaiah 57:15) There are no peacocks in heaven. All sin is rooted in pride. And until that pride is dealt with, people are not ready and willing to receive Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord.

You see, the reason that this Beatitude is put first is it is the foundation of all the other blessings that Jesus is going to talk about. If you don’t have this key, the other keys don’t make any difference at all. Listen again to Jesus in Matthew chapter 18, verses 3 and 4: *“Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”* (Matthew 18:3–4) Until a man lays his pride in the dust, he cannot be saved. Even God cannot fill that which is already full. We’ll never live spiritually until we admit we are dead spiritually. Jesus said to the Pharisees, “Because you say you have no sin, your sin remains.” (John 9:41)

Do you know what evangelism is, my dear friend? It’s one beggar telling another beggar how to find bread. That’s all it is. You’re looking at a beggar. Evangelism is one beggar telling another beggar how to find bread.

## Conclusion

She was beautiful. She was charming. She was gifted. She was the talk of the town—a lovely, gracious, talented girl. She sat at the piano and played. The crowds came and they told her how sweet and how beautiful she was. But there was a preacher there that night. His name was Cesar Millán. And Cesar Millán approached this young lady and said, “You have charm, and you have grace, and you have beauty; but if you don’t get saved; if you don’t see your need and give your heart to Jesus Christ, you’re just as lost as the worst harlot in London.” She was insulted a little bit. She was shocked by the rudeness of this preacher. I think God the Holy Spirit knew what she needed, though, because she went up to her bedroom and tried to sleep. She tried to laugh it off. But she couldn’t laugh it off. And at three AM in the morning, Charlotte Elliott gave her heart to Jesus Christ and was born again. She was the one who wrote a song that we sing here so often: “Just as I am, without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me, O lamb of God, I come, I come.” That’s the way she came.

And, friend, that’s the way you’ll come, and that’s the way anybody will come, because it was none less than Jesus Christ who said, “*Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*” That my, dear friend, is the key to the kingdom.

# Turning Tears into Telescopes

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: August 2, 1992**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 5:4**

*“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.”*

MATTHEW 5:4

## Outline

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Conclusion

## Introduction

We're in a series of messages on the Sermon on the Mount, and the title of this series is "Building on the Rock," and the subtitle "The Keys of the Kingdom," as we're studying the Beatitudes. These are wonderful, wonderful passages of Scripture. We call them the Beatitudes. They are not platitudes. They are so contrary to what the world would say. And the one that we have today is perhaps one of the strangest sentences in all of the Bible. I'll read them all and then come back to our Beatitude for today: *“And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: and he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.”* (Matthew 5:1–9) But note especially now verse 4: *“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.”*

Now, may I say that the world would never say this. The world would never say, *“Blessed are they that mourn.”* The world would say just the opposite: *“Blessed are those who never have to cry. Blessed are those who never mourn.”* We have an idea



that if we could go through life without ever crying, without any sorrow, without any pain, without any heartache, without any moan and groan, it would be wonderful. But not so.

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

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

—ROBERT BROWNING HAMILTON

*“Blessed”*—Jesus says—*“are they that mourn.”*

Now again, I want to say, the people of this world would say if we could just arrange conditions where we never have any sorrow, never have any pain, never have any hurts, then we could just change men; if we can change condition, we can change character. But that isn't what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches just the opposite. And I want to remind you that man fell in a perfect environment. It was the Garden of Eden. You couldn't have a better environment than that which man fell in. But the world gets it so backwards. The world puts the emphasis on condition. God puts the emphasis on character.

Someone has well said, “You can't purify the water by painting the pump.” And yet that's what we try to do. We just think that somehow if we can change the exterior, then somehow if we can make conditions such that we never have any hurts, we never have any pains, then we're going to be just right. But, you see, Jesus was a strange teacher. And He put the emphasis upon character; on what you are, not what you have.

Now He doesn't say blessed are those who have popularity, those who have position, those who have personality, those who have possessions, those who have power. I can show you people who have all of these things and are perfectly, exquisitely miserable. Jesus doesn't say blessed are those who have certain things, but blessed are those who are certain things—and here's second in the list: *“Blessed are they that mourn.”*

Now I want to make something clear here, however. Jesus is not talking about the moaners; He's talking about the mourners. Now all of us know the moaners. I mean these people who are like that little fellow in Li'l Abner who went around with that dark cloud all over his head. You remember that guy? You couldn't pronounce his name, because it had no vowels in it, just all consonants. But he was somebody. Everywhere he went there was a rain cloud over his head. And I know those kinds of people. And

very frankly, I don't think those are what Jesus is talking about.

He was not talking about the miserable, the melancholy, the sad sacks, the crybabies of this world. He was not talking about the moaners. We all know those. They are drinking constantly from the intoxicating cup of self-pity. Their favorite hymn is "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen," and the only pleasure they get in life is singing it to you. And, dear friend, you don't dare ask them how they feel, because you'll get an organ recital. They will tell you exactly how they feel.

Now that's not what Jesus Christ is talking about here. He is not talking about the moaners. And He's not talking about those who have heartaches and troubles and difficulties in life. We all have those. I've been watching the Olympics. Have you? I tell you, I hate to see anybody lose. It breaks my heart when one of these little gymnasts will go away with a tear streaming down her cheeks. I mean, she has worked and worked and worked and worked and worked, and this is the big chance. And then, one little misstep, and it's all over. And the tears come. And well might the tears come. But that's not what Jesus is talking about here. He's not talking about that. He's not talking about the sadness in life and the sorrows of life per se.

The word here, "*Blessed are they that mourn,*" is the deepest word for sorrow. It's the word for the grief that you feel at the graveside of a loved one. It's a strong word, a word for lament. I think it's described in Psalm 34 and verse 18: "*The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.*" (Psalm 34:18) That's what He's talking about, my dear friend.

May I put it to you bluntly? May I ask you a question? Jesus was a man of sorrows. The most poignant verse in all of the Bible, I think, the shortest in our English Bible, is this: "*Jesus wept.*" (John 11:35) Do the things that break the heart of Jesus break yours? That's the question. Do the things that break the heart of Jesus break yours? "*Blessed are they that mourn.*" Do we have a dry-eyed church in a hell-bent world? One of the things that we have learned not to do is to mourn.

So many of our church services are filled with cheerleader enthusiasm. I'm not talking against joy. My dear friend, the Bible says there's a time to laugh and there is a time to weep. (Ecclesiastes 3:4) So far as our nation is concerned, I believe that it's time for America to be on her face before God. This, my dear friend, is a time to weep. And the best thing you can say about the mourners, to begin with, is at least they have the sensitivity to feel—that their hearts are touched.

Now it's out of vogue to mourn. It's out of vogue to weep. We've done all that we can do to keep ourselves from feeling any pain. We have our psychologists who will numb our neurosis. We have our counselors who will absolve us of all guilt. We have our doctors to sedate our pain. We have our insurance agents to take away our worries. And even at death we have the mortuary to somehow try to beautify death for us.

And then on top of that, we want to go from one entertainment to another, one amusement to another. And I've told you before that the word *amuse* means "not to think." To *muse* means to "think." A museum is a place you go to think, to observe. *Amuse* means "not to think." We go from one amusement to another amusement. It's like Disney World, the Magic Kingdom. Have you ever gone to the Magic Kingdom? You move from this thing to this thing, to this thing, to this thing, and there is somebody there always sweeping up the trash so you won't see it. We want to kind of live that way. I mean, that's the idea of this world: just make life a Magic Kingdom. Well, Jesus is saying, come out of the Magic Kingdom into God's kingdom, the real kingdom. And He says, "*Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.*"

Now we can talk about different kinds of mourning, but I believe, as I studied this passage of Scripture, Jesus here is talking about those who primarily mourn over sin—that's an old-fashioned word, too, isn't it?—those who mourn over sin, theirs and the sin of humanity, because, you see, Jesus began this way: "*Blessed are the poor in spirit*" (Matthew 5:3)—those that see that morally, spiritually, they are bankrupt in the sight of a righteous and a Holy God. And when a person sees that, what follows that, *ipso facto*? What follows that? When we see our bankruptcy, then it brings our brokenness—bankruptcy and brokenness. When we see that we are spiritually bankrupt—that in our hands we have nothing to offer to God, but that even our righteousness is as filthy rags in the sight of a righteous and a Holy God (Isaiah 64:6)—it is then that we mourn.

So with that in mind I want us to think of three basic things this morning that I find here in verse 4.

## **I. The Guilt That Convicts Us**

First of all, I want you to see the guilt that convicts us—the guilt that causes us to mourn. Now you're such a nice-looking congregation this morning dressed in your Sunday best, Bible in your hand, having just sung hymns. Many of us come to church quite satisfied with ourselves. As a matter of fact, some of us have the idea that we've done God a wild favor just by getting there. And one of the hardest things for us to do is to really see that we have anything to weep over, that we have anything to mourn over.

And these Beatitudes, these attitudes that ought to be, are really the text for the sermon. And so you find the sermon illustrated in the rest of the Sermon on the Mount as Jesus gives the Beatitudes. And I want you to see some illustrations of what He's talking about. What is it that convicts us?

### **A. The Deceiving Power of Sin**

Well, first of all, there's the deceiving power of sin. Look in chapter 5, verses 21 and 22: "*Ye have heard that it hath been said of them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and*

*whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.”* (Matthew 5:21–22)

Now most of us have a little list of *do*'s and *don*'ts: “I do this,” and, “I do this,” and, “I don't do this,” and, “I don't do that.” And, you know, that little list of *do*'s and *don*'ts can just lead to abominable pride in our lives. I have some *don*'ts that you don't have. There some things that you do that I don't do. But, you see, what Jesus does is just to rip the veneer off of all of that. And Jesus gets down to the heart of the matter. And when Jesus sees anger, in God's ledger He writes down “murder,” because, you see, there is that reservoir of rage that is there that nobody else can see, but God sees.

Look, if you will, in chapter 5 and verse 27. He goes on to say here, “*You have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*” (Matthew 5:27–28) God doesn't see as man sees. Man looks on the outward appearance. God looks on the heart. (1 Samuel 16:7)

You are reading one of those lascivious magazines, lusting: God writes down “adultery.” You say, “I've never committed adultery”: God says, “Huh?” Maybe not in your mind; but you've got a lot to mourn over, my dear friend. You know, rules and regulations, *do*'s and *don*'ts, won't make you more like the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul was a proud Pharisee. He kept all of the Ten Commandments outwardly, except one of them. He said, “I was doing fine. I had my little list of commandments.” He said, “I was checking them off. ‘*Thou shalt have no other gods before me*’: (Exodus 20:3) I've never done that. ‘*Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain*’: (Exodus 20:7) I wouldn't think of it. ‘*Don't make any graven images*’: (Exodus 20:4) no sir, not me. ‘*Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy*’: (Exodus 20:8) I always do. ‘*Honor your father and mother*’: (Exodus 20:12) oh, indeed, I have done that. ‘*Don't commit adultery*’: (Exodus 20:14) I wouldn't dream of committing adultery; no sir. ‘*Don't steal*’: (Exodus 20:15) not me. ‘*Don't kill*’: (Exodus 20:13) oh, no.” He said, “I was doing fine. I was sailing along. But then I came to one commandment, and it wiped me out.” Do you know which one it was? It was the one commandment I've never heard anybody else ever confess they were guilty of: “*Thou shalt not covet.*” (Exodus 20:17)

Let me give it to you. Put it in your margin. Romans chapter 7 and verse 7: “*What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.*” (Romans 7:7) The word *lust* here means “desire.” Paul said, “Yes, I've never stolen anything. Yes, I've never killed anybody. Yes, I've never committed adultery. But I can never say I've never wanted to.” He said, “*I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not*

covet.”

## B. The Defiling Power of Sin

What do we have to weep over, my dear friend? Are you listening? First of all, there is the deceptive power of sin. Many of us do not realize how deceitfully wicked our hearts are. Our hearts are *“deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.”* (Jeremiah 17:9) That’s what God’s Word says. But not only the deceptive power of sin; my dear friend, the defiling power of sin. Look, if you will, in verses 29 and 30 of this same chapter: *“And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.”* (Matthew 5:29–30)

Now, folks, you’re going to have to admit that is stout preaching. What is He saying? What does the eye speak of? Well, with our eye we are able to behold beauty. The eyes speak of the pleasurable things of life. What does the hand speak of? With the hand we grasp and hold things. That speaks of the profitable things of life. That’s what He’s talking about here, I believe: the pleasurable things and the precious things; the things that we can see, and the things that we can hold.

Do you know what sin does? Sin takes these things and it perverts them: the beautiful things, the precious things, the things that we behold and the things that we hold. Sin has a way of perverting these things. And may I tell you, the devil is a pervert. The devil has no raw materials. He takes the good things of God and he perverts them.

## C. The Destroying Power of Sin

But now, watch. My dear friend, listen. There is the deceiving power of sin. There is the defiling power of sin. There is the destroying power of sin. Look at it. Continue to read. Look in verse 30 here: *“And”—He said—“if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.”*

Now, what is Jesus Christ teaching? Is Jesus Christ telling you, my dear friend, that if you want to go to heaven, cut off your right hand and pluck out your right eye? That’s not what He’s saying. What is Jesus Christ saying? He’s saying, my dear friend, it is better to be a maimed saint on your way to heaven than to be a healthy sinner on your way to hell. That’s what He’s saying. He’s not saying that cutting off your hands is going to get you to heaven. Plucking out your eye is not going to get you to heaven. Christ died for those sins. But I’m telling you, my dear friend, it would be better for you to go limping into heaven than it would be for you to go dancing into hell. Sin destroys.

And I want to say that Jesus Christ is the One who taught more about hell than any

other person in the Bible. Never lampoon a preacher that's a hellfire preacher, because what you're doing is ridiculing the Son of God. Jesus Christ had more to say about hell than any other preacher in the Word of God—Jesus Christ, who was infinite love. There is a hell. Hell is real. Jesus was compassionate. It was the compassionate Christ who talked about cutting off your hand and plucking out your eye. Dr. Robert G. Lee, the former pastor of this church, one of the greatest preachers of all Christendom, said, concerning preaching on hell, and people calling it cruel, "I had rather be called cruel for being kind than to be called kind for being cruel." And I agree with him. The cruelest thing that a preacher could do would be to fail to warn people from the wrath to come and from that place that the Bible calls hell.

And again, dear friend, don't argue with me. It was Jesus Christ who spoke here on the Sermon on the Mount. He spoke, dear friend, of the deceiving power of sin—it's in the heart; of the defiling power of the sin; of the destroying power of sin. And when you really see that—and I can't make you see it; all I can do is preach it, pray God the Holy Spirit of God will make you see it—but when that touches your heart, and when that gets out of your head and down into your heart; when you realize it was your sin that nailed Jesus Christ to the cross, your sin is the nails that held Him there, your hard heart, the hammer that drove those nails; when you see that sin is an affront to a righteous and a holy God; when you see that sin deceives, it defiles, it destroys; then you'll understand why Jesus said, "*Blessed are they that mourn.*"

## **II. The Grief That Consumes Us**

But I want you to see the second thing: Not only the guilt that convicts us, but I want you to see the grief that consumes us. Again, I want you to know that the word here for "grief" is not an ordinary word. There are many words for "sorrow" in the Bible. This is the deepest, the most poignant word for "sorrow." It means "to lament, to be consumed with grief."

And again, I want to say this is the missing note in the modern church. Many people are baptized pagans. They have united with churches like they have joined country clubs. But they have never been broken over their sin. I'll give you a verse that you need to ponder on. It's a verse that perhaps you need to read over and over again. It's found in 2 Corinthians chapter 7 and verse 10: "*For godly sorrow worketh repentance...*"—that's the missing note—"godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." (2 Corinthians 7:10)

There are two kinds of sorrow, my dear friend. And Jesus here is talking about godly sorrow. "*Blessed are they that mourn.*" Now, what's the difference between godly sorrow and the sorrow of the world? Listen to the verse again: "*For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of:*"—that is, once you get saved,

you don't repent of that salvation—*“but the sorrow of the world worketh death.”*

Now, what is godly sorrow? It is not mere regret. Many of us have done things that we regret. And we're sorry. I mean, when I was a child, I did many things I regretted when my dad found out about it. We had a pump room. He took me out there. And he never whipped me on an empty stomach; he always turned me over, and that's the way he whipped me. I regretted it—sorrowfully regretted it. But that is not godly sorrow.

Not regret. Not remorse. Now regret is primarily in the mind. Remorse goes past the mind to the heart. But that, my dear friend, is not godly sorrow—remorse. As a matter of fact, remorse without repentance can be a dangerous, dangerous thing. Regret is primarily in the mind. Remorse is in the mind and in the heart. But remorse, my dear friend, compared to repentance, is a dead-end street. Repentance is a highway. Remorse looks at the sin and its consequences. Repentance looks beyond the sin to Calvary.

A person filled with remorse is one who loves his sin and hates himself at the same time. Have you ever seen someone like that? He loves his sin, but he hates himself, because he can't quit. That's remorse. A person who has repented is a person who hates his sin because he loves his Savior. That's the difference. We have many people that waltz down our churches with regret, and others have come with remorse. But, oh, thank God for those who have come with repentance!

What is the difference? The Bible teaches that Judas, when he had learned that he had betrayed the Lord Jesus Christ and saw all that was happening, or when he became aware of the consequences of his betrayal, with trembling fingers he made a noose, put it around his neck, and hanged himself. And he stepped from the hell that was within him to the hell that was beyond him. And he is in hell tonight, so filled with remorse that he threw the thirty pieces of silver on the floor and went out and hanged himself. My dear friend, there was a man remorseful, but he never repented.

Simon Peter, on the other hand, cursed and swore and denied the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible says he *“went out, and wept bitterly.”* (Matthew 26:75; Luke 22:62) Simon Peter was filled not with remorse, but with repentance. When Simon Peter saw the Lord Jesus Christ, Simon Peter knew that “not only have I broken His law; I have broken His heart, and that breaks my heart,” and he wept bitterly. And Simon Peter was the great preacher of Pentecost, because there was a godly sorrow that worketh repentance unto salvation.

*“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.”* True repentance, my dear friend, and faith are heads and tails of the same coin. David, in Psalm 51, committed adultery. At least, Psalm 51 is the record of his repentance after he had committed adultery. And David said in Psalm 51 and verse 4 when he was speaking to God, *“Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done evil in thy sight: that thou*

*mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.*” (Psalm 51:4) David said, “O God, I didn’t just sin against my wife, and against my children, and against my body, and against the kingdom, even against your law; but, God, I’ve sinned against you. I hurt you, my God. I sinned against you. And then David said in Psalm 51 and verse 17, *“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”* (Psalm 51:17)

Have you come to that place? I don’t mean just broken over your sin; I mean broken from your sin. I don’t mean just what your sin has done to you; I mean what your sin has done to God. I don’t mean regret; I don’t mean remorse; I mean repentance. “Godly sorrow worketh repentance not to be repented of; the sorrow of the world, death.” *“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.”*

### **III. The God Who Comforts Us**

Now what we’ve seen, my dear friend, is the guilt that convicts us; then, the grief that is to consume us; and then, the God who is to comfort us: *“for they shall be comforted.”* That’s what Jesus says. And that’s the only way to know the comfort of our dear Lord: *“They shall be comforted.”*

Now, let’s look at this: *“They shall be comforted.”* Once you see the guilt, and feel the grief, then you know the grace. What does it mean to be comforted? What is that? Well, it’s not a sympathetic pat on the back: “There, there.” That’s not what it means. The word *comfort* is not a word filled with sympathy. It’s a word filled with strength. Do you know what the word *comfort* means? Our English word is very much like the Bible word: *com-*, meaning “with,” and *-fort* means “strength”—“with strength.” Think of the word *fortress*. Think of the word *fortification*. Think of the word *fortify*. God says, “I will put my strength in you. I will be your strength. I will give you comfort. You will be comforted.”

Now, what does that mean? It means God is going to give you strength. Psalm 138 and verse 3: *“In the day when I cried”—*notice this: *“when I cried”*; *“Blessed are they that mourn”—“thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.”* (Psalm 138:3)

Now, how does God do this? Bless God, through the Holy Spirit. Let me give you a verse for your margin—John 14, verses 16 and 17. Jesus Christ gave us this incredible and wonderful promise. Jesus said, *“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter...”*—isn’t that what we’re talking about: comfort?—*“I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever. Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”* (John 14:16–17) What is He talking about? Oh, my dear friend, there is One who lives in



my heart today. He is the Holy Spirit of God. He gives me that comfort. He speaks to my soul.

“Adrian, have you ever wept over your sin?” I have. I wept as a teenage boy. As a teenage boy, I never got into the kind of sin that people get into today. I thank God for that. I’ve never been a cigarette smoker. I don’t know what it is to be drunk. I haven’t got the foggiest notion of what drugs are like. I don’t want to find out. I went to the marriage altar a virgin, and I married a virgin. I thank God for that. I’ve never gotten into those kinds of things. And I’m so grateful to God I haven’t. But I don’t brag. It’s only by the grace of God. But, oh, I was a sinner. I knew it—all those dishonest things in my life, all those mean things in my life, those profane things in my life. And I can remember going out as a teenage boy and taking my bicycle and going out into the country. I didn’t even know how to be saved. I would sit down and weep over my sin. If somebody had pointed me to Jesus earlier, I would have been saved. I knew I was a sinner. That sin broke my heart. And I know I still fail God.

But, oh, my dear friend, there is One in me—His name is the Holy Spirit—who gives me comfort today. For those sins are nailed to the cross.

*My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!  
My sin, not in part but the whole,  
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,  
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!*

—HORATIO G. SPAFFORD

That is the comfort the Holy Spirit gives.

Have you ever known that comfort? I mean to be clean and clear? The Holy Spirit of God is the One to those with a broken heart, those who confess their sin He comes with strength to save. You’re forgiven. You’re clean. You’re pure. You say, “Well, yes, but what if you sin after that?” Well, I’m glad you asked, because, my dear friend, listen. The Bible says in 1 John chapter 2 and verse 1, “*If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world.*” First John 2:1: “*An advocate.*” (1 John 2:1)

Did you know that the word *advocate* is exactly the same word that Jesus used in John chapter 14 when He said, “I’ll send you another Comforter”? It’s the Greek word *parakletos*. And it comes from two words: *para*, meaning “alongside of, like parallel lines,” and *kletos*, *kaleo*, which means “to call.” It is “someone called alongside of you.” If you go into a courtroom, you get a lawyer. He comes and stands alongside of you. He says, “Now, you let me handle this. You just be quiet. You just let me handle this. I am your lawyer.” The word *comforter* and the word *advocate* are the same word. Now, friend, that’s the strength that you have.

Do you know who the devil is? The devil is the prosecuting attorney. The Bible calls the devil—listen—“the accuser of the brethren.” There is somebody who follows you around and dogs your footsteps. He writes down everything you do, my dear friend, and he sends it to heaven as a testimony against you. The devil says, “God the Father, how can you let Adrian Rogers preach? How can you let him claim to be your child?” The devil says to me, “That’s right! You miserable failure! You’ve sinned! Deny it!” Do you know what I say to him? “See my lawyer. He’ll handle it.” *“If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father”—“[a comforter] with the Father.”* Jesus Christ is my Savior.

## Conclusion

Friend, listen. Let me tell you something. When you come to honest brokenness over your sin; when you come to that place, the Holy Spirit of God gives you such comfort that your sin is forgiven; and then when you need help, when you’re in jeopardy, when you fail, the Holy Spirit of God stands nigh to the broken; He is a help; He is strength. And I know that strength day by day. Do you?

*“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.”* He will turn every hurt to a hallelujah. He will turn ever tear to a comfort. My dear friend, it all begins when you see yourself as poor in spirit. A comforter. When you say, “O God, it is not just what I have done; it is what I am; not just what sin has done to me, but what it has done to you; and, O God, with a broken heart, I repent of it—not just regret, not only remorse, not just the mind, not just the heart, but the spirit—God, I repent,” God says, “I forgive,” and God sends the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to give you peace.

# The Mighty Meek

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: August 9, 1992**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 5:5**

*“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.”*

MATTHEW 5:5

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Definition of Meekness
- II. The Development of Meekness
  - A. You Must Be Submitted to the Son of God
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  - C. You Must Be Filled with the Spirit of God
- III. The Dynamic of Meekness

Conclusion

## Introduction

Take the Word of God and turn to Matthew chapter 5 as we continue our series of messages from the Sermon on the Mount under the general heading “Building on the Rock.” For Jesus said, “Whosoever hears these sayings of mine and does them will be like a wise man that built his house upon the rock.” (Matthew 7:24)

I’ve traveled in the Middle East and been in the Mediterranean. There’s a beautiful island there that I have visited, and some of you have visited; it’s the island of Crete. And that island is called in the Greek *Makarios*. And it’s the word that is translated “blessed.” There’s an island named “Blessed.” And the reason they named Crete *Makarios* is that they thought that it had everything on it that was needed to sustain life, that it was self-contained; there was enough vegetation, enough food, enough grain, everything that was on the island, enough water, to sustain life. And not only did they have enough for themselves, but they had enough to export. And so the Greeks named that island *Makarios*—“Blessed.”

Now we’re going to read some Beatitudes, and these Beatitudes begin with that same word, *Makarios*—“Blessed.” And that gives you some idea what the word *blessing* means. It means more than “happy.” Some translate this “happy,” but it means more than “happy.” It means “having everything that you need.” Having everything that you need spiritually: that is being blessed.

And so the Lord Jesus Christ gives us these Beatitudes, or “attitudes that ought to be.” They’re not platitudes; they are attitudes, and really they deal with Christian character. And, my dear friend, Christian character is what you are. Your reputation is what others think about you. But character is what God and your wife know about you. Now this deals with character; not what blessed men have, or not what blessed men do, but what blessed men are—because, friend, all of us are going to die—and some sooner than we think—and when you die, you’ll leave behind all that you have and all that you’ve done, and you’ll take with you all that you are, isn’t that right? See, it’s character that is so important. And that’s the reason it’s more important that you seek blessedness than happiness.

Most of the people in the world are doing what? Well, they are seeking happiness. They want to be happy. But do you know those who look for happiness the most find it the least? That’s a strange thing, but it is absolutely true. People who are on a search for happiness are generally the unhappiest people in the world. *Happiness is not something you find by looking for it; happiness is something you stumble over when you’re seeking blessedness.*

Now, friend, you seek happiness, and you’ll never find it. But you get right with God, and blessedness will find you. It will run you down. And this is what Jesus Christ is talking about here in these Beatitudes. He’s talking about blessedness. Listen to it: “*And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: and he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed...*”—makarios—“*Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.*” And then we come to our text for today: “*Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.*” (Matthew 5:1–5) Now you talk about an inheritance, friend—to inherit the earth!

When I was a little boy, I used to listen to a program called “The Search for Missing Heirs.” Did you ever listen to that? Somebody had died and left a lot of money, but nobody knew to whom it belonged. And so there was a search for the missing heirs. It might be, dear friend, that today you’re that missing heir, the one who is to inherit the earth, and yet you don’t even know it. So I hope today that you’ll hear your name called. “*Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.*”

But what does that mean? What is this Beatitude? We’re going to talk today on this subject: “The Mighty Meek.” And if there’s one thing that this world would not say is blessed, it is meekness. I mean, we don’t think that meekness is a blessing at all. People of this world would say, “Blessed are the mighty men; blessed are the muscle men; blessed are the mental men; blessed are the money men; blessed are any kind of men except the meek men,” because we think of meekness as weakness. But the Bible says, “*Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.*”

## I. The Definition of Meekness

Well, what is meekness? Well, let me tell you what it is not, before I tell you what it is. It is not weakness. Put that down big and plain and straight: meekness is not weakness. And if you think that meekness is weakness, you can go a week trying to be meek, and you'll find out that meekness is not weakness. Do you know what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 11? *"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart."* (Matthew 11:29)

Do you think of Jesus as weak? Jesus said, *"I am meek."* Do you think Jesus was weak? If you think that Jesus was weak, then you read the Bible where He fasted forty days and forty nights alone in the wilderness with wild beasts. I'd like to see one of you macho men do that. Do you think Jesus was weak? Get a picture of Jesus making a whip and driving the moneychangers out of the temple. Do you think Jesus was meek—Jesus, who said, *"The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head"*? (Matthew 8:20) These pictures of Jesus that make Him look like He just stepped out of a beauty parlor make me sick. Jesus was a man, a strong man—and He said, *"I am meek and lowly in heart."* My dear friend, meekness is not weakness.

Do you know who the Bible says, in his day, was the meekest man? This is back in the Old Testament. It was Moses. The Bible says that Moses was the meekest of all the men on the earth. (Numbers 12:3) That's before Jesus Christ got here, who was more than a man. Do you think Moses was a wimp? You study the life of Moses. I mean, he got in trouble sometimes because of his temper, but one thing he was not was a weak man. He was a general who led the children of Israel out of Egypt. He was no wimp. Meekness is not weakness. What is meekness? Well, dear friend, it is not cowardice. It is not a milquetoast type of character. It is not weakness. The word means "yielded." It literally has the idea of strength under control.

There was a man, J. Wallace Hamilton, who wrote an incredible book that I've had in my library for a long time. The title of the book is *Ride the Wild Horses!* That's the title of the book. And he points out that when God made us, when God created us, when God put us together, God put into our nature certain drives, certain instincts, certain ambitions, and they are not evil in themselves. But these drives, these instincts, these ambitions, need to be made to yield. And he pointed out what I want to point out: that the word *meekness* has the idea of a wild stallion being broken. As a matter of fact, in that day, and sometimes still in this day, when a steed—an animal, especially a horse—has been domesticated, it has been trained so a rider can sit upon its back, or so it can pull a plow. The proper term for that was that that horse, that animal, that ox, whatever, had been *meeked*. It had been meeked; it had been broken. Now it yields to the rider. Now it yields to the yoke. It is strength under control. That's what meekness is. It is a

compliant spirit.

You see, these Beatitudes come in order. The first step is this: *“Blessed are the poor in spirit.”* Now, my dear friend, that shows our condition. We say, “In myself, I am spiritually bankrupt.” And then: *“Blessed are they that mourn”*—because after our condition comes our contrition. You see, then we say, “O God, have mercy upon me! I see what I am. I weep over it. I truly repent of it.” And then, after that condition, and that contrition, comes that control, where “I take myself now, Lord, and I place myself under your control. I am meek; not weak, meek. I have a new master.” A horse that has been meeked still has the same strength, still has the same fire, still has the same drive; it still has the same instincts; but now there’s a bridle—a bit, a bridle, and a saddle.

Now J. Wallace Hamilton talks about different ways that you might deal with a wild horse. The first way is just to let him run wild. And that’s what we have: a generation that does today. How do they deal with this? By what we call just no restraint—or self-assertion: “Just let the horse run. Whatever is natural is beautiful, and whatever is beautiful, it must be right. So you just do your thing.” That’s self-assertion: “Don’t put any restraint upon yourself. If you want to get drunk, get drunk. If you want to fornicate, fornicate. If you want to fight, fight.” Just no self-restraint.

The chief apostle of this philosophy in yesterday was a man named Nietzsche. Now Nietzsche influenced the world far more than we may realize. As a matter of fact, a student of Nietzsche was Adolf Hitler. Let me tell you what Adolf Hitler said about letting the horses run wild. He said this: “Get rid of your pious priests and their weak-livered gospel of mercy. Purge out of your souls this disease, this devil of Christianity. Progress depends on the strong man and the strong people. Therefore, be strong. Assert yourself. Be a superman.”

Hitler read that. Hitler said, “That’s what I’m going to have: a super race.” And the result was the gas ovens, the holocaust, the war that some of us went through. I did when I was a little boy. That’s one way to deal with the wild horse: Just let him run. Assert yourself. Do your thing. And the devil will take the hindmost.

Now there’s just the opposite of that—and that’s not self-release, but it’s self-restraint. While there are some who want to let the horse just run wild, then there are others who want to cripple the horse. They want to hobble the horse so he can’t run at all. That’s Buddhism.

Have you ever seen a fat Buddha sitting there with that placid look upon his face? That’s Buddha. That’s the philosophy. And the philosophy is simply this. The thing that causes you your difficulty is that you have certain desires, and then you get frustrated because these desires are not met. So what you need to do is just simply negate these desires. What you need to do is somehow dampen that spirit until you come to the place where you don’t desire anything, so therefore you’re never disappointed. So therefore,

in their mind, you have come to a state called *nirvana*. Friend, that's not Bible Christianity. That's no more Bible Christianity than letting the horse run wild. You don't let the horse run wild, and you don't cripple the horse.

Some people think, "Oh, you know, if I could, I would be holy. If I would just go to a monastery somewhere, and wear a wooly robe, and do a chant, then I'd be holy." Well, friend, there's no holiness in a hole. I want to tell you that. What is Jesus saying? Jesus is not saying, "Let the horse run wild." And Jesus is not saying, "Cripple the horse." What Jesus is saying is, "*Blessed are the meek.*"

Now, let me give you a verse for your margin. It's Romans chapter 6 and verse 19. Listen to it: "*For as ye have yielded your members...*"—talking about your hands, your eyes, your feet, your tongue—"as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity;"—that is, "as you used to be yielded to Satan"; listen to it—"even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness." (Romans 6:19) That's it. You yield.

That's what the word *meek* means: strength under control. The same members; the same eyes; the same ears; the same tongue: but now, rather than using my tongue to blaspheme, I use my tongue to praise. I still have ambition. Now my ambition is to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm still a fighter. But now I'm fighting the devil. I'm fighting that crowd. It's the same strength. God doesn't hobble the horse; He energizes it. But He puts the bit on. He puts the bridle on. He put's the saddle on. He says, "Blessed are those who have yielded." Have you ever yielded? That's the one thing we don't want to do, and that's the one thing that we need to do more than anything else.

I may have told you about an experience that I had. Driving down the road, I saw a drunk staggering along in disgrace. By the way, a drunk is not funny, not to be laughed at; he's to be wept over. I looked at him. I thought I recognized him. I did. I stopped the car. I said, "Son, get in." He got in. I said, "Can I take you home?" He said, "Yes, Pastor." I drove up to the house with the drunken boy, brought him in the house. His dad and his mother were there, and they were embarrassed the pastor would bring their drunken son home. They took him in and got him to bed. I started to leave. The dad stopped me. He said, "Pastor, can I talk to you?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Pastor, I'm embarrassed that you brought my son home drunk. But he's not the only drunk in the family." He said, "I'm a drunk, too." And he said, "I don't know what to say to this boy. I would be such a hypocrite to tell him not to drink, because I'm a drunkard." I said, "Why don't you quit drinking?" He said, "Pastor, you probably won't believe what I'm about to tell you, but I really hate liquor." And he used a curse word. He said, "I hate the *blank* stuff, but I can't stop." He said, "I just don't have what it takes. I can't stop."

My heart broke for him. I said, "Fred, have you ever driven a team of horses?" He was an old fellow. He said, "I sure have." I said, "Fred, if you were driving a team of

horses, wild horses, and they were getting away from you, and you were afraid for your life, and you couldn't make them stop, and you couldn't rein them in, and sitting next to you there in the wagon was someone that you knew could control them, what would you do?" "Well," he said, "Pastor, that's easy. I'd just turn the reins over to him." And I said, "Fred, that's the only thing I know for you to do: just simply say, 'Lord Jesus, I can't,' and quit trying, and start trusting, and just simply turn the reins over to Him, because, my dear friend, those horses are wild horses, and there is only One who can contain them."

He does not want to let them run wild. He does not want to cripple them. But what it is, is strength under control. That's the meaning of it. That's the meaning of meekness.

## II. The Development of Meekness

Now I want you to look with me not only about the definition of meekness, but how do you develop meekness? You know, Jesus said, "*Blessed are the meek.*" Well, where do you get it? Now, remember there's a sequence. First of all, you see yourself as poor in spirit—absolutely bankrupt. Secondly, you are brokenhearted over it. Now, dear friend, if you've never been broken, you're never going to be meek. A meek horse is a horse that has been broken. We sit in our churches heady, high-minded, unbent, unbroken, as I said last Sunday, somehow getting the idea that we've done God a wild favor because we've come here. But we walk out never ever seeing our bankrupt condition, never ever mourning over our sin, and therefore we never ever yield our lives to Jesus Christ. But if you're ready to yield your life to Jesus Christ this morning, let me give you three steps now to develop this meekness.

### A. You Must Be Submitted to the Son of God

First of all, my dear friend, you must be submitted to the Son of God. Put these verses in your margin—Matthew chapter 11, verses 28 through 30. Listen to them. Jesus Christ is saying to you, "Today, come unto me." Are you listening? Jesus Christ—not Adrian Rogers, Jesus Christ—is saying to you today, "*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*" Now, listen to it. "*Take my yoke upon you...*"—now, what is that? An ox that has the yoke is meek—"*Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek...*"—do you see it? Do you see it?—"*I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*" (Matthew 11:28–30)

Here's the picture of two oxen, and they are pulling together. The yoke is on one, and the yoke is on the other, and these two oxen side by side are pulling. Jesus Christ is saying, "I want you to take my yoke upon you." It is no longer only you, but it is you and Jesus. Whenever the yoke is on two oxen, one ox is the lead ox. And in this case, it's Jesus. Jesus says, "Therefore, you follow me. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of



me; for my yoke is easy.”

Now when He says, “*My yoke is easy*,” it means it fits right. Christianity is not something that you have to do; it’s something you get to do. I mean, God loves you so incredibly. He says, “*My yoke is easy*.” I hear people say, “Oh, it’s hard to be a Christian! It’s hard to be a Christian! It’s hard to be a Christian!” My friend, that’s a lie. The Bible says, “The way of the transgressor is hard.” (Proverbs 13:15) Jesus said, “My yoke is easy.” That doesn’t mean you won’t pull. It doesn’t mean there’s no work to do. There’s plenty of work to do. Don’t say, “My yoke is lazy.” “*Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me.*”

My dear friend, first of all, if you would be meek, there’s a decision that you have to make. Jesus Christ will not force Himself upon any man, woman, boy, or girl in this room today. I’m going to give an invitation when I close this message for you to come forward and give your heart to Jesus Christ. And very frankly, it will be up to you whether you come or not. God will not force you to take this yoke. You can say *no*, if you wish. There are not enough angels in heaven or out of heaven to force you to come. But there are not enough demons in hell or out of hell to keep you from coming. There’s not a preacher in this world that can preach you down this aisle. And if he could, it wouldn’t do you any good. Anything I can talk you into, somebody else can talk you out of. But you’re going to have to make a decision, my dear friend, to take the yoke of Jesus Christ. You’re going to have to take it. Jesus said, “*Take my yoke upon you.*”

Now you can refuse, if you wish—and that’s your privilege. And I can tear my heart out and beg you to come to Jesus Christ. But you’re going to have to take His yoke. You’re going to have to learn of Him. There comes a time when you make a decision. And Jesus Christ says, “*Come unto me.*” He doesn’t say, “Come to a denomination.” He’s not talking about *churchianity*. He’s not talking about a creed. He’s saying, “Come unto me. You’ll find rest unto your souls.” And don’t you let that dirty devil get you to thinking negatively about the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is the way to blessedness, and meekness is the way to inherit the earth.

## **B. You Must Be Responsive to the Word of God**

Not only, my dear friend, must you be submitted to the Son of God; I want to tell you something else: If you would be meek today, you must be responsive to the Word of God. Turn with me to James chapter 1 here for a moment. And let’s just turn to it, because I think we ought to have it in our hand. James chapter 1, and I want you to see what our Lord says here in verse 21: “*Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive...*”—now, watch it; look at it, James 1:21—“*and receive...*”—are you listening?—“*receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.*” (James 1:21) The word soul is *psuche*. We could say, “able to save your

psyche.” *“Receive with meekness.”* Do you want to be meek? Friend, do you know what meekness is? It is submission to a higher power. And not only must you receive the Son of God; you must respond to the Word of God. “Receive with meekness”: that is, let the Word of God be your control; let the Word of God be your bridle and your bit. *“Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.”*

And look at the word *receive*. Actually, there are two Greek words that are translated “receive.” And obviously, they are both not used here. The first is Greek word *lambano*, which is sort of a self-prompted taking. It’s sort of grasping, reaching out, snatching.

Frankly, there are some people who think they can learn the Bible that way. They say, “Well, I’m going to study the Bible.” And so what they do, they get a readable Bible, and what they do, they get a dictionary, a Bible dictionary, and they get a concordance. Maybe they get some commentaries. They get a yellow legal pad. They get a pen. They sit down at their desk and they say, “I am going to learn the Bible.” I feel sorry for you. You’re not going to learn the Bible. You might learn some facts about the Bible, but you’re not going to learn God’s Word until you receive it with meekness, ready to be taught. You might know the names of all the kings of Israel. You might know Bible chronology. You might know it all. But, dear friend, you have not received the Word. What you have done is simply *lambano*. You have gone into the Word of God to try to snatch out some truth. Maybe for your pride; maybe you’ll know more than somebody else; maybe you’ll show yourself as some teacher; but, my dear friend, you will not know the Word of God, because your spirit has never been broken.

There’s another word for *receive*, and it’s the word *dechomai*. That’s the word that’s used here. And do you know what that means? It means “to welcome with humility”—“to welcome”; not “to take,” but “to welcome.” Have you ever welcomed the Word? Have you ever sat down to study the Bible absolutely prepared to do everything it says? Not just parading the Word of God past the judgment bar of your mind to make up your mind whether you think this is right, or you think that’s wrong; or whether you think this interesting, or that is interesting. The Bible is not meant to be interesting; it’s meant to be disturbing.

I went to China to preach in China and preached in Taiwan, and Taipei, in a citywide crusade there. And I had a wonderful time. Brother Bob, you were with us. And we learned one thing. We went to a Chinese house. The Chinese are the most hospitable people I’ve ever known. They will not allow you to come into their house without serving you something. And you should never come into the Chinese house without receiving something from their hand. But when they brought a refreshment out, whether it were a cup of tea, or whatever it was, they said to us, you never reach out with one hand and take it. You take it with both hands and bow and at least take a sip. To reach out with one hand has the idea of grasping. To reach with both hands has the idea of receiving.

The hold, dear friend: If you let go of this world with both hands and reach out to Jesus Christ with both hands, and as you study the Word of God receive with meekness the engrafted word that is able to save your soul, deliver your psyche, you'll learn, dear friend, that through the Word of God, God will put a bridle and a bit on you. And the horses won't run wild. And they won't be crippled. My dear friend, they will be controlled.

### C. You Must Be Filled with the Spirit of God

The third thing: Not only receive Jesus, submit to Jesus the Son of God; not only bring your life to receive the Word of God; but, oh, dear friend, be filled with the Spirit of God. Read there in Galatians chapter 5, verses 21 and 22 and following. The Bible says, "*The fruit of the Spirit is...*"—what?—"meekness." (Galatians 5:22–23) When you say, "Lord Jesus, I put your yoke upon me"; when you say to the Word of God, "I receive this word with meekness"; when you say to the Spirit of God, "Work in me," the Holy Spirit of God, my dear friend, produces meekness. It's the fruit of the Spirit. You don't produce that fruit; you bear that fruit. He produces that fruit in you. You walk in the Spirit. There will be that meekness in your heart and in your life. "*Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.*"

### III. The Dynamic of Meekness

I've talked to you about the definition of it. I've talked to you about the development of it. Let me talk to you for just a moment about the dynamic of it, and we'll be finished. "*Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.*"

Have you ever just sort of daydreamed about having an inheritance? I heard of a man sitting on a curb crying. Somebody said, "Why are you crying?" He said, "Well, I just read in the newspaper where Rockefeller, the richest man in the world, died." He said, "Why are you crying? You're not a relative of his." He said, "That's why I'm crying."

Oh, all of us, you know, we just kind of dream about having an inheritance. "*Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.*" That's the dynamic of it. Now, what does that mean? What does it mean?

Well, may I say, friend, you'll never have your inheritance, you'll never have your full inheritance, without meekness. Now a man who cannot control himself, or be controlled by the Spirit of God, is never satisfied. Here are some wonderful verses. What a blessing these were to me this week as I looked at them! And we're dealing now with what it means. What does He mean when He says we're going to inherit the earth? Well, it speaks of now, and it speaks of hereafter; in the sweet bye-and-bye, and in the nasty now-and-now, you can inherit the earth.

First of all, how do we inherit the earth right now? First Corinthians 3—you may turn to it—verses 21 and following. First Corinthians chapter 3—I want you to listen to it: "*Let*

*no man glory in men...*—oh, we look at all of those athletes; and what was the name of that boy who signed up the other day for what? Forty million dollars. “Well,” you say, “I wish that I were he.” Well—*“Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are your’s...”*—that’s more than forty million. That’s more than forty million. I mean all, that’s pretty big, isn’t it? All—*a-double-I*—all things are yours. You know, do you believe that? I hope you do. It’s in the Word of God. You say, “Well, I believe in my head, but it never got to my heart—*“all things are your’s; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are your’s; and ye are Christ’s; and Christ’s is God’s.”* (1 Corinthians 3:21–23)

Now, just keep that in mind, and turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 10. We’re talking now about inheriting the earth. He says here, *“All things are your’s.”* Now, look, if you will, in 2 Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 10: *“As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor...”*—well, that doesn’t sound like you’ve inherited the earth, does it?—*“as poor, yet making many rich;”*—and now, here’s the key thing—*“as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.”* (2 Corinthians 6:10) Friend, I don’t care what you have. If you don’t have blessedness, you can’t enjoy it, because blessedness does not come in things. And I don’t care what you don’t have. If you have blessedness, you have everything. It’s so strange. What can the devil do to a person like this? He says here in these verses that *“all things are your’s”—“as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.”*

And the devil comes to you. And, you know, the devil will come as what? The devil will either come as a roaring lion to terrify you, (1 Peter 5:8) or he’ll come as an angel of light to entice you. (2 Corinthians 11:14) So, first of all, the devil comes as a roaring lion. And the devil says, *“Arrrrrrgh. If you don’t follow me, I’ll take everything from you.”* You say, “Devil, you can’t take anything from me, because I don’t have anything.” That’s what it says here: *“as having nothing.”* “I don’t have anything, so how are you going to take something from me when I don’t have anything?”

“Well,” the devil says, “that doesn’t work. I’ll tell you what I’ll do. I’ll come to him not as a roaring lion; I’ll come to him as an angel of light.” “If you follow me,” he says, “I’ll give you *this* and *this* and *this*.” You say, “Devil, how are you going to give me anything? I already have everything.” What is he going to do? “As possessing nothing, yet having all things”: what can the devil do with a man like that? *“All things are your’s.”* *“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.”*

But not only, dear friend, in this life; also in the world to come. Have you ever thought about that prayer that we’ve prayed: *“Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth”*? There’s coming a time when the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ. (Revelation 11:15)

*Jesus shall reign where'er the sun  
Does his successive journeys run;  
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,  
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.*

—ISAAC WATTS

And the branches shall bend down with fruit. The plains will wave with grain. The lamb and the lion will lie down together. (Isaiah 11:6) And the saints will rule and reign with Jesus Christ. (Revelation 20:6) He didn't make this for the devil's crown. He made it for His people. *"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."*

## **Conclusion**

I don't know what side you are on, dear friend, but I want to line up on this side. I want to see myself as bankrupt, broken, and destitute. I want to weep over it. And then I want to say, "Lord Jesus, as best I know how, I yield myself to you. I take your yoke. I believe your Word. I'm led of your Spirit. And I'll inherit the earth."

# A Formula for a Blessed New Year

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date:** December 29, 1985

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 5:6

**Main Scripture Verse** *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.*”

## Outline

Introduction

I. Desire Jesus Preeminently

II. Seek Jesus Purposefully

III. Enjoy Jesus Perpetually

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and turn to the Gospel of Matthew chapter 5? I want to speak to you on “A Formula for a Blessed New Year.” Now I didn’t say, “a happy New Year”—though I hope you’ll have a happy New Year. But I can tell you, my friend, whether you have a happy New Year or not, you can have a blessed New Year—and there’s a difference. You know, happiness depends upon what happens. And if your hap is good, you’re happy. If your hap is bad, you’re unhappy. And so we don’t want your spirit and soul to depend upon happenstance. So I want to give you something that does not depend upon what happens to hold you through the New Year. And so, rather than saying, “Happy New Year” to you, I’m going to say, “A blessed New Year to you.”

Now I want to read here in Matthew chapter 5—I begin in verse 1: *“And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: and he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say*

*all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.” (Matthew 5:1–12)*

Now all of these are the Beatitudes, but I want to single out one of these, and it is found in verse 6: *“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”* Now Jesus said, “If you’ll hear these words and live by them, you’ll be like a man that built his house upon a rock. And when the storms come, your house will stand. And,” He said, “when the rains descend, and when the floods rise, and when the winds blow, your house will stand.” (Matthew 7:24–25) When He talks about rain, He’s talking about pressure from above. When He speaks of floods, He’s talking about pressure from beneath. When He speaks of winds, He’s speaking of pressure on every side. And we live, as it were, in a pressure cooker. And 1986 looks like it’s going to be a real stormy one. And yet, in spite of all the turmoil—economic, military, terrorism, drought, famine, freeze, flood—no matter what, Jesus gives us a formula for a blessed life, no matter what happens.

Now in the Old Testament, we have the Ten Commandments. In the New Testament, we have the Beatitudes. And the basic difference is the Ten Commandments deal with outward action, but the Beatitudes deal with inward attitude. And that’s what makes these things so wonderful. Now the world thinks that happiness and blessedness depends on what we have. The world says, “Well, if you have ability, and you have money, and you have popularity, or you have handsomeness, or you have beauty, or you have talent, or you have power, then you’ll be happy.” Well, folks, you can find people who have all of these things who are perfectly miserable. That doesn’t bring happiness; that doesn’t bring blessedness. You see, in the Beatitudes the emphasis is not on the word *have*; it is on the word *are*: *“Blessed are the peacemakers”*; *“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness.”* And you see what Jesus is saying: “It is not what you have that makes you blessed; it is what you are that is the secret of blessedness and satisfaction.”

Now, look again in verse 6: *“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”* And here’s my formula for you for a blessed New Year. And I’d like, if I could, to lay this burden on your heart, that you would say, “Pastor, I’m going to do what the Holy Spirit has said through you tonight. I’m going to make that my goal, my aim, this coming year.”

## **I. Desire Jesus Preeminently**

Number one: Desire Jesus—desire Jesus. Now, when the Bible says, *“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness,”* it is really saying, “Blessed are they

which do hunger and thirst after Jesus,” for the Bible says Christ “*is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness.*” (1 Corinthians 1:30) To seek righteousness, you must seek Jesus. To seek Jesus, you do seek righteousness. And so I want to say, this coming year, I want you to take all of your desires, and let your desires, as many as you may have, let them all be subjugated to one basic desire—and that is that you desire Jesus Christ preeminently.

Now man has natural hungers. He hungers for food, and friends, and fame, and fortune, and fashion, and fitness; and all of these things, in some degree, are legitimate. But, my dear friend, we are to hunger preeminently for Jesus Christ. He is heaven’s bread for earth’s hunger. Now the word *blessed* here literally means—it’s a Greek word, *makarios*—it literally means “to be in a state to be congratulated.” It’s very hard to translate. “Joyful,” I believe, is perhaps the closest thing we could come to translating the word *blessedness*. But notice what the Bible says. It does not say that we are to hunger for happiness. It doesn’t say that we are to hunger for joy. It doesn’t even say we’re to hunger for blessedness. Now, pay attention. It says we are to hunger for righteousness.

Now, so many people are hungering for happiness; but, you see, unhappiness is merely a symptom—it is not the sickness. The sickness is sin. And if you hunger for happiness, all you’re trying to do is deaden the pain of a sickness.

Let me illustrate what I’m talking about. Suppose you go to the doctor, and you’ve got a raging fever in your body, and the doctor examines you and gives you a sedative to kill the pain and a medicine to lower the fever, but he never deals with the infection. That doctor, in my estimation, if he doesn’t do something else for you, has not really helped you. Indeed, he may have hurt you by deadening the pain and doing nothing else. Now, when a person seeks happiness rather than righteousness, what they’re doing is simply deadening the pain of a sinful life.

We are to seek righteousness. Now, you see, if I seek happiness, I’ll never find it, because only real happiness, real joy, real blessedness, real fulfillment are in Jesus. But if I seek Jesus, I will find happiness; I will find joy. Happiness, joy, blessedness—whatever we want to call it tonight—is not something that we find by seeking for it.

Have you ever gone to a resort and watched the people in these resorts? Go to Miami Beach or somewhere and watch the people walking down the street. You will never see a more miserable looking lot of people than you’ll find in these resorts. If you don’t believe it, try it sometimes. Just stop and watch them as they go by. They are absolutely miserable. You’ll find better looking faces on bottles of iodine. And they have come there, most of them, to seek joy, to seek happiness—and that’s why they don’t find it. Friend, happiness, joy, fulfillment is a by-product. If you seek it, you don’t find it.



But if you serve the Lord Jesus Christ, then the Bible says, “*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness.*” (Matthew 5:6) You are to desire the Lord Jesus Christ. There’s a hunger that you have, dear friend, that will never ever be satisfied apart from Jesus Christ. God just made you that way, and you’re not going to be satisfied apart from the Lord Jesus.

Suppose you invite me over to your home some time for dinner. And so, about dinnertime, I arrive at your house. And you take me into your library, and you show me all of your wonderful collection of books. And I can smell the aroma of the food in the kitchen. And I look at your books, and I’m very polite about your books. But remember, it’s dinnertime. And then, after that, you show me your art collection. And I look at your art, and you explain all of the intricacies of that art. And I’m very polite, and I say, “Yes, that’s beautiful art”—and let’s say that it is. And then, you show me your gun collection, and I say, “Yes, very nice guns.” And the aroma of that food is coming in. And let’s say I’m not hungry—let’s say I’m *hungry*. Now there’s a difference. And I mean, it’s time to eat, and you’re showing me all of these things. Now you may even show me some poetry. You may even show me your Sunday School outline, and you may even tell me some blessed and wonderful things. But, folks, I don’t care how beautiful the art is, how interesting the books are, how cleverly you have written the poetry—it makes no difference: Those things cannot satisfy the physical hunger. Now I’m a physical being, and I’ve got to have food. But, conversely, those physical things will never ever satisfy your deepest need, which is the Lord Jesus Christ.

I want you this coming year to desire Him, to say, “Oh, I desire—I hunger—after the Lord Jesus Christ.” So, I’m going to say, number one, desire Him preeminently.

## **II. Seek Jesus Purposefully**

Number two: This coming year, I want you to seek Him purposefully—purposefully. Now it’s not just enough to desire Him. If you really desire Him, if you really hunger for Jesus, you’re going to seek the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, when Jesus said, “*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness,*” He was taking the two most basic things that we need—food and water—and He was saying, as we spend so much of our lives just to make certain that we have food and water, then we’re to do that: We’re to purposefully seek the Lord Jesus Christ.

According to some reading that I’ve done, a man can live about forty days without food. He can live about three days without water. He can live about eight minutes without air. But he cannot live thirty seconds, spiritually, without Jesus. He is to seek Jesus. If he desires Jesus, he is to seek Jesus.

Now, when a man knows that he’s in a starving condition, let me tell you what

happens. His interests are greatly narrowed; he's not interested in a lot of things that other people are interested in. He really doesn't care whether the Giants won today or not. He's starving. He really doesn't care about the paintings in the Dixon Art Gallery. He really doesn't care about some peace treaty between Israel and the Arab nations. If he's starving, his interests are very narrow. Isn't that true? There is one thing on his mind, and that is food. And he makes up his mind that he's going after food, and he's going to find it or he will die.

Now I wonder, have you ever really sought the Lord Jesus Christ with that kind of a purpose? If we desire Him enough, we will seek Him that way. You see, you have but one need—and that is Jesus.

Now you say, "Well, I already have Jesus. Why should I desire Him?" Well, let me explain that. Friend, the Apostle Paul, when he was an old man, said, "Oh, that I may know him!" (Philippians 3:10) Now you have Jesus, but you've just touched the hem of the garment of Jesus. I want to ask you a question: Did Columbus discover America? Well, he did. But yet, there are thousands of unnamed lakes in Canada that are still to be explored. What I'm trying to say is this: that you may have discovered Jesus, but the Apostle Paul at the end of his ministry knew there was so much more, and more and more, of the Lord Jesus: "Oh, that I may know him!"

Now I don't want you to get me wrong. I am not talking about a second blessing. You never go beyond Jesus. You go into Jesus—into Jesus. Actually, the Scripture, when it says, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ*," (Acts 16:31) literally may be translated, "*Believe into the Lord Jesus Christ*." By faith, you go deeper and deeper and deeper into the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, in a way, it is a second blessing. People ask me, "Pastor, have you ever received the second blessing?" And sometimes, if I want to be a little mean, I just say, "Yes," you know. And the eyes all light up. They think, well, I've had some sort of a charismatic experience, you know. And I say, "Yes, I have the second blessing." And they say, "Well, tell me about it." And I say, "The second blessing is discovering what I got when I got the first blessing, brother: just discovering Jesus, more about Jesus." Friend, you'll never go beyond Jesus. And I want to tell you what the third blessing is. The third blessing is discovering you didn't discover it all in the second blessing.

Friend, let me tell you something. In Jesus, you're complete. I mean, "*In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*." (Colossians 2:9) And we are to desire the Lord Jesus Christ. You'll never go beyond Jesus. You'll never need more than Jesus. But you need to go more into Jesus to know Him better. You are to seek Him as a hungry man would seek food.

You know, Jesus said, "I am the Alpha and the Omega"—"the Alpha and the

Omega.” (Revelation 1:8; Revelation 1:11; Revelation 21:6; Revelation 22:13) You think about that. What he meant by that is, “I am the alphabet.” Alpha is the first letter in the Greek alphabet; omega is the last. If He were speaking to our congregation, He wouldn’t say, “I’m alpha and omega.” What would He say? “I am A and Z, and all the letters in between.”

You know, I’ve got hundreds of books in my library, but all of them have the same basic—what?—twenty-six letters in the alphabet. Is that right? Twenty-six letters. They’re all made of twenty-six letters. Isn’t that amazing? And all that knowledge is there. And you can put those twenty-six letters together in so many different ways, and I never need to go outside the alphabet to express those thoughts. And that’s the way it is with Jesus. Friend, you never need to go outside of Jesus, but there is so much in Jesus that is still yet to be discovered, yet to be appropriated.

I was reading about an old saint. She loved the Lord with all of her heart. Her favorite verse was, *“I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”* (2 Timothy 1:12) She quoted it every opportunity she got. But as she got old, she got senile, and her mind began to fail. And she couldn’t remember it as she used to, and it really bothered her. And she would quote, *“I know whom I have believed,”* and she couldn’t get all of it. *“I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have…”* And she couldn’t remember it. And, finally, she wasn’t even able to say, *“I know whom I have believed,”* or *“he is able to keep.”* Finally, she just remembered one word of that verse; and as she died, she repeated it over and over again. Do you know what it was? “Him,” “Him,” “Him.” And, friend, I want to tell you, when she said that, she said it all. Jesus—just Him. She had the whole thing.

Listen, folks. May the desire of your heart be this Christmas and this New Year’s that you would desire Him preeminently; and because you desire Him preeminently, that you would seek Him purposefully—I mean, that you would make it your ambition to so hunger after Jesus, to so thirst after Jesus. You see, a hungry man is a single-minded man. He’s not interested in popularity, society, position, entertainment. He’s desperate. Have you ever sought the Lord Jesus desperately? You know, a hungry person is so humble. He really doesn’t care what others think.

I’ve been to New York City and seen people eating scraps off the table that other people left in restaurants. Have you ever seen that? I’ve been to California, Los Angeles, seen a young man with his head stuck down in the garbage can eating garbage. I’m going to tell you something. If I got hungry enough, I’d do the same thing—and so would you. Now I tell you what: I’d be embarrassed if you were to see me this evening with my head in a garbage can eating garbage. You’d say, “Hey, look at the

pastor. He's eating out of a garbage can." And everybody would say, "Look, there's the pastor eating out of a garbage can." Maybe there'd be a crowd there watching me eat out of a garbage can. So I don't think I'll do that this evening. I'll tell you one thing: If I get hungry enough, I'll eat out of a garbage can—and so will you.

Now, you know, there are certain proud people. They come to church, and they're not hungry; therefore, they're not fed. I mean, they don't really hunger and thirst. When Jesus was talking about hungering and thirsting, He was not talking about just having a hunger pain; He was talking about starving, thirsting, wanting, desiring—passionately desiring.

You can tell when a person is hungry or not. They sit down at the table, and they don't want to eat because the china is chipped, the parsley is on the wrong side of the plate, conversation upsets them a little bit: They're not hungry. A person comes to church, and he says, "Well, the preacher preached too loud," or, "The service was a little long," or, "Nobody shook my hand." Hey, folks, listen. If you come to this church or any church looking for something to criticize, you can find it. But if you come here looking for Jesus, you can find Him, too. And a hungry person is a person who actively seeks food—humbly seeks food—with determination. He says, "I must have it. My poor soul, it must be fed."

A hungry person doesn't have a take-it-or-leave-it attitude toward food. Have you ever heard anybody say something like this: "Well, if God wants to bless me, that's all right with me"? Oh, no. Listen, friend. He wants to bless you, and it's not your job to persuade Him to bless you, but only to permit Him to do so when you have a hunger that He can satisfy. But you're going to have to cultivate that hunger.

You know, if somebody were to just put a morsel of food on my tongue, and push it back in my mouth, and stroke my esophagus until I swallow, maybe I'll eat. Now, that's the way some of you are: you think, "Maybe if he can just come here and force-feed me a little bit, maybe the pastor will be blessed enough that he'll be able to give me a little tidbit."

But, folks, I want you this year to say, "I want Jesus. I am going to desire Him preeminently. Therefore I am going to seek Him purposefully with all of my heart. I am going to set aside a time, a quiet time, and I'm going to get into the Word of God. And I want Jesus Christ to be someone real to me. I want to know Him as the Apostle Paul wanted to know Him.

### **III. Enjoy Jesus Perpetually**

Now, the third and final thing I want to suggest that you do this coming year: not only desire Jesus preeminently; not only seek Him purposefully; but I would like for you to

enjoy Him this year. Just enjoy the Lord Jesus continually—enjoy Him perpetually. You know, Weymouth translates verse 6, *“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled,”* he translates it, “For they shall be completely satisfied.”

Now to be completely satisfied doesn't mean that you'll never want to eat again. That would be tragic. Joyce fixed us a wonderful Christmas dinner, and we had all the kids around the table. And I have to admit I overdid it. You know, one of the things I'm going to do New Year's is go on a diet, too, by the way. But I overdid it. I ate, and, you know, I was like that little old boy that they asked him to have some more food, and he said, “No.” He said, “I'm about to explode now.” And they said, “Well, we made cherry pie.” He said, “Well, pass me a piece of pie and stand back!” I felt about that way. And you know, I thought, “Well, you know, I really don't care if I ever eat again.” But about seven o'clock, I was back there in the refrigerator fooling around, looking for that turkey. Isn't that right? It's amazing. And I'm glad I was, because I'd hate to think that I'd just eat one time and that one feeding would satisfy me. Now it does satisfy me, but I don't want it to so satisfy me, that I don't ever want to go eat again.

And that's the wonderful thing about Jesus. You see, look. We are perpetually hungry, that we might be perpetually satisfied, and yet that we might get hungry again. He never allows us just to eat once and that satisfies us completely, because there's just the joy of feasting on the Lord Jesus. He's made us continually dependent upon Him, that there might be the joy of continual feasting, and then continual satisfaction. And so I want you to enjoy the Lord Jesus.

Let me tell you something. It is the devil's lie that holy living and misery go together. What Jesus is saying is you can be completely satisfied. Now the devil wants to get you to thinking negatively about God. The Pharisees were known for what they were against rather than what they were for. But holiness and righteousness do not mean that we lose the good things of life; it means for the first time we can really enjoy them.

## Conclusion

Here's my wish for you—it's wrapped up in these verses—this coming year. First Timothy 6:17: *“Trust...in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.”* (1 Timothy 6:17) Or, again, Psalm 34:8: *“O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.”* (Psalm 34:8) Or, Psalm 107:9: *“He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.”* (Psalm 107:9) My desire for you this coming year, and the goal of my life this coming year, is this: I am going to desire Jesus preeminently; I am going to see Jesus purposefully, and I am going to enjoy Jesus perpetually. And I hope that you'll do the same thing. *“Blessed are they which do hunger*

*and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”*

# The Secret of Satisfaction

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: August 21, 1983**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 5:6**

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Food of a Spiritual Man

II. The Focus of a Starving Man

III. The Fullness of a Satisfied Man

Conclusion

## Introduction

Now, I want you to take your Bibles this morning and turn to Matthew chapter five and let's look at one verse, verse six. As we told you already we're speaking on this subject, THE SECRET OF SATISFACTION. Matthew chapter 5 and verse 6. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. Now, Ramoth translates this, for they shall be completely satisfied. How many really satisfied people do you know? Not very many people know, man is always seeking and never finding. It reminds me of a little boy in the backyard chasing a yellow butterfly. He wants to get his hands on it so bad, he just thinks man, if, if I could just get that thing it'd be wonderful and so he spends half an after noon chasing it and finally he catches it. And when opens his hand all there is a yellow smear and that's the way life is in a sense. We're chasing that butterfly of happiness and satisfaction and when we get to where we think we ought to be it's not what we think it ought to be and when we get what we want we don't want what we get and we're always wanting something more. Well, I want to talk to you today about how to be satisfied, really satisfied and it's, well, I can just go so far as to say satisfaction guaranteed, that's just how strong it is. Friends all around me are trying to find what the heart yearns for by sin undermine, I have the secret, I know where it is found, only true pleasures in Jesus abound. Amen. That is true.

Now, we're dealing with the beatitudes and as someone has wisely Said these beatitudes are attitudes that ought to be. Now, in the Old Testament we have the Ten Commandments, The Ten Commandments deal with outward action, but the beatitudes deal with inward attitudes. Now, man in his search for satisfaction he puts a premium upon having things. You know, we say if a man has health, if he has wealth, if he has prestige, if he has power, if he has handsomeness, if he has friends, if he has influence,

if he has all of these things, he'll be happy. A lot of people have these things and more and they're perfectly miserable. These things in and of themselves can not and do not bring happiness, do not bring satisfaction and yet our scripture today talks about the way that a person can be completely, completely satisfied because in the Bible the emphasis is not on what a man has but on what a man is. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. Now, if in your heart today there is a hunger, dissatisfaction and you're looking for fulfillment and you don't have it then don't tune me out and don't let the devil distract you. I'm going to be talking to you today about the secret of satisfaction.

## **I. The Food of a Spiritual Man**

The very first thing I want you to notice as we look at our verse is the food of a spiritual man. Now, notice what the text says. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after what? Righteousness, righteousness. Those who are hungry and those who are thirsty fought righteousness. Now, what is righteousness? Let me rephrase that question and ask you this way. Who is righteousness? Not what is righteousness but who is righteousness because righteousness is not primarily a thing, righteousness is primarily a person and his name is Jesus. First Corinthians chapter one and verse thirty says that Christ is made unto us righteousness. And so, Jesus, the Lord Jesus Christ is righteousness so let's just translate this verse this way. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after Jesus, for they shall be completely satisfied and I don't believe I have done any violence to the meaning of that verse. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after Jesus, for they shall be completely satisfied. Jesus is Heaven's bread for earth's hunger. Now, let's look at the word blessed there for a moment also in verse six. That word, it's kind of hard to get it translated, it's translated so many different ways because we don't seem to have one English word that really encapsulates the meaning of that word blessed. Some translate that word happy, happy. Well, that's pretty good but that's only part of it. Others translate that word joyful. Maybe that's better. Others translates that word to be envied, or they, blessed means to be envied or to be congratulated or they, we'll just pull all those words together and we'll just roughly use the word happy. Happy are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.

Now, I want you to see something here. He doesn't say happy are they which do hunger and thirst after happiness, it's very important that you understand this. I want to say something, I want you to listen to me. Anybody who sets out to be happy in life never is. Did you hear that? Anybody who sets out to be satisfied in life never finds it. Anybody who searches for satisfaction never finds it, anybody who hopes for happiness in and of itself, he never finds it and I'll tell you why. Happiness is not something you



find by looking for it, happiness is a by-product of righteousness. Now, we're not, he doesn't say blessed are they which do hunger and thirst for blessedness. He doesn't say happy are they which do hunger and thirst for happiness. He doesn't say satisfied are they which do hunger and thirst for satisfaction, he says blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness and righteousness is the Lord Jesus. Now, I'll tell you why you could never be satisfied by searching for satisfaction and why you can never be happy by looking for happiness because dissatisfaction and unhappiness is not a sickness, it is a symptom. The sickness is unrighteousness. On happiness is the symptom of the sickness and dissatisfaction is the symptom of the sickness which is unrighteousness. That's the reason when in the Garden of Eden after man sinned God said something very unusual. God said to Adam and Eve, cursed is the ground for thy sake, not for your punishment but because I love you thorns and thistles would have bring forth unto thee and you earn your living by the sweat of your brow and we're going to have floods and tornados and we're going to have hurricanes and we're going to have drought and we're going to have Bo weevils and we're going to have weeds and we're going to have pain and pain and moan and groan and woe and misery, why? Because God loves us. You say wait a minute, it doesn't make sense. Oh yes it does make sense. You see, when man sinned a terrible sickness entered into mankind and unhappiness is the symptom of that sickness. The worse thing that could have happened to mankind was for him to continue to live in a sinful state in the Garden of Eden and never know any pain and never know any problems. If he did he wouldn't know he was sick, he wouldn't know what was wrong with him. Did you ever get the idea it'd be wonderful if you could just live without pain? That wouldn't be wonderful at all, it'd be terrible. I mean, for example, you might be sitting on a tack right now and not know it see, if you could live without pain. It wouldn't be all that great, you'd go home this afternoon for lunch and be slicing the roast and leave your finger in the plate and never know it. It'd be awful. You see, pain is God's messenger, God's gift so that when we're sick or when we hurt ourselves pain is there to let us know that something is wrong in the physical realm.

Now, dissatisfaction and unhappiness is the pain in the spiritual realm to let us know that man is sick, he has a sickness and it is unrighteousness and therefore man must not treat the symptom which is unhappiness, he must treat the sickness which is unrighteousness. Do you understand what I am saying? I mean, suppose you got sick and, and you had a terrible headache and you had a fever and all of your joints were hurting and so forth and you go to the doctor and the doctor and you tell the doctor, I feel miserable. You tell him how you feel and he says well, I can fix that, don't worry about that, and he goes and gets a hypodermic needle and goes? And gives you a high

powered drug and you say hey, boy, thank you doc, I can feel that already and it just deadens the pain and gives you a little euphoria and you say boy, what a great doctor and you just go floating out the office you know. Would you say that's a great doctor? I wouldn't say that's a great doctor.

Now, in all honesty if I'm hurting and I go to a doctor I'd like for. Him to do something about it if he can. I think all of us, but if that's all he does, I mean, if that's all he does, if all he does is reduce the fever and kill the pain and not deal with the infection in my estimation he's not a good doctor at all. Because after a while when his narcotic has worn off the pain will come back and the condition will be worse and it'll take more the next time to deaden the pain and before long it won't be the pain that's dead, you know who it will be, don't you? Me, because you see, I have a sickness and if he's just merely treating the symptom and not the disease. Of that and you say now come on over here pastor, come into the living room, I want to show you this artwork and you show me the paintings that you have and maybe they're beautiful paintings, maybe even religious paintings, but that time I'm smelling that bread baking and I try to pay attention to the paintings and then you say now come on in here and sit down, I want you to listen to my stereo and he puts on the Bellevue Sanctuary Choir led by Tommy Lane and he says just listen to that music, that stereophonic sound and my stomach is growling and I smell that steak in there just broiling and I try to pay attention and act like I enjoy it and then he says pastor, you know, we just wanted to have you in our home for a long time, let's just have a good old fashioned prayer meeting and we begin to pray and pray and pray and I'm getting hungrier and hungrier and hungrier all the time.

Now, friend, I don't care how beautiful the paintings are, how sweet the music is, how marvelous the prayer is, that's not going to keep me from being hungry, my body has physical need. Let's suppose I'm worse than hungry, suppose I'm hungry, have you ever been hungry? I mean, just really hungry. And here, this guy is, is wasting our time. I mean, let's get in there and eat, then we'll talk about some of these other things. Oh, you say, that's not very spiritual. It is spiritual. Listen, after Jesus had fasted for forty days and had been in direct contact with Almighty God, fellowshiping with the father, the Bible says he was still hungry. Now, all of that spiritual food could not satisfy his physical body and conversely, conversely friend, you also are a spiritual person and all of that all physical food is not going to meet the need of your spirit as spiritual food cannot meet the need of your body. Now, that which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the spirit is spirit and there's a part of you, there's a hunger of the spiritual man. The food of the spiritual is Jesus and righteousness so just remember that, that you have a deep satisfaction as the spiritual part of your nature and until you feed on the food that God has given to meet that spiritual need you will always, always,

always in the deepest part of your being have a dissatisfaction and a deep unhappiness because you have a sickness called sin.

## **II. The Focus of a Starving Man**

Now, second thing I want you to notice, if that is true, that the food of the spiritual man is Jesus, I want you to notice secondly the focus of a starving man, the focus of a starving man. You see, when Jesus was talking about hungering and thirsting he wasn't talking about mere appetite, he was talking about a person who needed food. You see, in the Middle East in that day as it is in Memphis in this day, food is not a nicety, it is a necessity, it not a luxury, it is something that we must have or we perish. God has so made us in the physical realm that we cannot exist long without food. I did some research and found out that a man can live about forty days without food. He can exist about three days without water. He can exist about eight minutes without air, but in the spiritual realm he cannot exist one second without Jesus Christ, not one second. You see, in Christ is life and without Christ, if you're feeding on Christ you have no life. You see, I'm talking now not about luxuries, I'm talking about necessities. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness.

You see, without righteousness there's the judgment of God, the wrath of God that is upon you. You must say, I must have this righteousness. You know what he said? I mean, when he was an older man, oh, that I may know him and I say wait a minute Paul, don't you know him, I mean, you're the chief apostle, you wrote most of the new testament and you're saying that I might know him. Why, I thought you already said I know. Whom I have believe and now you're saying oh, that I may know him. Yes, Paul knew him but there's so much more to know about the Lord Jesus. I mean, any of us, we just simply skimmed the surface and there's more and more and more as Christians that we need to learn about the Lord Jesus Christ. Have you ever had anybody ask you have you received the second blessing? I have.

You know, there are a certain kind of people who look down on others as if they're kind of second rate Christians. You know, like there's a, there's a first blessing, you get Jesus and then after you get Jesus then you go on and you get something else and if you only got Jesus well, and you haven't gone on and gotten something else why you to be, you're to be pitied, that you're sort of a going to Heaven second class. Well, I want to tell you something friend, I want to tell you what the second blessing is. Do you want to know what the second blessing is? The real second blessing is discovering what you got in the first blessing, that's all, just discovering what you got when you got Jesus. That's the second blessing. Do you want me to tell you what the third blessing is? That's discovering you didn't discover it all in the second blessing. And the fourth blessing is

discovering you didn't discover it all in the third blessing and you go on and on and on like the apostle Paul to the end of your life saying oh, that I may know him, him, the focus of a starving man is food and the food of a spiritual man is Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness. You see, Jesus is the sum, the substance. You don't go beyond Jesus, you don't go to this verse of scripture and saw all the books in my library and you know it's an amazing thing, no matter how many wonderful, beautiful thoughts or, or deep, convoluted theological tongues are there in that library, it makes no difference, they're all written with just twenty six letter. I mean, you can take and put them together all kinds of ways, but everything you need to say, you can just take those letters and put them together. Isn't that amazing? Jesus said I'm the alphabet. No matter what you need to say, I'm it.

Friend, let me tell you something, you listen to me and listen well, and get it down bit and plain and you Christians listen to me. Not only is Jesus necessary, Jesus is enough. Now, never forget that. Jesus is enough. The, the, the focus of a starving man is food and the food of a spiritual man is Jesus, blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, Christ, our righteousness, you're to be focusing on the Lord Jesus Christ. So, you are to seek Christ, listen to me now, exclusively and not only are you to seek him exclusively, you're to seek him earnestly, earnestly. You see, a man who is really starving is dead serious about this matter of getting food. As I've said before he's interested in one thing, he's a very single minded man. He's not interested in popularity or society or position or entertainment, I mean, he's serious about it.

I heard of a, a little boy who asked his mother in the middle of the night, mama, would you get me a glass of water and she got him a glass of water and about twenty minutes he called her again and said mama, I need another glass of water. She got him another small glass of water. Then about ten minutes later he said mama, I'd like some water. She didn't think he could possibly be thirsty. She said if Now, when you understand that Christ is our righteousness what does the focus of your life come to then? Him, the Lord Jesus. You begin to seek Jesus. The focus of a starving man spiritually is Jesus, Jesus, Jesus and I want to tell you how you'll seek him. You'll seek him like a hungry man seeks food. How should you seek him? Number one, you seek him exclusively, exclusively. Now, what's a hungry man interested in? What's a starving man interested in? Football scores, flower arrangement of the Ladies pink lemonade society, what's he interested in? Fame, fashion, what is he interested in? I'll tell you what he's interested in. A starving man, you know what it is, food, food. You see, he becomes a fan, a fanatic, he's interested in one thing and one thing alone. He has narrowed all of his interest.

Now, let me tell you something friend. In the spiritual realm you have but one need

and I can give you the name of that need because it's also the name of a person, J E S U S, Jesus said blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness. Christ is made to us righteousness. Now, if you are unsaved person, God help you to see that your great need today is Jesus, not Bellevue Baptist Church, not some doctrine, not some other experience, the need of your life is Jesus, the hunger of your life is Jesus and you'll never have that need met until you feast on the lord Jesus. And if you're a Christian, if you're saved you still must continue to hunger after Jesus. You say, now, wait a minute, if I already feed on him, why should I hunger after him? Well, nobody can ever eat enough at one time that they don't need to eat again and I'm going to tell you about that later on some more, but you know the apostle Paul came to the end of his life, to the end of his ministry and do you know what he said? I mean, when he was an older man, oh, that I may know him and I say wait a minute Paul, don't you know him, I mean, you're the chief apostle, you wrote most of the new testament and you're saying that I might know him. Why, I thought you already said I know: whom I have believe and now you're saying oh, that I may know him. Yes, Paul knew him but there's so much more to know about the Lord Jesus. I mean, any of us, we just simply skimmed the surface and there's more and more and more as Christians that we need to learn about the Lord Jesus Christ.

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Do you want me to tell you what the third blessing is? That's discovering you didn't discover it all in the second blessing. And the fourth blessing is discovering you didn't discover it all in the third blessing and you go on and on and on like the apostle Paul to the end of your life saying oh, that I may know him, him, the focus of a starving man is food and the food of a spiritual man is Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness. You see, Jesus is the sum, the substance. You don't go beyond Jesus, you don't go around Jesus, you just keep going deeper and deeper into Jesus. Actually, the Greek verb, believe on. The Lord Jesus Christ can be translated believe into the Lord Jesus Christ. We're just going deeper and deeper into

Jesus. I heard of a little lady who had memorized so many verses of scripture she loved the Bible and in times of meditation she'd quote it back to the Lord as her praise to the Lord and that's a wonderful way to praise the Lord but as oldness and senility came she lost her memory and about the only verse that she really knew good was that one I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he's able to keep that which I've committed unto him against that day and she would quote it over and over, but then her memory continued to fail and she could just remember a phrase out of it, committed unto him, committed unto him, committed unto him and it brought her such comfort and finally she came to the place where all she could say in that verse was one word, him, him, him, but in that one verse she had all of the Bible, all of the Bible in that one verse, him, the Lord Jesus. Don't be hungering after anything else, don't be looking for something else, you're never going to go beyond the Lord Jesus, you're never going to find anything sweeter than the Lord Jesus, more wonderful than the Lord Jesus, he in the Bible called the alpha and the omega.

Do you know what that means? You seminary students will soon find out, just rolling over here. The alpha is the first letter in the Greek alphabet, the omega is the last letter. If Jesus had been speaking the modern day Americans, he would have said I am the A and the Z, that is, I am the alphabet, all the letters in between. I was looking in my library last night sitting there thinking about this verse of scripture and saw all the books in my library and you know it's an amazing thing, no matter how many wonderful, beautiful thoughts or, or deep, convoluted theological tongues are there in that library, it makes no difference, they're all written with just twenty six letters. I mean, you can take and put them together all kinds of ways, but everything you need to say, you can just take those letters and put them together. Isn't that amazing? Jesus said I'm the alphabet. No matter what you need to say, I'm it. Friend, let me tell you something, you listen to me and listen well, and get it down bit and plain and you Christians listen to me. Not only is Jesus necessary, Jesus is enough. Now, never forget that. Jesus is enough.

The focus of a starving man is food and the food of a spiritual man is Jesus, blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, Christ, our righteousness, you're to be focusing on the Lord Jesus Christ. So, you are to seek Christ, listen to me now, exclusively and not only are you to seek him exclusively, you're to seek him earnestly, earnestly. You see, a man who is really starving is dead serious about this matter of getting food. As I've said before he's interested in one thing, he's a very single minded man. He's not interested in popularity or society or position or entertainment, I mean, he's, he's serious about it. I heard of a little boy who asked his mother in the middle of the night, mama, would you get me a glass of water and she got him a glass of water and about twenty minutes he called her again and said mama, I need another glass of water.

She got him another small glass of water. Then about ten minutes later he said mama, I'd like some water. She didn't think he could possibly be thirsty. She said if you ask me for water one more time I'm going to get up and spake you. Five more minutes he said mama, when you get up to spank me would you bring me a glass of water.

Now, blessed are they which do hunger and thirst. You see, when a person is thirsty, when a person is hungry, you pay any price, really, he'll pay any price. I was in Los Angeles, I saw a man, a good-looking young man with his head in the garbage can down there looking for crust of pizza out in front of a pizza parlor. He didn't care what the people thought. I was in the cafeteria in New York when the door opened and a man ran in off the street and sat down at the table where some people had just gotten up and began to stuff in his mouth as fast as he could the crumbs and the, and the refuse that was left on the table until the management ran him out and he ran out like a little animal out the door, like a little squirrel scurrying in and scurrying out. No pride, he didn't care what people thought.

Isn't pride an abominable thing? You know that pride will keep some of you this morning from coming down this isle and giving your heart to Jesus? You're not hungry enough. You're wondering what People think, hub? And pride, and, and lack of appetite will keep you from getting something out of a message. You come to church you know and if you come to church and you're not really hungry well, then what you do is you start looking around and to see if you can find something to criticize. Now, if you want something to criticize this morning there's a lot to criticize, you can start with Bob Sorrell and just, there's plenty to criticize, see. Isn't he humble? And, you can just start anywhere, you can start with the pastor, is what I started to say, and you can just criticize if you want to find. Somebody said it doesn't take much size to criticize. I heard about a pastor that said brother Jones, would you stand and lead us in a word of criticism, you know, it doesn't take much to criticize, you can find something to criticize, but on the other hand if you want God you can find god because he's here.

Now, I mean, if a man is invited to a meal and he comes and sits down in front of that meal and he says well, I'm not going to eat. Well, why are you not going to eat? Because the china is chipped or because the fork is on the wrong side of the plate or because the parsley is not arranged just right. Well, he's not hungry. You see, a, a hungry man wants to be fed. That's the reason some folks don't like to go to church where you really preach the Bible. They want to go to one of those churches where you get a duet, a sermonette, a cigarette and the whole thing is over, you know and, and they do not want, they do not want the Word of God, they are, they're not hungry, they have no appetite for the things of God and if t he service goes a little long, if pod is moving they can't understand why everybody else is so excited, they want to know why

doesn't everybody else want to get out of this place like I do. When I was over in England I heard George Brower who was a great missionary speak and he said one day he was in a missions conference and God was tremendously blessing and he was preaching on missions and the holy spirit was obviously there but he said there was one man that just got so tired and he wanted to get out and George said he had preached a little longer than normal, that man borrowed a watch from the man next to him and held it up and went like this in the middle of the sermon. I ought not to give you any ideas, he held be filled and friend, I want to tell you that the, the food of the spiritual man is Jesus and the focus of a starving man is food. Would to God that we could see the hunger that we ought to have in our heart and in our lives.

### **III. The Fullness of a Satisfied Man**

Now, the third thing I want you to see is the fullness, the fullness of a satisfied man, the fullness of a satisfied man. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. Or again as Ramoth said they shall be completely satisfied. Now, that doesn't mean that you'll never want to eat again. In the physical realm sometimes you can be completely satisfied.

And let's take Thanksgiving Day for example. Now, you go and maybe if your wife is just half the cook that mine is you could go and sit down Thanksgiving dinner and you know, she just serves everything from alpha to omega and it's all there, from soup to nuts and you sit down about four inches from the table and you eat until you can touch it and you know you like that guy that said boy, I'm glad I ate when I did because I completely lost my appetite and you just, you know you feel like you never, ever want to eat again don't care if you ever eat again. I mean, this is it, this is the ultimate, the zenith and food doesn't interest me and you get up and you waddle off to the ballgame and sit down and watch the ballgame and fellowship with your family. I've done that and about seven o'clock I find myself back in the kitchen, opening the refrigerator, looking in. God built us that way. You know, we're, you just can eat enough at one time that just carries you on and that's the way it is with the Lord Jesus.

You see, look, why, God's not going to let you just feast on Jesus one time and that's all. There is a, there's a beginning feast where you come to him for salvation but then you continually feed on the Lord Jesus Christ. Why? Oh, thank God for appetites. You thank God for food, have you thanked God for appetites? Oh, thank, you see, if you don't have an appetite, one or two things wrong, either you're sick or dead, huh? Or just ate, see, you're sick or dead. I mean, listen folks, if you don't have an appetite for our Lord spiritually you're sick or spiritually you're dead or else you're just filled up with him. I mean, that's all there is to it, that's all there is to it. I'm talking to some sick saints



today. I mean, you don't really have an appetite for our Lord but you're, you're saved, but you're just kind of sickly, you're kind of puny and the thought of too much food just kind of makes you a little, it just doesn't excite you. Thank God for a man that's got a spiritual appetite like a lumberjack. Boy, when a man says God, I want some more, I want to know some more about the Lord Jesus. You see, our Lord allows us to have a perpetual hunger that we might have a perpetual feast that we might have a perpetual satisfaction and that's the way we go on and on in the Christian life as we continue to feast upon the Lord Jesus. Now, this verse therefore doesn't mean that you won't get hungry again but it means that you can keep on being satisfied. Isn't that wonderful? Because he's always there, always there that you can feast upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, listen, I'm talking to you about the fullness of the satisfied man. Now, go back to our scripture that says blessed is the man that does hunger and thirst after righteousness, blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness. Now, notice what the word blessed remember what it means? Happy, joyful, to be congratulated, to be envied, you see, you get that, you get that happiness, you get that satisfaction. How do you get it? You get it by seeking righteousness. That's the fullness of the satisfied man. I forget about trying to be happy and I seek Jesus. I forget about trying to be satisfied and I seek Jesus and then all the sudden I say hey, I'm satisfied, hey, I'm happy and friend, you're looking at a man that's satisfied today. You're looking at a man that's filled with joy today and I don't take credit for that, it's Jesus in me that is giving me that joy and that satisfaction. I couldn't have found it had I been searching for it, but by finding him and knowing him and feeding on him, then there's the fullness of the satisfied man.

Do you know what the devil will tell you? The devil will tell you that holiness and happiness don't go together. The devil will tell you that you make up your mind, either you be righteous or you, you can have fun. Friend, the devil is a liar. You'll never know satisfaction until you find it in the right place. The devil will tell you that if you seek righteousness you won't, God will take the good things of life away from you. I want to tell you that you will never be able to enjoy the good things of life until you know Jesus, not as you ought to enjoy them. The Bible says in First Timothy chapter six, verse seventeen, he giveth us richly all things to enjoy. Listen to these verses. First Peter two, verse three, If so be that you've tasted that the Lord is gracious. I have a friend he's gracious. Psalm 34, verse 8. Oh taste and see that the Lord is good. I have a friend, he is good. Psalm 107, verse 9. For he satisfieth the longing soul and filleth the hungry soul with goodness and he's filled me because there is the fullness of a satisfied man. Oh, how sweet, how wonderful to know the Lord Jesus Christ.

## Conclusion

Let's get it all together now, are you ready? Let's see if we can just bring it together. The food of a spiritual man is Jesus because he is our righteousness. The focus of a starving man is food. He narrows everything down to one thing. The fullness of a satisfied man is blessedness, blessed is the man that hungers and thirst for righteousness, he shall be filled—he shall, he shall, he shall. Do you know him? Are you saved? Are you satisfied? I mean, is the heart hunger of your life met? It will only be met in Jesus and if you try to find it any other way you can no more satisfy your spirit with things than I can satisfy my body when it's hungry with preaching. God made you a spiritual creature as well as a physical creature. Would you say I'm hungry for the blessing? My poor soul, it must be fed. I want every head bowed.

# The Secret of Satisfaction

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: August 16, 1992**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 5:6**

*“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”*

MATTHEW 5:6

## Outline

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    - A. A Deliberate Quest
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## Introduction

Take God’s Word, please, and turn to Matthew chapter 5. We’re continuing our series on the Beatitudes, and I remind you again that they’re Beatitudes and not platitudes, because the world would never agree with what these Beatitudes say. I’m talking about this world’s system.

Now, these are a series of statements that begin with the word *blessed*, and the word *blessed* means to be satisfied, it means to be secure, it means to be full of joy. And, the world thinks that the idea of blessedness is what? Well, the world says, “Blessed are the rich”; “Blessed are the powerful”; “Blessed are the handsome”; “Blessed are the influential”; “Blessed are the intelligent”; “Blessed are the wealthy”; “Blessed are those who are at ease”; “Blessed are those that have plenty”—that’s what the world says. But, that’s not what Jesus says. And then, even in the Ten Commandments, while the world thinks that a man is blessed by what he has, in the Ten Commandments the emphasis is primarily on what man does: “Do this”; “Do this”; “Do this”; “Don’t do this”; “Don’t do this”; and “Don’t do this.” But, you see that the Beatitudes go beyond even that. The Ten Commandments deal with outward action. The Beatitudes deal with the heart—“the attitudes that ought to be.”

Now, let’s read them, and then we’ll come to our Beatitude for today: “*And seeing*

*the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*”—that’s the first Beatitude. “Blessed are those who see themselves as spiritually, morally bankrupt.” They see their condition. And then, look in verse 4—“*Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted*”—for after they see their condition comes this contrition. They’re broken about their sin, broken over their sin, and broken from their sin. There’s genuine repentance. And then—“*Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth*”—that is, they’re compliant. They are ready now and willing to do God’s will. To be meek means to be submitted, yielded to the will of God. Do you see how these Beatitudes follow the one after the other? And then, we come to the one that is for today: verse 6. Look at it—“*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.*” (Matthew 5:1–6) Listen to it again: “*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.*” (Matthew 5:6) I want to talk to you today on “The Secret of Satisfaction”—that is, to have your deepest hunger met. “*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.*” (Matthew 5:6)

Do you know what Madison Avenue is in the business of doing? Madison Avenue is in the business of creating in you certain hungers. I mean, they will advertise things, and you will look at them, and you didn’t even know you wanted it until you see that ad. Have you ever—I have—watched something on television—maybe it will be a glass of iced tea—and I have to go into the kitchen and get one right after I watched that. I didn’t even know I was thirsty. And yet, I’m watching something there. And, they create in you... That’s their business—to create hungers in you. And, many times, because of Madison Avenue, we’re buying things we don’t need with money we don’t have to impress people we don’t like—because Madison Avenue has just created in us a certain kind of hunger.

Now, my dear friend, God, by the Holy Spirit, is wanting today in this message to create in you a hunger of something that you really do need, you desperately need—as a matter of fact, you cannot live without it—and that is to hunger and thirst after righteousness. And, if you do and if you will, there are no *ifs*, *ands*, or *buts* about it—I promise you satisfaction guaranteed. You will be satisfied. “*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness*”—this is what the scripture says—“*for they shall be filled.*” (Matthew 5:6)

Now, what does it mean to hunger after righteousness, anyway? What are we talking about when we say, “righteousness”? Well, you may think of righteousness as something you do. But righteousness, in the Bible, is wrapped up in a person, and His name is Jesus. The Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 30 that Jesus Christ is our righteousness. (1 Corinthians 1:30) He is made righteousness for us. He is

our righteousness. And, when a man hungers and thirsts after righteousness, he is hungering and thirsting after Jesus Christ. Now, get that, or you won't understand the rest of the message. Life's hidden hunger is Jesus Christ Himself. You may not know it. You may not understand it. You may not agree with it. But, it is as true as I am standing here today. The deepest need of your life is a right relationship with God through Christ. He is the righteousness of God that you're to hunger for.

Now, how are you to desire the Lord Jesus Christ? How are you to hunger after the Lord Jesus Christ? May I mention three ways today? And, I'm talking to you about "The Secret of Satisfaction."

## I. Desire Jesus Preeminently

Number one: You should desire Jesus preeminently. Do you have that in your mind? Please jot it down on a piece of paper. You should desire Jesus preeminently. That is, you should desire Him above all other things. Now, Jesus is talking here about hungering and thirsting. You've done that in the natural realm. You know what it is to be hungry naturally. Well, we're going to talk to about being hungry supernaturally.

You see, it's fine to hunger naturally. God made you where you get hungry physically; you get thirsty physically. There is nothing wrong with that. But, dear friend, even if you seek food and water in the first place, you've made a mistake. In Matthew chapter 6 and verse 33, Jesus has talked about food and fashion and fitness, and then He says, "*After all these things do the Gentiles seek... But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and*"—what?—"his righteousness." (Matthew 6:32–33) "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things*"—food, fashion, fitness—"shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6:33) Now, there's nothing wrong with food. There's nothing wrong with fashion. There's nothing wrong with fitness, in their place. And, their place is second place—their place is second place. "Seek ye"—what?—"first"—"first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." (Matthew 6:33) God will not take second place to anybody or anything.

Now, how are you to seek the Lord Jesus Christ? You are to seek Him preeminently. He is to be first in your life. *Jesus Christ is heaven's bread for man's deepest hunger.* Now, look at the verse again. It says, "*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness.*" (Matthew 5:6) "Blessed are those who are hungering and thirsting after Jesus—who put Jesus in first place." "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*" (Matthew 6:33)

Now, He will not work in second place. You know what most folks want to do? They don't want to seek righteousness. Do you know what they want to seek? They want to seek blessedness. When I said to the television audience, "We're going to talk to you a little bit about how to be satisfied," most people said, "Well, that's what I want, is

satisfaction.” Well, the problem is, by wanting satisfaction, you don’t get it. By wanting happiness, you don’t get it. By wanting blessedness, you don’t get it. You see, what you need is not primarily happiness and satisfaction and blessing. What you need is Jesus.

Now, pay attention. When you get Jesus, when you receive Jesus, when you hunger and thirst after Jesus, then you are blessed. But, that is a byproduct. He doesn’t say, “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after blessedness.” *“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness.”* (Matthew 5:6) You say, “Well, what’s the difference?” Well, my dear friend, that lack of blessedness, that lack of joy, that lack of satisfaction, that lack of peace, that lack of fulfillment—all that is is a symptom. That tells you that there is something wrong, and that symptom that tells you that something is wrong causes you to seek the remedy, which is Jesus Christ.

¶ Now, let me illustrate. Suppose you feel bad—you’re weak, and you’ve got pain, and you’re trembling, and you’re dehydrated, and you’ve got all of these terrible symptoms. And, you go to the doctor, and the doctor says, “Well, you’re very sick, but don’t worry about it. I’ll give you something to kill the pain.” And, he gives you a sedative, and that’s all he does. And, you go out of there, maybe on a high because of the drugs that he’s given you, and you feel fine for a while. Do you want that kind of a doctor? Well, when I go to my doctor and I hurt, I want him to make me feel better, if I can. But, if that’s all he does—if all he does is treat the symptom, if all he does is deaden the pain without dealing with the infection—as far as I’m concerned, he’s not a good doctor. A good doctor is going to find the cause of that pain, the cause of that fever, the cause of that malady, and he’s not merely going to deaden the pain and try to kill the symptoms, because the symptoms are God-given to say, “There is something wrong; get it fixed.” Isn’t that right?¶

Now, my dear friend, that unhappiness that you feel, that lack of fulfillment that you have, that lack of joy that’s in your life—all of that is a symptom; that’s all it is. And, if you treat the symptom without treating the disease, that would be very foolish. So, the Bible doesn’t say, “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after blessedness”; “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after peace”; “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after anything else except righteousness”—because man’s problem is what? Unrighteousness—unrighteousness. And, out of unrighteousness come all these other things. And so, until you come to the place where you see that your deepest need is Jesus Christ, ’til you bring all of your ambitions into a burning focus to seek Jesus Christ, you’re not going to have your deepest hunger met and your deepest needs met.

Now, we have physical hunger, and there is nothing wrong with physical hunger. And, if you have physical hunger, dear friend, spiritual things can’t meet your physical hunger.

¶ Suppose you invite me over to your house for a meal, and I come to your house. And, I know that you're a good cook so I've been kind of laying off food, ate a very light breakfast and hardly any lunch because I'm determined to put you out of business when I come to your house. And so, I come to your house, and you invite me in and say, "Pastor, let me show you how we've redone our garden." And, we go out and look at your beautiful flowers, and I say, "That's nice." And, you say, "Pastor, come into the library and let me show you some new books that I've bought." And, we go in and look at your library. And, about that time I feel a growl down here, but I don't say much about it. And then, you say, "My wife has done some antique shopping. Let me show you something she just recently bought," and we look at that for a while. And then, you say, "You know, I've taken up painting. Let me show you some of my painting," and I look at that for a while. And then, you say, "Janie, come in here and play the piano. Let the pastor hear that new song that you've done." And, I'm looking at flowers, and I'm looking at antiques, and I'm listening to music, and all of this. And, my stomach is gnawing, and I'm saying, "Hey, when do we eat?"—maybe I don't say it out loud. But finally, we get to the table, and there the table is perfectly set, the fresh cut flowers on the table, even candles burning, you know, sometimes as people do, and all the silverware is polished, but not a speck of food. Now, my dear friend, what good is all of that? None of those things—none of those things—can meet the need for food.¶

And, conversely, my dear friend, food can never meet the need of your deepest longing, which is Jesus. You're a physical being, but you're a spiritual being. And, you must have—you must have—the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, food and water—"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst" (Matthew 5:6)—He's talking about food and water. In the material realm, food and water are necessities; they are not luxuries. If you don't eat physically, you're going to die. If you don't drink water, you're going to die. And so it is in the spiritual realm. Jesus Christ is not some luxury; Jesus Christ is a necessity.

And, what are you to seek when you seek righteousness? My dear friend, listen, you are to seek Jesus Christ. Seek Him preeminently. Now, that means, dear friend, that all you ever will need spiritually is in Jesus Christ. Some people talk about a "second blessing." They say, "Well, now that you've been saved, now that you've received Jesus, have you gone on and gotten the second blessing?" Friend, I want to say it with all of the love that I can possibly say it, but, dear friend, all you need is Jesus. Now, get it down big and plain and straight: the fullness of God dwells in Him, (Colossians 2:9) and He dwells in you. Not some second blessing—you seek Jesus. And, when you get Jesus, my dear friend, you get everything. You'll never go beyond Jesus.

Now, you may go deeper and deeper into Jesus. Sometimes people ask me, "Pastor Rogers, have you gotten the second blessing?" And, whimsically I say, "Oh yes, I have." And, they say, "Well, tell me about it." I say, "*The second blessing is discovering what I*

*got in the first one when I got Jesus. And, I'll tell you what the third blessing is: the third blessing is discovering I didn't discover it all in the second one because I spend the rest of my life learning more and more about the Lord Jesus Christ."*

Listen, you are to seek Jesus preeminently. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." (Matthew 6:33) And, my dear friend, Jesus Christ is the righteousness of God applied to us. Jesus Christ is Alpha and Omega. (Revelation 1:8,11; 21:6; 22:13) Do you know what *alpha* is? *Alpha* is the first letter in the Greek alphabet. *Omega* is the last letter in the Greek alphabet. And so, when the Bible calls Jesus "the Alpha and the Omega," if it were in our idiom, Jesus would be called what? "A and Z."

¶ Now, I have my library at home. And, I have I really don't know how many books, but I have a lot of them. But, did you know, dear friend, that all of the wisdom and all of the truth in that library is just in a handful of letters put together differently? That's all—just a handful of letters put together differently; just twenty-six letters in the alphabet. That's all. And, everything in those books is just in those letters. And, my dear friend, all of the wisdom of God is in Jesus, Alpha and Omega. I mean, it's all there. Everything is there. He is the A, the Z, and every letter in between. He's it.¶

You seek Jesus Christ preeminently.

¶ There was an old saint. She had a favorite verse, like all of us do. But, her favorite verse was this: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." (2 Timothy 1:12) She loved it. She shared it with all of her friends. That was her favorite verse. "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." (2 Timothy 1:12) But, as she got older, dementia set in, and she could not remember things like she used to remember them. And, she would try to quote her verse to her friends when they would come in, and she would say, "I know..." "I have committed..." "I know whom I have..." and she couldn't quite get it all out. And, she would give a part of it and get it a little confused. And, on her deathbed her memory had come down to just one word: *Him*. And, she would just say, "Him," "Him." But friend, in that one word she had the whole Bible. I mean, that's it—*Him*.¶

Seek Jesus preeminently. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." (Matthew 6:33)

## **II. Seek Jesus Passionately**

Let me tell you how else to seek Him: not only should you seek Him preeminently, but, my dear friend, you should seek Him passionately. What our Lord here is talking about is hunger; He's talking about thirst. What are the marks of a person who is hungry?



What are the marks of a person who is thirsty? May I give you three?

### **A. A Deliberate Quest**

The first mark of a hungry person is he is on a deliberate quest for food. Now, a starving man... Jesus here is not talking about a person who just has an appetite but a person who sees himself broken and bankrupt and famished. What are the marks of this kind of hunger? My dear friend, if you were starving, are you all that interested in the flower arrangement for the Ladies' Pink Lemonade Society? If you're that hungry, are you all that interested in the ball scores? I mean, if you are that hungry—what is the mark of a person who is truly hungry? Well, my dear friend, he is interested in one thing. His focus is narrow. He is interested in what? In food. In water. He has reached a point of deliberation. His mind begins to work on food and water, food and water, food and water. People sit in the church service like this, and their mind is a thousand different places. Do you know why? They're not hungry. There's no deliberation. There is no determination. You see, a man who is on a deliberate search for food—he has set his face for it; then he gets on a determined search for food. He's determined—he's going to be fed.

You know, I've seen people come to churches thinking like maybe they've done God a wild favor by getting there. And then, they kind of cross their arms and say, you know, "Let's see what this fool has to say. Let's see if he can persuade me." And so, the preacher is preaching, and they are in sort of a little mental argument. What the preacher says, they say to themselves, "Yes, but..." And then, there's a little thing going on there. They're not hungry—they're not hungry. They're not desperate. They're not trying to be fed. Can you imagine the starving man saying, "Well, if somebody wants to feed me, they may"? I've heard people literally say, "Well, if God wants to save me, He can." Oh, my dear friend, "*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness.*" (Matthew 5:6)

¶ A little girl said, "Mamma, may I have a drink of water?" It was already 10:30 at night. She got out of bed and got the little girl a drink of water. Eleven o'clock: "Mamma, can I have another drink of water?" She got up and got the little girl another swallow of water. She said, "Now, that's it. You go to sleep." 11:30: "Mamma, I want some more water." She said, "If you say another word about water, I am going to spank you." Fifteen minutes later: "Mamma, when you get up to spank me, will you bring me a drink of water?" A person who's thirsty will pay a price. A person who is not thirsty or hungry, they won't pay a price.¶

¶ Again, along the same line, I heard of an itinerant who knocked on a door and said to a woman, "Will you feed a hungry man?" She said, "Are you willing to work?" He said, "Well, it doesn't look like there's any work to do around here." She said, "When you

came up the road, there was a pile of wood that needed sawing.” She said, “I saw you when you looked at it.” He said, “Lady, you saw me see it, but you ain’t seen me saw it.” He wasn’t hungry.†

### **B. A Determined Quest**

There are people, dear friend, who, when they’re hungry, they are in a deliberate quest for food. And, that deliberate quest for food becomes a determined quest for food. I remember that song “It’s Real,” that old gospel song about the man that had a formal religion but he really didn’t know Jesus, and then he really got serious and he said, “So I prayed to God in earnest... My poor soul, it must be fed.” Have you come to that place?

*So I prayed to God in earnest,  
And not caring what folks said;  
I was hungry for the blessing;  
My poor soul, it must be fed.*

—HOMER L. COX

### **C. A Desperate Quest**

As a matter of fact, not only is a hungry person on a determined quest; not only is a hungry person in a deliberate quest; my dear friend, he’s on a desperate quest for food. He’ll go anywhere; do anything, almost; pay any price. I’ve seen people eat out of garbage cans. Have you? And, you know they’d lost all their pride. People come to church, and many of them find something to criticize. Hey, folks, if you’re looking for something to criticize, you can find it. Let me tell you where to start: right here. If anybody says anything bad about me, I just say, “Thank God they don’t know any more.”

You’re looking for something to criticize? You can find it anywhere. Here’s a man who sits down at a table, and he says, “Well, the salt is damp. The china is chipped. The tablecloth is wrinkled. The parsley is on the wrong side of the plate.” I can tell you one thing: he’s not a hungry man. Isn’t that right? People who come to pick, to find fault, you can put it down big, put it down plain, put it down straight: they are not hungry. You come to find fault, you can find plenty to find fault with. But, if you come to find Jesus, He’s here. My dear friend, it all depends upon the appetite that you bring to church.

† One lady said to a pastor, “I didn’t like the way you preached this morning.” He said, “What was wrong?” She said, “It’s your language. It was very inelegant. In the course of your sermon, you said ‘pants.’ You should never say ‘pants’; you should say ‘trousers.’ It’s much more elegant.” He said, “I’ll try to remember that.” He said, “Well, what did you think about the sermon? What else do you remember?” She said, “Very frankly, I don’t remember anything else.” He said, “If I hadn’t said ‘pants,’ you wouldn’t

have gotten anything out of the message.”<sup>f</sup>

“Blessed”—“Blessed”—“Blessed”—“are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness.” (Matthew 5:6) My dear friend, a person who is hungry and thirsty is on a deliberate, determined, desperate search for food. Have you narrowed your interests down to one interest? I mean, do you see Jesus Christ as your greatest need? Do you seek Jesus Christ as a starving man would seek food? Oh, my dear friend, when you come to that place, you’re going to find Him.

Why is it that people are not hungry? I mean, what’s wrong with a man who is not hungry? Well, several things. Number one: He could be sick. When you get sick, you lose your appetite. Number two: He could be stuffed full of something else—feeding on this world’s garbage, or anything else. You know what the Bible says in Proverbs 27 and verse 7? “*The full soul loatheth an honeycomb*”—I mean, if you’re full, even honey doesn’t sound good to you—“*but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.*” (Proverbs 27:7) The full soul, he’s not even interested in honey. “*But*”—my dear friend—“*to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.*” (Proverbs 27:7)

### III. Enjoy Jesus Perpetually

Now, here’s the third thing I want to say today, and I’ll be finished. Listen, you are to desire Jesus Christ preeminently: “*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.*” (Matthew 6:33) Secondly, you are to desire Jesus Christ passionately. You are to hunger and thirst after Jesus Christ. But, not only that, my dear friend; you are to enjoy Jesus Christ perpetually—enjoy Him. Listen: “*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.*” (Matthew 5:6)

I don’t know how much of God that you have, but I’m going to tell you something today that may shock you: you have all you want—you have all you want. I don’t know how much of God you have, but you have all you want. A shallow thirst—a shallow satisfaction. Small hunger—small satisfaction. “*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst...for they shall be filled.*” (Matthew 5:6) That’s the reason I said, dear friend, I’ll guarantee it—because there is One who stands behind the guarantee, and His name is Jesus Christ. He’s the One. He’s the One who said, “No *ifs*, *ands*, and *buts* about it—you will be satisfied”—because when you are filled with righteousness, you are filled with blessedness, because you have a hidden hunger, you have a need, that can only be met by Jesus Christ.

So many people have the idea that righteousness is a negative thing. The Pharisees were known for what they didn’t do. People get the idea, “Well, if I’m going to be righteous, I can’t have any fun.” No, if you’re going to be righteous, you can be blessed. Happiness and holiness are inextricably linked together. Dear friend, you don’t lose the good things of life when you come to Jesus. As a matter of fact, listen: “*Seek ye first the*

*kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and*”—what?—“*all these things shall be added unto you.*” (Matthew 6:33) I didn’t say they shall all be taken from you. They shall be added to you. Friend, listen, you enjoy those things more in the context of righteousness. Don’t let the devil get you to thinking negatively about God. The Bible says in 1 Timothy chapter 6, verse 17 that “*God [gives] us richly all things to enjoy.*” (1 Timothy 6:17) He doesn’t say He doesn’t want you to be blessed. He just simply says, “Get your priority right.” Seek Him preeminently, seek Him passionately, and you will enjoy Him perpetually. I love this. I love it because does that mean that if you just give your heart to Jesus today, get saved, receive Him as your personal Savior and Lord, from there on you never have to seek Him any more, you never desire Him any more? Oh no, oh no. Jesus is using an illustration that everybody can understand from the physical realm. He’s saying in the spiritual realm, your spiritual hungers are like your physical hungers.

¶ Have you ever, on Thanksgiving Day, sat down for the Thanksgiving meal? Generally, at our house it’s about 1:30 or 2:00 before everything gets fixed. And, everybody gets in, and we all get around the table. And, we eat and eat and eat and fellowship and eat. And, you know, it’s just a great time, and everything is there. And, the turkey—and is it stuffing or dressing? I never can remember—whatever they put on the inside, anyway, that’s in there, all of that. You’re just having a wonderful time. And, when you’re finished, you say, “I don’t care if I ever eat again. I mean, that’s it. I mean, I am completely satisfied.” You know what I’m talking about? Nod your head. Look intelligent. Okay, now look—“I am completely satisfied.” And then, what happens? That’s about 3:30. About seven o’clock that night, you find yourself in there opening the refrigerator and looking in and poking around all that stuff. It’s amazing, isn’t it?¶

You see, listen, God allows us in the physical realm to have continuing appetite that we might have continuing satisfaction. This thing of being satisfied is not a once-for-all thing any more than eating a meal is a once-for-all thing. You see, you have a continual hunger, not because that food didn’t satisfy you; you have a continual hunger because that food did satisfy you. And, your appetite is increased because of the goodness of the food, and the satisfaction that it brought once—it continues to bring day after day. On my knees this morning, I have found that satisfaction. On my knees today, I have fed on heaven’s bread. And, you come to the Lord Jesus Christ, and you are continually being hungry and you are continually being satisfied. And, that’s the reason, my friend, I say that when you desire Him preeminently, when you seek Him passionately, you will enjoy Him perpetually. He will meet the deepest needs of your heart. And then, when you meet the Lord Jesus Christ in all of His fullness, all of His sweetness, you have that blessedness, and all of these other things are added to you. (Matthew 6:33)

My dear friend, put it down—listen—you will be completely satisfied, you will be

continually satisfied, and you will be certainly satisfied because Jesus said it shall happen. Let me give you a couple of verses. Listen to this—Psalm 107 and verse 9: *“For He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.”* (Psalms 107:9) If people understood what they had in Jesus, I don’t believe you could keep them away with a machine gun. Listen to 1 Peter 2, verse 3: *“If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.”* (1 Peter 2:3) Psalm 34, verse 8: *“O taste and see that the LORD is good.”* (Psalms 34:8) Friend, I am not inviting you today to a funeral. I am inviting you to a feast.

I’ve been on this road for a long time now serving the Lord Jesus. Jesus satisfied the need of my heart when I was a teenage boy. I stopped on the corner of 39th Street and Calvin Avenue in West Palm Beach, Florida, and I looked up into the sky as a teenage boy. I had just walked my girlfriend home, the girl I’m married to today. I had been a church member, made a profession of faith. Whether I was saved or not I really don’t know, but I prayed like this: “O God, I don’t have satisfaction. I don’t know whether I’m lost and the Holy Spirit has me under conviction, or whether I’m saved and the devil’s trying to make me doubt it.” But, I just looked up into the heavens. I looked, as it were, into the face of God, and I said, “O God, right now, this moment, with all of my heart, once and for all, now and forever, I receive you as my personal Lord and Savior. I don’t look for a feeling. I take you at your word. You said, *‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.’* (Acts 16:31) I believe, I receive, and that settles it.” My friend, as a teenage boy, my heart was satisfied, and it still is.

## Conclusion

Do you know what evangelism is? It’s just one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread. That’s what I’m trying to tell you. I wish that I could take Jesus for you. I wish I could do it for you, but I can’t. I tell you one thing I can do: I can hold up the Word of God and tell you what Jesus said when He said, *“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”* (Matthew 5:6) Desire Him preeminently. Seek Him passionately. You’ll enjoy Him perpetually—you will; I promise.†

# The Magnificence of Mercy

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** August 23, 1992

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 5:7

*“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.”*

MATTHEW 5:7

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Beauties of Mercy

II. The Basis of Mercy

III. The Blessings of Mercy

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you find again the Beatitudes, Matthew chapter 5? We’re calling these “The Keys to the Kingdom.” And, these are statements that Jesus Christ has made, and He begins each one of them with the word *blessed*. The word *blessed* is almost hard to translate. We could say “happy,” but it means more than “happy.” It means “fulfilled.” It means “with joy.” It means “complete.” It may mean “to be congratulated.” All of those things and more are wrapped up in that Greek word *makarios*.

Listen as the Lord Jesus Christ gives these Beatitudes—we’ve said almost every Sunday, “the attitudes that ought to be”: *“And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”*—and there He meant, “Blessed are those who see their spiritual condition, that they see that they are bankrupt, paupers, in the sight of a righteous and a holy God.” The word *poor* here doesn’t mean just “without much”; it means “without anything.” Then verse 4—*“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted”*—and so, you see, when we see what we are in and of ourselves, spiritually (in our hands we have nothing to offer to God), then the next step for blessedness is to be broken over our bankruptcy: *“Blessed are they that mourn.”* (Matthew 5:4) Genuine, godly sorrow that brings repentance. And, that brings us to the next blessedness—*“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth”*—and we’ve already told you that *meekness* means “submission to the will of God.” It is strength that has been conquered

and now controlled, because when I see what I am in and of myself, and then when I repent of that sin with godly sorrow, then I yield myself to God. And then, look, if you will, in verse 6, the last one that we talked about—*“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled”*—and that righteousness is as is Jesus Christ Himself: not our own righteousness, not self-righteousness, but the righteousness that comes by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. So, when I see that I’m a lost sinner, and when I repent of my sin, and when I yield my heart to God, and when I hunger and thirst for Jesus, then God does something in my heart; I am born again. And then, I begin to act like a born-again person. And, that brings us to the Beatitude for today, verse 7—*“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy”* (Matthew 5:1–7) This is a God-like characteristic that is in the heart and mind of those who have been born again. And, the way it shows is by having a heart full of mercy. Those who have received mercy, beyond the shadow of any doubt or peradventure, will show mercy.

Now, what is mercy? Well, mercy is not just softness. There are some people who are so soft they wouldn’t hurt a fly.

¶ I was in a meeting the other day, and they were discussing somebody that they wanted to do something that took a little courage. And, they said, “Don’t get him. He wouldn’t kill a snake in a nursery.” Well, that’s soft enough, that’s but that’s not necessarily mercy.¶

And then, mercy is not just mere sentiment. It’s not seeing somebody hurting and somebody in trouble and shedding crocodile tears. That may be sentiment, but it is not mercy.

¶ I heard of a preacher who was preaching, and he was talking about how we need to be compassionate, and he said, “I was walking down the streets of a town; and I looked over there in doorway, and there was a derelict. And, the sand and the newspapers were blowing up around his body. He had passed out. He was just lying there. And,” he said, “all down that busy street people were walking—well dressed, going about their business. And, they looked down there, and there was a piece of humanity on the ground.” He said, “Nobody was stopping. Nobody did anything. And then,” he said, “after we had gone to dinner and come back, he was still there; and nobody had done anything.” Oh, isn’t it amazing? Isn’t it amazing how we always think that the other man ought to do it? And, there he had not only softness, maybe sentiment, but he did not have mercy.¶

What is mercy? What is this quality of mercy? My dear friend, it is compassion in action. That’s what mercy is—not softness, not sentiment, but compassion in action. Now, I want us to think about this Beatitude: *“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.”* (Matthew 5:7)

## I. The Beauties of Mercy

First of all, think with me, if you would, about the beauties of mercy. Did you know that the quality of mercy is one of the most beautiful characteristics of God? And, when you're merciful, you're acting like God. Put these verses in your margin. I love them. They have already spoken to me this morning.

One is Lamentations chapter 3 and verse 22. Now, don't turn to it, because I'll be finished with the sermon before some find it, but just put it in the margin. Lamentations chapter 3 and verse 22: *"It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed"*—friend, you think about it—*"because his compassions fail not."* (Lamentations 3:22) There, God links mercy with compassion: *"It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed...his compassions [they] fail not"*—and then He goes on to say—*"They are new every morning."* (Lamentations 3:22–23) Every morning you can wake up and greet the mercy of God. Have you ever thought about the fact that for you to fail to live this day, God does not have to take your life—all He has to do is stop giving it? Every day is a gift from God. *"[His] mercies...are new every morning."* (Lamentations 3:22–23) *"It is of the LORD's mercies that [we're] not consumed."* (Lamentations 3:22)

And then, put this verse in your margin—Ephesians 2, verse 4 and following: *"But God, who is rich in mercy, for"*—or "because of"—*"his great love wherewith he loved us"* (Ephesians 2:4) Do you know how God counts His riches? Not in silver or gold, but in His mercy.

And so, my dear friend, what are the beauties of mercy? When you're merciful, you're God-like. To be unmerciful is not to be like God. The Bible says in Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 1: "Therefore be imitators of God"—not in the bad sense of imitation, but actually, the King James says, *"Be ye therefore followers of God."* (Ephesians 5:1) And, the word literally means "imitators" of God. "Be God-like."

And, my dear friend, the Lord Jesus Christ illustrated that so much in the Gospel of Luke. In the Gospel of Luke, there was a lawyer who came—Luke chapter 10, I think most of you know it—and he said, "Good master, what do I have to do to inherit eternal life? What do I have to do to be saved?" Well, Jesus said, "You know the law. What does the law say?" "Well," he said—and this man was a good lawyer—"Well," he said, "the law says you are to love God with all of your being, and you are to love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus said, "You've got it right. You've got it right. You just do this, and you'll be all right." (Luke 10:25–28) Well, this man—he was not only a good lawyer, but he was a bad lawyer. I mean, he got the answer right, but he didn't know the Lord. And, Jesus knew he wasn't saved. You see, he was looking for a loophole in the law. And so, did you know that you can be one hundred percent right and still die and go to hell? Did you know that? I mean, there are some of you here in this building right now today, if I were to ask you how to be saved, you could give it to me just like that.



When you die, you're going to hell. You say, "Well, now wait a minute, pastor. I know the plan of salvation." *You're not saved by the plan of salvation; you're saved by the Man of salvation.*

Have you ever thought about it? When Herod wanted to know where Jesus Christ was going to be born, he went and asked the scribes, "Where is Messiah to be born?" "Oh, they said, "you go right down there to Bethlehem. That's where He's going to be born." But, not a one of them went down there to bow a knee to Him. They knew, and yet they missed it. (Matthew 2:1–3) Here was a man, this lawyer—he had it all just right. He was a good lawyer, but he was a very bad lawyer; and so, he says, "But now, wait a minute. Who is my neighbor? Just who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29) In other words: "I don't want to love anybody I don't have to love. I don't want to show mercy to anybody I don't have to show mercy to." I mean, as far as he was concerned, God wasn't really around. He didn't have to worry about God. But, His neighbor—that was something he had to worry about.

And, Jesus told him that story that I preached on not so very long ago. Remember the story of the Good Samaritan? Do you remember that story? Jesus said, "*A...man went...from Jerusalem to Jericho, and [he] fell among thieves.*" (Luke 10:30) Now, if you know anything about the topography of the Holy Land, you know that Jerusalem is set on a hill; Jericho is down in the Dead Sea—the rift there on the banks of the Dead Sea, thirteen hundred feet below sea level. Here's a man. He starts on a mountaintop. He's going from Jerusalem to Jericho. Jericho was a heathen city. You remember that's where Rahab lived. Jerusalem was the holy city. And, this man pictures mankind going away from God, from the holy city to the hellish city. He's going down, down, down.

And, Jesus said that on that road he "*fell among thieves.*" (Luke 10:30) Now, there are a lot of limestone caves there, and precipitous places. A lot of wild animals used to be there. And, it was a place where marauders, and muggers, and robbers, and thieves, cutthroats—they would stay in those caves just waiting for someone to come along. And, this man came along, and the Bible says that they beat him, they stripped him, they robbed him, and they left him half-dead. (Luke 10:30)

And then, Jesus said to this lawyer who wanted to know who his neighbor was...Jesus said to him, "Then there came along that day a certain priest, and the priest saw him, and he passed by on the other side." (Luke 10:31) Now, you know, the priests—they were the religious people of that day. They were the teachers, and they performed all of the rituals and the sacrifices. He represents ritualism. Oh, there are so many churches today that are so filled with ritualism. They stand. They sit. They kneel. They pray. They sing. They do this. They do that. And then, they go out and are just as lost as a goose in a snowstorm. This priest represents ritualism, and he just passed by.

"Then," Jesus said, "another man, this time a Levite, he walked by. He saw him, and

he passed by.” (Luke 10:32) Now, what does the Levite represent? Well, they were keepers of the law. So, if the priest represented ritual, he represented rules. You know, the law can condemn us, and the law can describe us; but the law can’t redeem us. Maybe this Levite said, “Look at you! Boy, you’re in a mess! What were you doing down here, anyway? This isn’t a safe place to be traveling alone. You should never have been here! You’re getting just what you deserve!” And, he went on past. And, that’s what the law does, dear friend. All of the rules in the Old Testament—they can describe us; they can condemn us, but they don’t save us.

“And then,” Jesus said, “a third man came along.” (Luke 10:33) He was what? A Samaritan. Do you know who the Samaritans were? They were a mongrel race. They were the ones that were left behind after the captivity. They intermarried with the pagan, heathen people around them. And, the Jews despised them. Jesus said, “*A certain Samaritan.*” (Luke 10:33) I know who He had in mind: He had in mind Himself—because Jesus was despised, rejected, hated of men. And, this man, this hated one, this despised one—he’s coming along, and Jesus said, “He saw the man. He saw him where he was. And, when he saw him, he was moved with compassion. He went to him. He bound the man’s wounds. And,” Jesus said, “he poured in oil, and he poured in wine.” (Luke 10:33–34) Do you know what oil represents in the Bible, symbolically? This is a parable. All of this is highly symbolical. What does oil represent? The Holy Spirit. Comfort. He’s the Comforter. And, he’s there with the oil and the balm, the healing oil.

Then, he poured in wine. (Luke 10:34) What does wine represent? The blood of Jesus Christ. It was the wine to cleanse, the oil to comfort, representing the precious, I believe, blood of Jesus, representing the wonderful ministry of the Holy Spirit.

And then, the Bible says the Good Samaritan took this man “*and set him [upon] his...beast, and brought him to an inn.*” (Luke 10:34) Now, when the Good Samaritan met this man to begin with, the Good Samaritan was riding and the man was on the ground. But, after the Good Samaritan met him, the man was riding and the Samaritan was walking. What a picture of substitution! Jesus takes my place, and I take His. He “*set him [upon] his...beast, and [he] brought him to an inn.*” (Luke 10:34) And, he said, “You take care of him. Here’s some money. And whatever else it costs, when I come again, I will pay the price.” (Luke 10:35) What a picture of salvation! I’m so grateful that Jesus came to where I was. I’m so grateful that He had compassion upon me. I am so grateful that He brought me to His house of mercy. I’m so grateful that Jesus Christ paid the price.

And, in that same chapter, in verse 36, Jesus asked that lawyer a question. He said, “Now, which of these showed mercy?”—“Which of these showed mercy?” (Luke 10:36) My dear friend, listen, Jesus Christ has shown every one of us mercy. And, mercy is not softness. It’s not sentiment. It’s compassion—compassion in action. And oh, how we

need to learn the message of mercy—not with the indifference of the priest and the Levite, not with the iniquity of those who beat of the man, but with the involvement that life calls for.

You go outside these doors, and you'll find that there are three classes of people. You go to this city—I don't know where you live dear friend, but in your city—I want to tell you there are three classes of people, and they're right there in that tenth chapter of Luke. Let me tell you what they are. They are the "beater-uppers," the "passer-uppers," and the "picker-uppers." That's all the world's made of. The beater-uppers—those people who would rob and kill and destroy. Every pornographer is one of them. Every beer baron and liquor dealer, as far as I'm concerned, is one of them. Every abortionist is one of them. Those are the beater-uppers. I'm telling you, we have people today who have been bruised and battered. Some are wounded domestically. Some are wounded psychologically. Little children who have been abused and battered, some of them sexually abused. Some of them are wounded economically. They're victims of slumlords, unfair economical practices. Some are wounded spiritually. They've been caught up in the cults, and false doctrine, and liberalism. When they have gotten into those movements, they are twice a child of hell. I am telling you, the bruised and the battered and the beat-up are all around us. There are the beater-uppers. There are the passer-uppers, and, God help us, they have their names on church rolls somewhere. And then, there are the picker-uppers. You're one of the three, my dear friend. Either you are like those thieves, who said, "What's yours is mine, and I'm going to get it"; or you are like the priest and the Levite, who said, "What's mine is mine, and I'm going to keep it"; or you're going to be like the Good Samaritan, who says, "What's mine is mine, but you can have it if you need it. And, I'm here to share, and I'm here to serve; and I'm here to minister." *"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."* (Matthew 5:7)

## **II. The Basis of Mercy**

Quickly now, I want you to think with me not only about the beauties of mercy—I am telling you, my dear friend, that mercy is a beautiful thing, because it is God-like—but what is the basis of mercy. Well, my dear friend, let me say this: there can be no mercy without truth. Did that sink in? There can be no mercy without truth. I'm talking to you about the basis of mercy.

Now, let me give you a verse—Psalm 85 and verse 10: *"Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."* (Psalms 85:10) I took my concordance and looked up place after place where God links mercy and truth together. I knew it was there, but I was amazed at the verses in the Bible where God conjoins mercy and truth. All real mercy is rooted in truth. Now, what I mean by that is to show mercy is not to minimize sin. Mercy is not sentiment. When you show mercy, you

withhold judgment. And, when you withhold judgment, that means that judgment is really needed, really expected. Mercy is the withholding of judgment.

Have you ever heard anybody say, “Is it fair for God to do this, or God to do that?” Or, have they ever gotten in the silly discussion with you about whether God is fair or whether God is not fair? Friend, God is not fair. Don’t ever expect God to be fair. God is not fair. Now, wait a minute. I’m not finished yet. God is not fair. Do you know, when I expect somebody to be fair to me, that means I have it coming to me. “Give me what I have coming. Be fair.” In other words, “I deserve this.” You see, that’s fairness: “You give me my part.” It’s like children arguing about a will: “It’s not fair that you get this and I don’t get that.” That’s fairness.

God doesn’t deal with us on the basis of fairness. God deals with us on the basis of mercy. We don’t deserve anything. When a man is looking for fairness, he’s not happy when he gets what he deserves because he figures, “I deserve it.” He’s only mad because he didn’t get it sooner, and doubly mad if somebody else gets more. I mean, that’s the object. That’s fairness. God is not fair. God is just and merciful. The justice of God says that sin must be punished. That is truth. Once you see that truth, then you cry out for mercy—then you cry out for mercy. You see, my dear friend, God is not some maudlin sentimentalist who just says, “Tut tut. Yeah, you’ve sinned, but I’m a merciful God. I’m a merciful God; that’s all right.”

Friend, let me tell you something: if you refuse the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, there’s no hope for you. Don’t think you are going to come to the Judgment one day—you refused Jesus; you trampled under foot the precious blood of Jesus—and then you say, “God is merciful. I’ll just come to the Final Judgment, and I’ll just stand before God and I’ll say, ‘Well, God, that’s right. I denied you. I refused you. I cursed you. I ignored you. I went my own sinful way. Here I am at the Judgment. Have mercy, Lord.’” Do you think you’ll get mercy?

Let me give you a verse of Scripture. Listen to it. It’s one of the most frightening scriptures in all of the Bible. Hebrews 10, verses 28 and 29: “*He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses*”—in the Old Testament, when a man saw the law of God, and he said, “I don’t give a rip about the law of God,” and he sins, God says he’ll die without mercy. “Well,” you say, “that’s Old Testament.” All right, let’s continue to read in verse 29. Listen to this. Now, you think that was bad?—“*Of how much sorer*”—“of how much more radical, deep”—“*punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?*” (Hebrews 10:28–29)

Do you think that Jesus Christ could have died in agony and blood for you, and you sit in a church building like this and hear a preacher preach about the love of Jesus

Christ—that He died for you—and then, do you think, dear friend, that you can walk out without Christ, refuse the Lord Jesus Christ, and trample beneath your the blood of Christ? You say, “I wouldn’t do that.” My dear friend, everybody in this building will walk out either under the blood or over the blood—put it down big and straight—and, if they walk out over the blood, has done despite to the Spirit of grace. It’s not just a Baptist preacher here. My dear friend, the Holy Spirit of God is speaking to you. He’s the One who is speaking. I’m just a Western Union boy; that’s all. He’s the source of the message.

You say, “Well, I don’t want that. I refuse that.” Then, do you think you’re going to come to the Judgment and say, “O God, have mercy”?

ƒ Suppose you get sick, and you call your doctor; and your doctor comes to you, and your doctor looks very worried. You say, “Well, doctor, I don’t like that look on your face. Give it to me straight.” The doctor says, “I am sorry to tell you this. But, you’ve asked me, and I’m going to tell you. I see no hope for you. You are going to die.” You say, “Well, now wait a minute, doctor. I don’t want to die. Doctor, you’ve got to do something. Isn’t there something that the medical art can do that can save my life?” And, the doctor says, “Well, I have read of a new serum, a medicine that may work in your case. It’s very, very, very new, and very, very, very expensive.” “Well,” you say, “doctor, it’s my life. You’ve got to do something.” “Well,” the doctor says, “do you have much money?” “Well, no, doctor, I don’t have any money. But doctor, you just can’t let me die because I don’t have any money. Doctor, can’t you do something?” And, the doctor says, “Well, let me see what I can do.”

You are there in your home, languishing upon your sickbed. After two or three more days, the doctor comes back. His hair is disheveled; his beard has two days’ growth. His eyes are sunken back into his head with dark circles under his eyes. His clothing is torn. There’s blood on his shirt. His hands are trembling. And, you look at him, and you say, “Doctor, doctor, what’s happened to you? Where have you been?” He says, “I went to get this medicine for you.” He says, “I went to several foundations, and I got some money, but I didn’t get enough money.” Then, he says, “I went to my own bank account. I took all I had out of my own bank account.” Have you ever known a doctor to do that? “And then,” he says, “I didn’t have enough so I mortgaged my house. And then,” he says, “I got the medicine. And, on my way over here, I had my precious son in the car with me, and I was driving in such a way to get to you in time that I wrecked my automobile. We’ve had a tragic wreck. The blood that you see on my shirt is the blood of my little boy. My son—I’ve just come from the morgue—my son has died. But, here it is. Here’s the medicine. Take it. I believe you’ll live.”

Suppose you took that vial of medicine, whatever it may have been, precious as it is, looked at it for a while, and then threw it on the floor, and it broke, and the contents ran

out in the rug, never to be retrieved. And then, suppose you pointed a finger in the face of that doctor and said, “Doctor, if I die, it will be your fault. Have mercy on me, doctor. Don’t let me die.”<sup>†</sup>

You say, “That’s unthinkable! That’s unthinkable!” I’ll tell you something else, mister: it will be unthinkable for you to come to the Final Judgment and say, “O God, have mercy upon me, and don’t let me die!” when God put His darling Son on the cross and bankrupted heaven in order to buy you salvation. Amen? Listen to me. Oh, listen to me! God is a God of mercy. And, if a man *“despised Moses’ law [and] died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment...shall he be thought worthy, who [has trampled beneath his feet] the blood of the covenant, [counted it] an unholy thing, [has] done despite unto the Spirit of grace?”* (Hebrews 10:28–29) My dear friend, the basis of mercy is truth. Listen—listen. The Bible teaches us that that mercy and truth are linked together.

### III. The Blessings of Mercy

Let me just finish this message talking to you not only about the beauty of mercy, talking to you not only about the basis of mercy, but let me talk to you for just a moment about the blessings of mercy. Oh, the blessings of mercy! You see, Jesus here is giving blessings. And, Jesus says, *“Blessed”—“blessed,” “blessed”—“are they which do hunger and thirst...[they’ll] be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.”* (Matthew 5:6–7) Now, that doesn’t mean that we are forgiven because we show mercy. It means we show mercy because we are forgiven. And, the more mercy we show, the more mercy we get. It’s just a cycle. And, you show mercy because you have received mercy.

Let me give you a verse of Scripture. Put this down. Boy, this is another frightening verse! James chapter 2 and verse 13: *“For he shall have judgment without mercy”—*that means there are some who are going to come to the Judgment and have no mercy—*“he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.”* (James 2:13) There’s judgment, but mercy just overcomes it. But, my dear friend, you will have judgment without mercy if you show no mercy.

Here’s another verse; put it down: Psalm 18, verse 25. God’s psalmist said to God, *“With the merciful [you will] shew [yourself] merciful; with an upright man [you will] shew [yourself] upright.”* (Psalms 18:25) My dear friend, when you’re upright, then you show mercy. And, when you show mercy, you get more mercy. The more mercy we show, the more mercy we get. But, we can’t get it until, first of all, we have come the route of being poor in spirit, repenting of our sin, yielding to God, receiving Jesus Christ, God’s righteousness—and when we receive that mercy, we show it.

<sup>†</sup>A man was blinded in an accident. He was a young man, spent most of his life with

perfect eyesight. And then, in an industrial accident he was blinded. He was bitter, confused, hurt, filled with remorse, confusion. After a while, he knew he had to go to a school for the blind. He dreaded it. But, he went into this school and went into the president's office. The president talked to him and said, "We're glad to have you here. We want to be a friend to you. We want to help you. You can live a very wonderful life, not as though you had sight, but there are many things that the blind know that others don't know. We're here to help you." Then, he said, "There's someone here, an instructor, who's going to show you around the campus." An instructor came in, and they greeted one another. And, the instructor said, "Come out on the porch with me." They went out on the porch. He said, "Listen, I just want to help you to get acclimated here." He said, "Here's what we're going to do. I'm going to walk you around the campus, first of all." He said, "Now we're going to walk down the steps." He said, "There are ten steps." He said, "Count them as we go down. There are ten that go out of this building. Count them. Try to remember how many there are." Then, he said, "When we go down the steps, we're going to turn right. And, as we turn right, we're going to go out through the garden, and," he said, "we're going to walk through the garden, and then we're going to circle the campus." And, he said, "I want you to get acquainted."

So, they began to walk. And, he said, "Don't worry." He said, "I'll be right here at your elbow in case anything goes wrong." That gave the young man some assurance. They went down the ten steps. They turned right. They went out into the garden. They took their time. The man felt the flowers and smelled them. There was a water fountain there. He got a drink from the water fountain. Then they sat on a stone bench there in the garden. Then they continued their route around. And, when they made the entire circuit of the campus, the young man was feeling better. He felt like, "You know, I know where I am. I feel a little bit at home."

The instructor said, "Let's go up to the dormitory where you'll be staying. Let's go in the room." They counted the steps into the room. He showed him where all of the furniture was located, where things were put up, where things were kept. And then, he said, "Listen, I'm here to help you. I'm here to show you. It won't be too long before you'll catch on." By this time, the young man was feeling at home. He said, "I want to thank you so much." He said, "I had so much fear when I came here, but you've been such a friend. You've helped me so much. I want to thank you." He said, "You've been very understanding." He said, "You know, it's hard for someone to understand when you're blind." "Oh," he said, "I can understand. I'm blind also."†

You know, those who have received mercy know how to show it more than anybody else, don't they? If you haven't received mercy, no wonder you don't show mercy. Oh, my dear friend, if God in love has forgiven us, how much more should we forgive one another!

## **Conclusion**

*“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.” (Matthew 5:7)*



# Integrity: Don't Leave Home Without It

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: August 30, 1992**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 5:8**

*"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."*

MATTHEW 5:8

## Outline

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## Introduction

Turn in God's Word—would you please?—to Matthew chapter 5, as we continue our study on the Sermon on the Mount, and under the general heading "Building on the Rock." We've been going through, these past three Sundays on the Beatitudes, a subsection that we have entitled "The Keys to the Kingdom." These are the Beatitudes. These are sayings of the Lord Jesus Christ that start with the word *blessed*, which means "to be congratulated, to have joy, to be happy, to be thankful." And, it's really a hard word to translate, other than just the word *blessed*. And, the Lord Jesus is teaching us here that character is far more important than anything else. These Beatitudes deal with character—"the attitudes that ought to be."

It has well been said that "a child rejoices in what he has, a youth rejoices in what he does, but an adult rejoices in what he is." Now, whether that's always true or not, I want to say that the more mature you are as a Christian, the more you will rejoice—not in what you have or what you do, but in what you are through the Lord Jesus Christ. And,

that's what these Beatitudes talk about.

Let's look at them again. Verse 1: *"And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy"*—and then we come to verse 8. What a beautiful Beatitude!—*"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."* (Matthew 5:1–8)

Today I want to talk to you about integrity, and the title of the message is this: *"Integrity: Don't Leave Home Without It."* *"Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God."* (Matthew 5:8) There is an integrity crisis in America, and it touches every area of America, whether it be Watergate, Irangate, or "Pearly Gate." All of the institutions in America are being touched by scandal and problems, and underneath it all is an integrity crisis. Three things I want you to notice as we look at this wonderful Beatitude.

## **I. The Principle of Integrity**

First of all, what I'm going to call "the principle of integrity." *"Blessed are the pure in heart."* (Matthew 5:8) Now, what does this word *pure* mean? It's the word from we get our English word *catharsis*, which means "a purifying," whether it be physical or emotional, a catharsis. And, the word does not have to do so much with cleanliness, although that is inferred. It has to do more with "unity" or "singleness of heart or mind." It literally means, "Blessed is that which is unmixed." For example, grain that would have chaff in it would not be pure. Or, metal that would have alloy in it would not be pure. Or, milk that had been diluted would not be pure. Or, an army that would have people who would defect—defectors in it—would not be pure. And so, when he says, *"Blessed are the pure in heart,"* (Matthew 5:8) what he is talking about is, "Blessed are those who have integrity, that do not have divided hearts, that do not have double hearts." The word literally means "singleness of heart."

Now, the Lord Jesus Christ amplified this. Look in chapter 6, in this same sermon, and verse 24, and you'll pick it up: *"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot"*—you cannot—*"serve God and mammon."* (Matthew 6:24) You cannot be double-minded—you cannot have an impure heart—and see God. You want to worship God? You must do it, my dear friend, without duplicity and without hypocrisy.

Now, there are a number of verses that I want to give you today, and, I think, if you'll just stay parked in Matthew chapter 5... Unless you're very nimble with your fingers, jot

the scriptures down. But, let me give you some other scriptures. For all of the Bible comes down, really, on this one verse: *“Blessed are the pure in heart”* (Matthew 5:8) — *“Blessed are those who are single-minded; blessed are those who are not double-minded.”*

Listen to these. James 4, verse 4: *“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity”—that is, “warfare”—“with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”* (James 4:4) What he is saying is that you can’t hold the world with one hand and Jesus Christ with the other. And then, James goes on to say in James chapter 4 and verse 8: *“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you”—now, listen to this—“Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.”* (James 4:8) Literally, in the Greek, it is “you two-souled, double-souled people”—“you have spiritual schizophrenia, you double-minded.” You’ve got to have a single mind if you’re going to serve the Lord.

Do you know what David was called in the Bible? King David? I love King David. I’ve got a son named David who is a missionary in Spain. I love David, and we named our son David after this David, and I’ll tell you why. The Bible says in Acts chapter 13 and verse 22 that David was *“a man after [God’s] own heart.”* (Acts 13:22) Now remember, we’re talking about the heart, and we’re talking about integrity. *“Blessed are the pure in heart.”* (Matthew 5:8) I want you to see how David illustrates what we’re talking about. When God looked at David, when God was wanting a king over Israel and God came to measure David, God did not measure him by putting the tape measure from his head to his feet—God didn’t measure to see how tall he was—nor did God put the tape measure around David’s biceps. God put the measure around David’s heart.

Remember all of the sons of Jesse had come in there, and Samuel was looking for the next king of Israel. And, by the Holy Spirit, Samuel is trying to discern which one is the one that God has chosen. And, Jesse brought his big, tall son out there, Eliab, and he looked like a king. I mean, he looked like some sort of an Adonis there, and he came out. The old prophet looked at him, and God said to Samuel, “Look not thou on the height of his stature or on his countenance, for God does not see as man sees. Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7) —the little boy named David, a keeper of the sheep. Samuel said, “Isn’t there another?” “Oh well, there’s just little David.” He said, “Well, bring him on in here. I want to look in his face. I want to look into his heart.” And, there he was, David. And, God said, “That’s the one I want, and I want him because of one thing: I want him because he’s a man after my own heart.” (1 Samuel 16:1–12) Now, what is “a man after God’s own heart”? Well he’s a man with integrity. I’m going to give you some verses that David wrote. And, by giving you these verses that David wrote, you’re going to see what made David the man he was. Jot them down.

Psalm 7 and verse 8—David said, *“The LORD shall judge the people: judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity.”* (Psalms 7:8) Do you see it? *“Mine integrity.”* (Psalms 7:8) By the way, just let’s open to Psalms right here; it’s worth it. Just go ahead and turn to Psalms right now. We’ve got time for this. I want you to mark these verses. Psalms, if you are not familiar with your Bible, is just about in the middle of your Bible. And, turn to Psalm 7 and verse 8. Let’s start right there. Psalm 7 and verse 8: *“The LORD shall judge the people: judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, and according to my integrity that is in me.”* (Psalms 7:8) Now, an integer is the simplest number. That is, it is a unit; it is not divisible. That’s what he’s talking about: “my integrity—I’m not double-minded.”

Look, if you will, in Psalm 25. Just fast-forward to Psalm 25, and look, if you will, in verse 21. Here’s the prayer of David. Here’s the man after God’s own heart: *“Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee.”* (Psalms 25:21) David knew that when he waited on God, his great resource was his integrity.

Now, look in Psalm 26 and verse 1: *“Judge me, O LORD; for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in the LORD; therefore I shall not slide.”* (Psalms 26:1) Look in verse 11: *“But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me.”* (Psalms 26:11) Go to Psalm 41 and verse 12, and we’ll make this one the last one along this line—but Psalm 41 and verse 12: *“And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity.”* (Psalms 41:12) By now I hope you’re catching something. By now I hope a thought is forming in your mind. When God looked at David, God said of David, “There is a man after mine own heart.” (Acts 13:22) And, what was David’s heart? David’s heart was a pure heart.

The word *pure* means “integrity.” It means “single-mindedness.” It’s not a spiritual schizophrenic. You say, “But didn’t David sin?” Yes, David sinned. David sinned horribly. He failed God. But, I’m going to tell you something about David: David may have had a sinful heart, but he always had a single heart. You see, David was not a hypocrite. And, when David sinned, it broke David’s heart as well as it broke God’s heart. And, David never offered an alibi. David offered a confession. And, he said in Psalm 51: *“Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest.”* (Psalms 51:4) David knew what it was to be right, and David knew what it was to be wrong. Yes, he wasn’t sinless. My dear friend, he was single. He was not a hypocrite.

Now, I want to ask you a question, my dear friend: Do you have that kind of integrity? Do you have absolute integrity? I’m getting to the age now where young preachers come to me, and they say to me, “Pastor Rogers, Brother Rogers, give me some advice. What would you say that I need in the ministry?” You know what I tell them? “Integrity—integrity. Just have integrity.” *“Blessed are the pure in heart”* (Matthew

5:8)—those who are single-minded, not double-souled, who love God with all of their heart. Now, that’s the principle of integrity.

## II. The Place of Integrity

Second thing I want you to think about: the place of integrity. Notice what he says: “Blessed are those who have integrity in their heart”—“*Blessed are the pure in heart.*” (Matthew 5:8) Now, what do we mean by that? We talk about “giving your heart to Jesus.” The skeptic says, “What are you going to do? Reach in the thoracic cavity and bring out that pulsating muscle and give that to God?” No, when the Bible uses the word *heart*, it’s not talking about the muscle that pumps the blood. It is talking about the core of the individual. It is talking about the seat of our emotions. It’s talking about the inner person. It’s talking about what I would call, in modern language, “master control.” “Your heart” speaks of total commitment. When people fall in love, they’re called what? “Sweethearts.” Not “airheads,” but “sweethearts.” They fall in love. Now, it’s the heart that is the core of individual. It is that part of the individual that dictates the character, directs the will, and dominates the affections.

Here’s a verse—Proverbs chapter 4 and verse 23: “*Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.*” (Proverbs 4:23) If you are going to be pure, my dear friend, you must be pure in heart before you can be pure any other way. And, that brings us to a real problem. Now, here’s a verse I want you to turn to. It’s found in the Old Testament—Jeremiah. It’s a classic verse on the heart: Jeremiah chapter 17. And, I want you to look at it with me and turn to it, because we’re going to get right down to the crux of the matter right here—Jeremiah chapter 17, verses 9 and 10. Now, the Bible says we are to be blessed if we are pure in heart. But, very frankly, none is. Look. Here’s what Jeremiah says, and this is the classic passage—Jeremiah chapter 17, verses 9 and 10: “*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.*” (Jeremiah 17:9–10) Now, here’s what Jeremiah says about my heart and your heart.

### A. The Disease of the Heart

First of all, he says it’s diseased. Do you see that word that says “*desperately wicked*” (Jeremiah 17:9) in verse 9? That word literally means “incurably sick.” In Jeremiah chapter 15, verse 18, he uses the same word, and he says, “*My wound [is] incurable, [it refuses] to be healed.*” (Jeremiah 15:18) It’s the same word that is used for “desperately wicked.” It means that you have a heart problem, my dear friend; you have a heart ailment—and I’m not talking about the physical ailment. You have an ailment that resists all medication. “*My wound [is] incurable, [it refuses] to be healed.*” (Jeremiah 15:18) All

the spiritual exercise and all of the spiritual diet in the world will not cure the disease of your heart. The heart is sick. It resists medication.

Now, so many people don't understand that their problem is their heart. And, they're trying to medicate their heart, when they need a heart transplant. They are trying somehow, some way, to cure the problem of sin. But, sin is on the inside. And, even if you reform on the outside, you've not dealt with the problem of the heart. I have told you before, *the heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart.*

¶ Now. I've gone to a sawmill from time to time and have been very interested in watching them put logs on that cradle and lop off the edges. They'll take a big ol' log out of the woods. And, it may have bumps and knots on it; it may be a little crooked, but they lay it on that cradle, and run it through there, and lop off one side of that log, bring it back, and turn it, run it through again, and lop off another side, bring it back, turn it, run it through again, and cut off another side. And finally, on the outside, it's perfectly square. And, if you stand and look down, it's perfectly straight. But, if you'll go and look at the end of it, the heart is still crooked.¶

That's the way it is with some individuals. Some individuals—they have reform outwardly. But, the Bible says, *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."* (Jeremiah 17:9) That's the reason that just reformation is not enough. You need regeneration. If a man is a drunkard, for example, and he quits drinking without getting saved, all that means is he'll go to hell sober. I mean, he's still got to be saved. The problem is not on the outside, primarily; the problem is on the inside.

Listen to what Jesus said. Just stay there in Jeremiah, and listen to what Jesus Christ said in Mark chapter 7 and verses 20 and following: *"And he said, That which cometh out of man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these things come from within, and defile the man."* (Mark 7:20–23) And, my dear friend, all of these things are in your heart. You say, "Murder is not in my heart. Fornication is not in my heart. Adultery is not in my heart. Blasphemy is not in my heart." That just proves that you don't know your heart. *"[Your] heart is deceitful above all things, and [it is] desperately wicked."* (Jeremiah 17:9) What Jesus Christ is saying is that all of these things are residual and potential in every human heart. And, we little may dare dream the potentiality for evil that lurks in our hearts. It is there down in the heart, and Jesus said it just comes out of the heart. (Mark 7:21) Everything that you see wrong in the world today has originated in the heart of men. These things come out of the heart.

¶ If you see an apple with a wormhole in it, don't be afraid there's a worm in that apple. No, the hole is not there to let the worm in; the hole is there to let the worm out.

The worm was already in the apple. The hole says the worm has come out. Well, how did the worm get in there? The worm was hatched in the blossom. And, the worm was inside that apple, and it simply came out. And, these things that we see in the world today—they have come out of the heart of man. They are inbred in human nature.†

That, my dear friend, is the diagnosis of the heart: your heart is diseased.

## **B. The Deceitfulness of the Heart**

And, not only is it diseased; it's deceitful. It's so deceitful. Look again in Jeremiah. Go back to Jeremiah chapter 17: "*The heart is deceitful above all things.*" (Jeremiah 17:9) This word *deceitful* is the same as the name *Jacob*. You know, we said the name *Jacob* means "supplanter"; it means "con artist." Now, if your name is Jacob today, let me tell you that Jesus transformed that name to mean "prince" today. So, be proud of your name. I'm not putting down the name. Jacob is a wonderful name. Jacob is one of the brightest stars in the Hebrew heaven, but he wasn't until Jesus, in the Old Testament Spirit of God, had changed Him. But, the name basically meant "deceiver." And, you remember it was Jacob who deceived his father, old, blind Isaac. And Jacob, how Jacob deceived his father—he put some goat hair on the back of his hand and came in and pretended that he was Esau. And, old, blind Isaac, who just simply went by his feelings, like so many people do, he felt the back of Jacob's hand, and he said, "Well, the voice is Jacob's, but the hand is Esau's," and he gave Jacob the blessing. Now, Isaac made a mistake. Like so many Christians today, he went by feeling rather than by the word. He made a mistake that way—just by feeling. How easily people are deceived! And, how the old Jacob in all of us deceives people!

But, my dear friend, what God is saying is that your heart is a Jacob that will deceive to get what it wants. It is incurably ill, and it is very deceitful. I'm talking about your heart. "[Your] heart"—my heart—"is deceitful above all things." (Jeremiah 17:9) What is the most deceitful thing in the world today? You say, "The media." Friend, the media is only deceitful because of the hearts of the people in the media. The most deceitful thing is not Hollywood. The most deceitful thing is not the media. The most deceitful thing is not some con artist. The most deceitful thing in all of the world is the human heart. "[It] is deceitful"—the Bible says—"above all things." (Jeremiah 17:9) I didn't say that; God said it. Now, we don't want to recognize the problem of the heart.

† One preacher went to witness, a preacher friend told me; said, "I was out soul winning." He said, "I was in a home, and," said, "the man in that home was a wife beater and a drunkard and an adulterer, and," he said, "she wanted me to come witness to her husband." He said, "I was in there talking to him, trying to get him under conviction of sin. And, she's sitting over there hoping he won't get mad. And so, she said to me, 'But preacher, he's got a good heart.'" Friend, that was his problem—that was his problem:

his heart—“*deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.*” (Jeremiah 17:9) †

And so, dear friend, you need to understand just how foolish it is to follow this world that says, “Let your conscience be your guide.” That’s like saying, “Let your heart be your guide.” See, you can be sincere, but if your heart is deceitful, you’ll be sincerely wrong. Here’s one of the most incredible verses in all of the Bible: “*He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool.*” (Proverbs 28:26) That’s it: “*He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool.*” (Proverbs 28:26) “*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.*” (Jeremiah 17:9) Sometimes somebody will ask you a question, and you’ll say, “Well, if I know my heart...” Well, the problem is you don’t know your heart when you answer that question.

### **C. The Diagnosis of the Heart**

Now, I’ve talked about the disease of the heart. I’ve talked about the deceitfulness of the heart. Let me talk to you about the diagnosis of the heart. Go back to Jeremiah chapter 17, and look at it again. He says in verse 10: “*I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins.*” (Jeremiah 17:10) Now, you can’t search your own heart. How can Jacob investigate Jacob? How could Mr. Nixon investigate Watergate? I mean, how can a deceitful heart investigate a deceitful heart? Who is going to diagnose the heart? Who is going to say whether your heart is good or bad? My dear friend, it must be God Himself. For you to try to diagnose your heart would be like looking at a sundial with a flashlight. You’ll never get the correct time. And, for a deceitful heart to try to diagnose a deceitful heart—it is impossible. You see, your heart is diseased. It is deceptive. And, therefore, God says, “I try the heart.” Now, how does God do this?

#### **1. God Reviews the Heart**

Well, first of all, God reviews the heart. God just looks into your heart. And, the word—look at it here—it says, “*I the LORD search the heart.*” (Jeremiah 17:10) Do you see that? “*I...search the heart.*” (Jeremiah 17:10) That word means—we’re in Jeremiah chapter 17, verse 10: “*I the LORD search the heart*” (Jeremiah 17:10)—that means “an intensive review.” God, with His x-ray eyes, dear friend, sees things that I can’t see this morning. You all look so holy today. Friend, God’s eyes go right past that suit you’re wearing, and God searches the heart.

#### **2. God Reveals the Heart**

But, not only does God review the heart; God reveals the heart. Look again, if you will, here: “*I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins.*” (Jeremiah 17:10) Do you see that? “*I try the reins.*” (Jeremiah 17:10) Do you see it? Look at it—Jeremiah 17, verse 10: “*I try the reins.*” (Jeremiah 17:10) Now, what are the reins? That’s the control center. Remember that I said that your heart is master control? Now, God looks into your heart, and God searches your heart. And then, after God reviews the heart, God reveals the



heart. How does He do it? He tries the reins. God allows circumstances to come into your life, and God sees how you react to those circumstances. If, my dear friend, your actions don't prove what you are, your reactions prove what you are.

Have you ever been rude to a person? Don't answer. You say, "Well, that person made me mad." Well, they just revealed the anger that's in you. They didn't put that rudeness in you; that rudeness was already there. All they did was push the hot button. God is just trying the reins. One thing after another, God allows circumstances to come into your life. And, you say, "Well, I'm surprised at myself. I never thought I could do that." Yeah, because you didn't know "[your] heart [was] deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." (Jeremiah 17:9) And, you didn't know that down in that pit called the human heart were all of those things, because we can mask it so well, can't we? The right circumstance has to come.

¶ A little girl was in the park, and a dog was barking. She started to cry; and then, the dog stopped. And, the mother said, "Look, don't cry darling. He stopped barking." She said, "But his bark is still in him."¶

My dear friend, you may be able to control these situations, but there will come a time when it will come out and you'll be surprised.

### **3. God Rewards the Heart**

God reviews the heart, and, my dear friend, not only does God review the heart; God reveals the heart, and God rewards the heart. Listen, when God comes to judge, you know what He's going to look at? Not primarily what you did but primarily what you are. The Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 4 and verse 5: "*Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.*" (1 Corinthians 4:5) You see, God doesn't see as man sees. Now, you see me preaching a sermon. You hear my words. My dear friend, God sees my heart this morning. God sees my heart. God reviews the heart. God reveals the heart. And God, my dear friend, rewards the heart. "*Blessed are the pure in heart.*" (Matthew 5:8) It is the heart—it is the heart—that is the place of integrity.

### **D. The Doctor of the Heart**

I want to talk to you, my dear friend, not only about the diagnosis of the heart and the disease and deception of the heart, but oh, thank God for the Doctor of the heart. Jeremiah chapter 17, verse 14—look at it: "*Heal me, O LORD*"—and that's the only one who can—"*Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed*"—how does He heal? By saving you—"*save me, and I shall be saved.*" (Jeremiah 17:14) You need a new heart. You need to be born again. How does God change you? He gives you a new heart—He gives you a new heart. Look in Jeremiah chapter 24 and verse 7. Oh, what a wonderful

verse this is! He says, *“And I will give them an heart to know me.”* (Jeremiah 24:7) There’s a heart transplant. That’s how God does it. God just gives you a new heart. When He saves you, He gives you a new heart. And friend, you cannot be pure in heart without a new heart.

First of all, you see yourself as a bankrupt sinner: *“Blessed are the poor in spirit.”* (Matthew 5:3) Secondly, you are broken over that: *“Blessed are they that mourn.”* (Matthew 5:4) Thirdly, my dear friend, you yield yourself to Him: *“Blessed are the meek.”* (Matthew 5:5) You say, “Here, God, I want your will.” God puts a hunger in you. *“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness.”* (Matthew 5:6) That’s Jesus. You have a hunger and a thirst for the Lord Jesus Christ. And then, by mercy, He gives you mercy: *“Blessed are the merciful.”* (Matthew 5:7) That’s what you need today—that you might have mercy. Then, my dear friend, there’s a pure heart. It’s a work of God. It is the work of God. Oh, Doctor Jesus will give you a brand-new heart!

### **III. The Promise of Integrity**

Now here, thirdly and quickly, what I’ve talked to you about is the principle of integrity. The principle of integrity is single-mindedness. I’ve talked to you about the place of integrity. *“Blessed are the pure in heart.”* (Matthew 5:8) That’s where it begins. If your heart is right, it doesn’t matter what else you do. You’ve got to be pure in heart, and only Jesus can give you a pure heart. Now, let me talk to you just briefly about the promise of integrity. *“Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.”* (Matthew 5:8) That’s it! That’s it! You will see God.

You see, there’s something about sin that blinds you. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 4: *“The God of this [age] hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of [the Lord Jesus] should shine unto them.”* (2 Corinthians 4:4) They’re blind to their sin, blind to the danger; but they’re blind to God. They want to see God. People want to see God. I mean, they’ve done everything trying to see God. They’ve swung from ropes. They’ve pierced their bodies through with knives. They’ve fasted. They’ve prayed. They’ve lived in caves and holes of the earth. They have given their money. They have gone on pilgrimages. They have done everything, trying to see God, trying to know God. My friend, let me tell you how to know God, how to see God: just get your heart pure; you’ll see God. You say, “With my eye?” Oh, no—with the eye of faith. You see, He’s not talking about your physical heart. He’s not talking about your physical eye. You get your spiritual heart right, and your spiritual eye will see.

I was reading that scripture this morning over there in Hebrews chapter 11, where the Bible says Moses *“endured, as seeing him who is invisible.”* (Hebrews 11:27) You get your heart right, and friend, you’ll see the invisible; you’ll see God. So, how will you

see Him? Oh, you see, you'll see Him in circumstances. You'll see Him in nature. You'll see Him in the face of your grandchild. You'll see Him in the Scriptures. And, God will become a bright, living reality to you. The Bible will burst aflame in your hands. God will be real to you, and I'll tell you why: because you'll see Him; you'll perceive Him. You will know Him because your heart is pure. In this same Sermon on the Mount, the Lord Jesus Christ said, "*When [your] eye is single, [your] body [will be] full of light.*" (Luke 11:34)

There are times, very frankly, when my heart gets cold, and I get away from God, and I get so busy doing things—good things—that steal away that time, just that pure devotion I need for Jesus. I have to get alone in my study, just close the door, and say, "God, it's time. I've got to see you." And, I'll start dealing with things in my life. I start giving back to God things that I've taken, maybe not of my reputation—some supposed ability, or some so-called possession that I don't really own anyway. It all belongs to Him. Even my children, my darling wife, this church, the ministry—I give it to Him, and I say, "God, I want one thing, and I want you only." Friend, I'll tell you, I can tell the moment when my eye gets single because my body gets full of light. You see God—you see God.

## **Conclusion**

That's what we need—for God to be real. And, my dear friend, what God wants in you, and what God wants in you more than anything else, is a simple little word: integrity.

Don't leave home without it. 

# The Priority of Peacemaking

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** September 6, 1992

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 5:9

*“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.”*

MATTHEW 5:9

## Outline

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- II. The Adversary of Peace
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## Introduction

Be finding in the Gospels the Gospel of Matthew—Matthew chapter 5—and we’re going to look here in just a moment at these Beatitudes, “the attitudes that ought to be,” the characteristics of the God-like. And we call these Beatitudes “the keys to the kingdom.” We’ve been having a wonderful time studying the Beatitudes. And let’s begin to read—verse 1: *“And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: and he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”* That is, “Blessed are those who see their spiritual need, that see that they are bankrupt in the sight of a righteous and a holy God.” Then, verse 4: *“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.”* Yes, blessed are those who are broken over their sins, who truly repent and turn from their sins. And then, verse 5: *“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.”* Blessed indeed are those who are yielded to God and ready to accept His will for their lives. Verse 6: *“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”* And our righteousness is Jesus Christ Himself, who is God’s answer to man’s sin. And then, *“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.”* Those of us who have been shown mercy, show mercy. And thank God for the mercy we have received in the Lord Jesus Christ. *“Blessed are the pure in heart:*

*for they shall see God.*” When we have come this route, then God purifies our heart and gives us a fresh vision of Himself, and God becomes a bright, living reality. And then we come to the Beatitude for today—verse 9. Look at it: *“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.”* (Matthew 5:1–9)

The other day when I was on an airplane I picked up one of those magazines and I read about a new mall that is opening in Minneapolis. It is said to be the largest shopping mall in the world. It covers 4.2 million square feet. Now that’s big. It’s got stores, restaurants, nightclubs, amusement rides—all of this. You say, “Well, how big is that?” Well, you could put eighty-eight football fields inside this mall. And, ladies, listen. To visit every store, you would have to take a three-mile hike—just to visit every store in that mall. It employs ten thousand people. They expect to be doing 650 million dollars worth of business a year. About forty million visitors a year are going to come to this mall.

Now when I read that article, I thought, “You know, that’s a big shopping mall. But there’s one thing you will not be able to buy there—and that is peace.” Nobody can put it in a bottle. Nobody can put it in a jar. There’s no way, no matter how big the shopping center is, that you can buy the commodity that I’m talking about today and that is a commodity that the world needs more than anything else—and that is peace. There is something desperately wrong with our world, and you don’t need me to tell you about it. Just pick up any newspaper and you can study it.

Now we are very intelligent people. We know a lot. We can build a mall that big. We can build jet airplanes. We can build rockets. We can build all of this. We have television that can circle the globe. We’ve made the world a neighborhood, but we haven’t made it a brotherhood. There is a desperate cry, a desperate need, for peace.

Now, what causes all of this? Well, just turn to the book of James with me—James chapter 4 now for just a moment—and I want you to look at it. James chapter 4, I think, is one of the most significant passages in all of the Bible as we go on this search for peace. James explains the whole thing. James says in James chapter 4, verse 1, *“From whence come wars and fightings among you?”* (James 4:1) “Why can’t we live together?” James says, “Where does all of this come from?”

In my reading I read a very interesting story. There were two men who had been taken captive by the Americans in World War II. They were captured in Germany with other German prisoners. They were brought back to the United States and they were put in a prisoner of war camp. But these two young men were different than all of the other German soldiers. They seemed to keep to themselves. They seemed to be frightened. They seemed to be bewildered. Nobody seemed to be able to communicate with them. The other Germans said they really didn’t know anything about them. And every attempt to talk to them was led to frustration, as they would shrink further and

further back away from the interrogators. Nobody knew who they were. They couldn't figure them out. They were just different. They didn't even look like the other Germans. After a while, they brought in an expert. And he began to talk to them. He said, "No wonder you couldn't talk with them. They are from Tibet. You don't even understand their language." This man understood their language, and then he got their story.

Let me tell you what happened to these two fellows. It's really not funny, but it is funny in a way. They lived in Tibet, and they were tired of living there in their little village. They had never been anywhere or seen anything, shut off from the outside world, so they decided they would go from Tibet across the northern border. They found themselves in Russia during World War II. Immediately they were picked up by the Russian authorities. They didn't know who these boys were. Before long, they were on a train headed towards the West. When they got there to outside a big city, they were given an army uniform. They were sent to boot camp. They shoved a rifle in their hand, and they were there on the Russian front fighting the Germans. They had never seen anything like that: people in hand-to-hand combat. They were shooting each other with guns. These young men, frightened, retreated; and when they retreated, they were captured by the Germans. And the Germans now took them, put them on another train, and they were traveling now, and they ended up in a German prisoner-of-war camp.

About that time the Allies had come with the invasion of Normandy. The Germans are retreating. They need every man that they can get. So they take these boys, shove a gun in their hand, and tell them to go fight the Americans. And so they're out there now again, scared to death. They begin to retreat. And the Americans capture them. And this time they're put in an American prisoner-of-war camp, and they end up in the United States. And finally, the whole secret is unlocked. These boys from Tibet came. They didn't know anything. Finally, after they talked to them a while, they said, "Do you have any questions?" They said, "Yes, we have a question: Why are all these people trying to kill each other?" They couldn't figure it out. "What on earth is happening?"

And that's the question that James is asking right here: Where do these wars come from? From where come wars? *"From whence come wars and fightings among you?"* Now what James does, he mentions three wars that are going on. Listen to them. *"From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye might consume it upon your lusts. Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."* (James 4:1-4) And here James mentions three wars.

The very first war: Men are at war with one another. Verse 1: *"From whence come*

*wars and fightings among you?”* We’re at war one with another. Oh, every now and then we’ll have a truce. But a truce is that period of time when you stop to reload. Every now and then we’ll have a truce. But there is no peace—religious, economic, racial, social, political, family or personal peace. We are a people at war on the face of this globe.

Well, why are men at war with one another? Well, continue to read: *“Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?”* That is the second war. The first war is that we war among ourselves. Why do we war among ourselves? Because we are at war within ourselves. That’s what James said. There is a war on the inside that wars in our members. People are not at peace. And that’s the reason they can’t be at peace with anyone else. Most of the folks are a fight going somewhere to happen. They’re just an argument going somewhere to happen. Why? Because they are in turmoil themselves. We live in a world that is uptight and full of turmoil.

Finish these sentences for me. Let’s see if you can do it. I’m ready to throw in the... *towel*. You got that one right. I’m at the end of my... *rope*. I’m just a bundle of... *nerves*. My life is falling... *apart*. I’m at my wit’s... *end*. See, you know them all, don’t you? I mean, here are people; folks, we’re just full of turmoil. And James says the war on the outside is because of the war on the inside.

Well, why the war on the outside? And why the war on the inside? Because of the third war. And that is, we are at war with God. Look in verse 4, where he says, *“Friendship with the world is enmity”*—and that word means “warfare”—*“with God.”* See, we’re at war with one another—why? Because we’re at war on the inside. And why are we at war on the inside? Because we are at war with God. And, *“There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.”* (Isaiah 57:21)

Now, my dear friend, until you are right with God in this world, you’re going to be a troublemaker, and not a peacemaker. Just put it down big and plain and straight: until you’re right with God, in this world, you’re going to be a troublemaker, and not a peacemaker.

## **I. The Attribute of Peace**

Now the Bible says, *“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.”* The first thing I want you to see today: the attributes of peace. What do we mean by *peace*? Peace, my friend, is not appeasement. Don’t get the idea, if you’re a peacemaker, that you are an appeaser. Appeasement never brings peace. And don’t think that you are honor-bound to get along with everybody. There is something wrong, something desperately wrong, with the person who can get along with everybody. You just can’t do it. Now you can try. The Bible says, *“If it be possible, as much as lies within you, live peaceably with all men,”* (Romans 12:18) which means that it’s not always possible.

As a matter of fact, you're going to be known by the enemies you make. Dr. Robert G. Lee, the former pastor of this church, was a great man. But he had his enemies. And he had people who didn't love him. Every man of God has those who don't love him. I've heard Dr. Lee say on more than one occasion, "One of these days somebody is going to preach my funeral." Well, literally, I preached his funeral. But I didn't know that I would, years ago. But he said, "One of these days somebody is going to preach my funeral, and when I'm in that coffin, when I'm in that casket, if that preacher has the nerve, the audacity, to say, 'Here lies dear old Dr. Lee: he didn't have an enemy, I pray God He'll give me the courage to kick the lid off that coffin, rise up, and say, 'That's a lie!'" He didn't want to be known as a man who did not have an enemy. All of us who stand for God will have enemies.

I remember reading about some preacher boy who was in a class in a liberal college, and the professor was telling them, "Oh, we ought never to have any enemies; we ought never to be controversial; there ought never to be any problems," and so forth. And what he was giving was the gospel of appeasement. And then he said, "What we need to do is to follow the example of Jesus." And that young preacher boy lifted his hand. He said, "Professor, if Jesus Christ was so beautifully tactful and diplomatic, how did He manage to get Himself crucified?"

Friend, listen. Jesus Christ did not get along with everybody, and everybody did not get along with Jesus Christ. And peace is not appeasement, and peace is not truce making. Now you can have a truce, and a truce is better than hot war perhaps. But that only means that is the cessation of hostilities. And there can still be a cold war. It goes underground to fester and to grow, and then perhaps to break out again.

Peace is not even the absence of war of any kind—hot or cold. There is no strife in a cemetery. But incidentally, that's not peace. Every now and then you'll go in a cemetery and you'll see where it says on the headstone, "Rest in Peace." Well, friend, it takes more than a grave marker to bring peace to a troubled soul. Peace is not just simply the absence of war. When the Bible uses the word *peace*, it is a positive word.

In the Old Testament, and today, modern Jews greet one another the same way: with the word *shalom*. And that word means "peace." When you meet somebody and you say to them, "*Shalom*," that doesn't mean, "May you get out of war." It infers there is something good, something wonderful, something positive, that is happening. The Greek word for "peace" is the word *eirene*. We get our beautiful name Irene from that. If your name is Irene, that means "peace." *Eirene*: that's the word he is using here. It is a positive word.

Now, my dear friend, let me tell you what peace is. Peace is not appeasement. Peace is not truce making. Peace is not even merely the absence of war. What is peace? Peace is a right relationship. Listen carefully, because this is a technical point,



but a very important point. Peace is a right relationship with God that leads to right relationship with self and guides us in a right relationship with other people. That's what peace is. It is a sense of wellbeing. And literally, peace is the result and fruit of righteousness.

Now if you don't see anything else, I want you to get this now. I want you to see how righteousness and peace are linked. This is not an artificial link. If you are an unrighteous person, you can never have peace. "There is no peace," says my God, "to the wicked." The only way that you can have peace is to have righteousness. Notice the Beatitudes: "*Blessed are the pure in heart,*" and then, "*Blessed are the peacemakers.*" There is no peace without purity.

Put these verses down in your margin. First of all, James 3, verse 17: "*The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable.*" (James 3:17) Did you get it? First, purity; then, peace. "*Blessed are the pure in heart.*" "*Blessed are the peacemakers.*" "*The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceful.*"

Put this one down—Psalm 85 and verse 10: "*Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.*" (Psalm 85:10) Isn't that a great verse? "*Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.*" There is a love affair between righteousness and peace; there is a marriage between righteousness and peace. And what God hath joined together, let no man put asunder. (Matthew 19:6; Mark 10:9) In Hebrews chapter 7 and verse 2, the Bible shows Melchizedek is a picture, a type, of the Lord Jesus Christ, and Melchizedek is called two things: first of all, "*King of righteousness*"; and, secondly, "*King of peace.*" (Hebrews 7:2) First, He must be "*King of righteousness.*" After He is "*King of righteousness,*" then He becomes "*King of peace.*" You see, righteousness and peace have kissed one another.

My dear friend, you cannot have peace without righteousness. What is peace? Peace is a right relationship with God, a right relationship therefore in your heart, and a right relationship with one another. It is a positive thing. It is the righteousness of God ruling and reigning in your heart.

## **II. The Adversary of Peace**

Now that, my dear friend, is the attribute of peace. Secondly, not only do I want you to see the attribute of peace; I want you to see the adversary of peace. It follows, as night follows day, if peace is linked with righteousness, then war—lack of peace—is always rooted in sin. It always is. Let me give you these verses. Isaiah chapter 48 and verse 22: "*There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked.*" (Isaiah 48:22) That's it. You want peace. This world wants peace.

My dear friend, sin is the problem. Can you imagine standing up in the Pentagon and saying, "Gentlemen, the problem is sin"? Can you imagine standing up in one of the

great universities and saying, “Gentlemen, the problem is sin”? People are saying, “What are we going to do about war? What are we going to do about all of these problems?” Ladies and gentlemen, *“There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.”* Righteousness and peace are linked together. Sin separates men from God. Sin brings inner turmoil. And it separates men from men.

Here’s another verse—Jeremiah 8:11–12. Key verse: *“For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my peace slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.”* (Jeremiah 8:11) Do you remember back in the sixties when the hippies were going around saying, “Peace, bro? But, my dear friend, they were living ungodly, immoral lives. There can be no peace without the Prince of Peace. There can be no peace without purity. And so the Bible says in Jeremiah that people give a false peace, saying, “Peace, peace,” when there is no peace. And then he says in Jeremiah 8, verse 12, *“Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush.”* (Jeremiah 8:12)

We have a group of people today yelling, “Peace,” and they can’t even blush over their sins. Did you know that a human being is the only animal that can blush? Friend, he is the one that needs to. But we have forgotten how to blush. Here are these people going around saying, “Peace, peace, peace.” The Bible says they have committed an abomination—this generation of *unblushables*, wondering why we don’t have peace. It’s very obvious: the adversary of peace is sin. That’s the reason the Bible does not teach peace at any price.

One of the strangest verses that ever fell from the lips of the Prince of Peace, Jesus, is this—Matthew 10, verse 34. He said, *“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.”* (Matthew 10:34) That’s incredible, because the Bible calls Him the Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6) I mean, He is known as the Prince of Peace. When He was born, the angels said, “Peace on earth; good will to men.” (Luke 2:14) The Bible says, *“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.”* And yet in this passage Jesus Christ said, “Don’t think I came to send peace. I didn’t come to send peace; I came to send a sword.”

What is He talking about? He is saying, “I did not come to bring some sort of a false peace and amalgamation of good and evil. I came with a sword to put a line of demarcation between truth and error, between light and dark, between sin and righteousness.” Now what Jesus is saying is this—that when God’s standard of righteousness is set, there will always be a division. Without righteousness, there can be no godly peace. And the sword that Jesus has is like a scalpel. It must first hurt before it heals. Peace can never come where sin remains. God will never make a peace treaty with sin—never!

I remember reading years ago in history about Admiral Nelson, the great admiral. He

had won a sea battle, and there was a French admiral who was surrendering to Lord Nelson, and that French admiral came, and he was dressed up in all of his regalia, with his special hat; he had all of those scrambled eggs on his shoulder. He came with spit and polish to approach Lord Nelson on the deck of a ship. He had his sword down by his side in the scabbard. And Lord Nelson saw him coming. Remember, he was coming to surrender. And that admiral with almost a smile on his face, as an equal, put out his hand to Lord Nelson. Lord Nelson just stepped back and said, “Your sword first. Lay down your sword.”

My dear friend, there are a lot of people who just think they can walk up and gladly hand the Lord Jesus Christ. He says, “Your sword first. Surrender first.” Jesus, my dear friend, is not an appeaser, and He will never make a truce with sin—never! To that degree, Jesus said, “Don’t think that I came to send peace. I came to send a sword.” What He meant by that is this: there can never be peace without first of all a surrender to the lordship of Jesus Christ.

### **III. The Attainment of Peace**

Now, here’s the third thing I want you to see. I’ve talked to you about the attribute of peace, which is righteousness. I’ve talked to you about the adversary of peace, which is sin. *“There is no peace, saith my LORD, to the wicked.”* Now I want to talk to you about the attainment of peace. I’ve said you can’t buy it in that supermarket. You can’t buy it in that mall. How can you attain peace? Let me give you some wonderful news.

#### **A. Peace Has Been Planned by the Father**

First of all, this peace has been planned by the Father. Jeremiah 29 and verse 11—if you don’t know this verse, you need to learn it: *“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.”* (Jeremiah 29:11) When God thinks of you, do you know what God wants for you? Peace. This is what God desires for you. God’s thoughts to you are not thoughts of malevolence. God is not some vengeful deity sitting up there on the throne making a lot of rules and laws that make you squirm like a worm in hot ashes trying to keep them, throwing down thunderbolts of wrath. That’s not the idea of God. God says, “The thoughts I have toward you, the things that I think to you, the plans that I have for you, they are plans of peace.”

Six times in the New Testament He is called the God of peace. In the book of Judges, Judges chapter 6 and verse 24, He is called Jehovah Shalom—Jehovah Shalom, the Lord our peace. Peace, peace, has been planned by the Father.

#### **B. Peace Has Been Purchased by the Son**

Secondly—are you listening?—peace has been purchased by the Son—planned by the

Father, purchased by the Son. Put these verses down—Ephesians 2, verses 13 and 14: *“But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace.”* (Ephesians 2:13–14) “You who were far off, you who were enemies, you are made near nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace.”

Then put this one down—Colossians 1, verses 19 and 20: *“For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;”—*that is, in the Lord Jesus Christ—*“and, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself.”* (Colossians 1:19–20) Jesus Christ on the cross provided this peace. How does the cross bring peace? At the cross wickedness was not appeased; wickedness was confronted. At the cross sin was not overlooked. At the cross sin was atoned and paid for, and God’s greatest righteousness confronted man’s greatest wickedness. And righteousness won and peace was attained through the blood of the cross. Thank God for that. I say, thank God for that.

A lady who lay dying—some people did not know her very well, she was a stranger in those parts, and they thought they ought to witness to her. One came and stood by her bedside and said, “Madam, do you know how ill you are?” She said, “Yes, I believe I am dying.” They said, “Well, we don’t want to alarm you, but have you made peace with God?” She said, “No.” They said, “May we help you to make peace with God?” She said, “No.” “Don’t you realize you’re dying?” “Yes.” “Don’t you want to make peace with God?” She said, “No.” She said, “I have no need to make peace with God: I am resting in the peace that Jesus made at Calvary.” She was way ahead of them. “I am resting in the peace that Jesus made.” We don’t make peace; Jesus made peace through the blood of His cross.

### **C. Peace Is Provided by the Spirit**

Now, listen. It was planned by the Father—God says, “I know the plans I have for you, the plans of peace”; purchased by the Son; and, my dear friend, it is provided by the Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God. You see, the Bible says in Galatians chapter 5 and verse 22, *“The fruit of the Spirit is...peace.”* (Galatians 5:22) It is provided by the Spirit.

Remember Jesus. In John chapter 14 Jesus said, “I am going to pray to the Father, and He will send you another Comforter, that He may abide with you.” (John 14:16) “And He is going to teach you all things and bring them into your remembrance.” (John 14:26) And then He says in verse 27, *“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”* (John 14:27) It is the Holy Spirit that brings this to our hearts and minds. He is the One who gives us this peace in our hearts, that tells us we are at peace with God. Planned by the Father, purchased by the Son, provided by the Spirit: the Holy Spirit is the executor of the will of Jesus Christ, Jesus’ last will and testament before He died.

He said to you, *“Peace I give unto you.”* That is what He left you. That is His legacy, my dear friend: His peace. And then He said, *“Not as the world gives, give I unto you.”* It is peace, as the old song says, the world didn’t give and the world can’t take away. The world didn’t give it to me, and the world can’t take it from me. It is the peace that passes understanding. (Philippians 4:7) No psychologist, no psychiatrist, without Jesus Christ could have any understanding of this, my dear friend.

#### **IV. The Agents of Peace**

Now, last of all, look at our text, and it says very, very wonderfully, *“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.”* Let me talk to you last of all about the agents of peace. We have talked to you about the attribute of peace, the adversary of peace, the attainment of peace, and then here is the agent of peace. And that’s me; that’s you. We are God’s agents.

I saw a cartoon in a magazine one time that in a preacher’s study there was his filing cabinet—you know, this four-drawer filing cabinet. And in the drawer next to the top it said “Sacred.” And in the one right at the very top it said “Top Sacred.” Well, dear friend, you are a sacred agent. You are Sacred Agent 777. You are God’s agent of peace.

Now that is so true. You are an ambassador. Do you know what we said peace is? It is reconciliation. And the Bible says in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 18, *“All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ,”*—we’ve been saved; we’ve been given peace; and then He says—*“and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.”* (2 Corinthians 5:18) That is our ministry. Oh, my dear friend, what is the ministry of reconciliation? It is just simply soul winning. It is just simply telling people about Jesus. He has given to us the ministry of reconciliation.

I was invited to Washington for the inauguration, and after the inauguration I got in a cab, and I came out the door. You know where I had been a guest there: at a particular building. And the cab driver thought I was important because of the door I came out. He said, “What do you do?” I said, “I am an ambassador.” Boy, he looked up. He was impressed. “Who do you represent?” I said, “A king.” Boy, He was really impressed. We went on a while back and he said, “Well, who is he?” I said, “He’s the greatest.” Well, on and on I just toyed with him for a while, and then I told Him, “I am a son of God, an ambassador of Jesus Christ, and an emissary of peace,” and I preached Christ to that young man.

And, my dear friend, I want to tell you, I had rather be an ambassador for Jesus than to be a prince or king here on this earth. We are ambassadors for Christ. He has committed to us the ministry of reconciliation. The grandest thing, the greatest thing, you can ever do is to receive the peace that Jesus Christ made on the cross, and let the peace of God rule and reign in your heart, and then be not just simply a peace lover,

but, my dear friend, a peacemaker; not an appeaser, not making peace with sin and unrighteousness, but lifting up the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **Conclusion**

Do you have peace? Corrie Ten Boom said, “If you look around, you’ll be distressed. If you look within, you’ll be depressed. But if you look to Jesus, you’ll be at rest.” That is where the peace comes from. Do you have peace with God? Do you? Remember you’ll never have peace until something is done about this problem of sin.

# Preparing for Persecution

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 5:10**

## Outline

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Conclusion

## Introduction

**T**ake God's Word and turn to Matthew chapter 5. We have been studying together the Beatitudes. And, I don't know about you, but my own heart has been blessed and enriched as we have studied together the Word of God, these beatitudes, as we've said, the attitudes that ought to be the character of a Christian, what a Christian is really like, and we call these the keys of the Kingdom. And, today, we come to Matthew chapter 5 and verse 10: *"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you"* (Matthew 5:10-12).

And, I have a feeling, ladies and gentlemen, that we are living in the lengthening shadows of the last day. I believe that Jesus Christ is coming soon, and one of the marks of the last days—and we can see it fulfilled—is the persecution of the saints of God, the children of God. The new whipping boy in the world today, do you know who he is? He is the Bible-believing Christian. You can ridicule other groups and get in trouble, but today, if you want to become the butt of jokes, if you want to receive the wrath of the world, become

a true Bible-believing Christian. There's no way to be a genuine Christian, a true man of God, and true woman of God, and escape persecution.

I want you to put in your margin 2 Timothy chapter 3 and verse 12. Don't turn to it but listen to it. The Apostle Paul said, "*Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*" (2 Timothy 3:12). There are no *ifs*, *ands*, and *buts* about that. All will—that is, who determine to live godly in Christ Jesus. So, I want to speak to you today on this subject: "Preparing for Persecution." And, you need to prepare your children, just as you prepare them to go to school, you need to prepare them to live in a world that is becoming increasingly hostile to Bible-believing Christians. Now, you can rub shoulders with this world. You can compromise with this world. You can go along with this world, and not receive any persecution. The persecution comes to those who will live godly in Christ Jesus.

Now, as a matter of fact, this verse that I just read to you speaks of joy. It says, "*Rejoice, and be exceeding glad,*" and it speaks of persecution. That's incredible that God would put both joy and persecution in the same passage, isn't it? Joy is the thermostat. Persecution is the thermometer. You say, "What do you mean by that?" Well, no matter what happens, the joy of the Lord is there to regulate conditions in your life. There's nothing that can take your joy from you. Joy controls conditions like a thermostat. But, let me tell you about persecution. Persecution is the thermometer that registers how much you love Jesus. That's it. If you're out-and-out for Jesus Christ—you can tell whether or not you're out-and-out for Jesus Christ by the persecution you get.

Now, if you're not getting any persecution, don't say you must be doing a wonderful job. Very frankly, you're doing a poor job. For the Bible says, "*Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*" That doesn't mean that they're going to throw you in the dungeon. That doesn't mean that they're going to tie you to a post and whip you. That doesn't mean that they're going to come in with a machine gun and kill your children. It may do all. All of that may happen, but that isn't what that necessarily means. The word *persecution* literally means, "to pursue," as we're going to see here in a moment. They are going to follow after you in many ways. You will become the butt of jokes; you'll become ostracized socially; you'll be passed by for promotions; you'll be looked down upon as socially inappropriate, if you live godly for Christ Jesus.

When I was a young man working my way through school, I was in construction work, and I was a carpenter's helper in high school and also early college, and I worked alongside of a man who was quite a profane man. And, when he learned that I was going to be a preacher, he really enjoyed ragging me about my faith, which I didn't mind, really, but I was the butt of a lot of jokes, and a lot of innuendos, and so forth, but then he said, "Listen, young man. If you're going to be a preacher, why don't you be a good one?" And then, he



said, "I knew a preacher one time; he was a good preacher." I said, "Well, tell me about him." He said, "He was a great guy. You could be around him, he would never mention politics or religion." That was his idea of a good preacher: a man who never talked about God. Now, if you just want to be the kind of a person who never takes a stand for anything, never witnesses for the Lord Jesus Christ, the people like that profane man that I was working under, they'll think that you are just fine.

## I. The Reasons for Persecution

Now, let me very quickly, in the time we have, as we look at this passage of Scripture that talks about preparing for persecution, I hope to make it very personal, and let me give you, first of all, the reasons for persecution. Why are Christians persecuted?

### A. The Life We Live

Look in verse 10, if you will: "*Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake*" (Matthew 5:10). Do you see it? That's the reason: "*for righteousness' sake*." Now, the word *righteousness* comes from a Greek word which means, "to divide." The reason that Christians are persecuted is that in a very real sense they are divisive; they divide. They are different. You see, *to divide* means, "to be different." Christians are different. Christians ought to stand out like a diamond in a coalmine, like a gardenia in a garbage can. Christians are different.

Now, point in case: if you'll just take the first seven beatitudes that we read and look at them, how different they are from the world! We're just simply different. For example, it says, "*Blessed are the poor in spirit*" (Matthew 5:3). Well, the world doesn't say that you're to be poor in spirit. Humility is laughed at today. Today we're told, "Be number one; assert yourself." The Beatitudes say, "*Blessed are they that mourn*" (Matthew 5:4). Who in America wants to mourn? America is laughing her way into Hell. "*Blessed are the meek*" (Matthew 5:5). The world says, "Don't be a meek man. Be a mighty man. Be a muscle man. Be a money man. Be a missile man. But, whatever you do, don't be a meek man." The world doesn't like that. The world thinks that meekness is weakness, and the world's attitude and motto is "Winner take all."

Now, what I'm simply saying is this—and listen to me, my dear friend: If you will take these beatitudes, I will guarantee it; if you'll take the first seven attitudes and begin to live that way, then number eight is guaranteed: you will be persecuted—you will be persecuted. Now, if you're not living by the first seven, you're not going to get number eight. But, if you'll take the first seven, if you'll take these beatitudes and you will begin to put them into shoe leather, get them out of that notebook that you're writing in and get them into shoe leather, the eighth is guaranteed. Why? Because children of God are

children of light, and they're children of darkness. My dear friend, we're alive in the spirit. They are dead in trespasses in sin. We live by faith. They walk by sight. We understand them. But, they do not understand us. And, Jesus, after He talked about being persecuted, He said, "You're the salt of the earth; you're the light of the world" (Matthew 5:13–14). Salt irritates when it is poured into a wound, and light reveals. And, I'm telling you that the gospel of Jesus Christ is an irritant to the putrefying wounds of this world, and the gospel of Jesus Christ is revealing light to the things of darkness of this world. And, therefore, they say, "Remove that salt, and put out that light."

Now, when we are persecuted for righteousness' sake, we must be very careful here. We must be very, very careful that it is persecution, and not punishing. A lot of Christians confuse persecution and punishment. We are punished by good people when we do evil. We are persecuted by evil people when we do good. Now, that's the difference. Now, there are a lot of people, very frankly, who think that they are being persecuted when they are simply receiving punishment that they ought to receive. Here's another verse I want you to put in your margin—1 Peter chapter 4, beginning in verse 14: *"If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified."* But now, listen to 1 Peter chapter 4, verse 15: *"But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody"*—verily, he that sticketh his nose in shall find a fist at the end of it—*"in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed"* (1 Peter 4:14–16).

A lot of Christians think they're being persecuted. They're not being persecuted; they're just busybodies; they're just people with bad manners and bad breath and arrogance and ego and everything else. And, they say, "Oh, people don't like me! I'm being persecuted!" You're not being persecuted. My dear friend, you're not living for the Lord Jesus Christ. That's just what you have received because of what you have done. You say, "Well, I'm a witness." But, the problem is, you're not a witness; you're more like a prosecuting attorney. You say, "Well I want to be different." But, the problem is, you're not different; you're odd.

Now, my dear friend, when Christians are filled with the Spirit, they're going to be supernaturally natural. They're going to be naturally supernatural. They're going to be different. And, they will be persecuted. But, don't go around saying you're persecuted if you're not living for the Lord Jesus Christ. This passage of Scripture, in the Beatitudes, says, number one, it must be false what they say about you; and, number two, it must be for His sake.

## B. The Lord We Love

The first reason that we're persecuted, number one, my dear friend, is because of what we are; that is, the life we live. The second reason we're persecuted—look at the Scripture again—*“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake”*—that's the first reason. Now, look, if you will, in verse 11: *“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake”* (Matthew 5:11). That's the second reason: the Lord we love. That will bring persecution. The life we live: *“for righteousness' sake.”* The Lord we love. Jesus says, *“for my sake.”*

May I tell you, this world hates Jesus Christ. You say, “Oh no, the world doesn't hate Jesus Christ.” My friend, the world hates Jesus Christ. Now, when I say that, a lot of people don't understand why I say that. Let me say this, my dear friend. The world does not hate the baby Jesus. Pretty soon, Christmas will come, and everybody loves a baby in a manger. The world doesn't hate the baby Jesus. A few people may. But, by and large, the world, the giddy crowd, dances around the manger, and the merchants will make millions. They don't mind the baby Jesus. I'm going to tell you something else. The world does not hate the Jesus that healed the sick and fed the multitudes. The world doesn't hate that Jesus—not at all. That isn't why the world hates Jesus. And, if that's all you know of the Lord Jesus Christ, then you may think that the world really doesn't hate the Lord Jesus.

Do you know why the world hates Jesus? Jesus said, “I have come to destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8). And, that, my dear friend, is why the world hates Jesus. Jesus has come to destroy the works of the devil. What are they? Liquor, abortion, pornography, pride, racism, and greed. And, Jesus Christ stands against that, and the world stands for it. And, my dear friend, when you stand with the Christ of the Bible—when you stand with the Christ of the Bible... I'm not talking about the baby Jesus. I'm not talking about the humble Jesus by the shores of Galilee. I'm talking about the Savior. Listen to what Jesus Christ said, in John chapter 15, verse 19 and following. Jesus said to His disciples, *“If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also”* (John 15:19–20).

My dear friend, the only reason that the world hates Jesus is because Jesus is not of the world. And, the Bible says, in Philippians 1 and verse 29, *“For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake”* (Philippians 1:29). My dear friend, when you receive Jesus Christ, you receive suffering. You say, “Well then, I don't think I'll receive Him.” That's your business—that's your business. Just don't receive Him. But, don't come down here and say, “I want to be a Christian. I want Jesus Christ as my

Lord. I want Him as my Savior. I want Him as my companion. I want His fullness. I want His grace. I want His love. But, I'm not going to suffer with the Lord Jesus Christ."

My dear friend, you can't be that way. Jesus said, "I've chosen you out of the world," and the reason that a Christian, a real Christian, is persecuted, number one, is for righteousness' sake: he is different. And, number two, for the Lord's sake: he is devoted. The life we live, and the Lord we love. The life we live; the Lord we love. The life we live; the Lord we love. My dear friend, you begin to live by these beatitudes, and you be out-and-out, with a burning, blazing, passionate, emotional love for Jesus Christ that will not back up, let up, or shut up, and this world will come down on you like a hammer. And, if you don't believe it, it's because you're not doing it. My dear friend, the Bible says, "*Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*" That, my dear friend, is the thermometer that registers how much you love the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **II. The Result of Persecution**

Now, here's the second thing: not only the reason for persecution, but the result of this persecution. What shall it be like? Look, if you will, in verse 11: "*Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you,*"—number one—"and persecute you,"—number two—"and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake"—number three (Matthew 5:11).

### **A. Personal Insult**

First of all, there's going to be personal insult. They will revile you. You will be made the butt of jokes. There are people that are going to laugh at you. They've done it ever since I was a teenager, gave my heart to Christ in high school, and would not do the things the other guys did, and would not use the language the other guys used. I was captain of my football team, president of our class, but nonetheless I knew what it was to be ridiculed and reviled for Jesus Christ.

### **B. Physical Abuse**

But, not only will they revile you, my dear friend; there may be not only personal insult, but physical abuse. The Bible says they will persecute you. And, this word *persecute* has more than just being reviled. It means, actually, they will do you harm if they can. You say, "Well, people don't do that in the twentieth century today." My dear friend, listen to me. More people have died for Jesus Christ in this century than all of the other centuries put together—in this century; in the twentieth century. As a matter of fact, there are people right now who are in prison. I'm not talking about in the former Soviet Union. I'm talking about in America. You know why? They're standing up for the unborn—they're standing up

for the unborn. I mean, today. They are in prison. They've been persecuted. Why? Because they stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves.

### C. Social Stigma

But, not only will there be personal insult, and physical abuse; there will be social stigma. They will *"say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake."* My dear friend, Christians never truly—true Christians, Bible-believing Christians—are never really reported on in the newspapers or in the media—most of the time, at least—as they ought. If you ever see a situational comedy, the Bible-believing Christian, what's he made to look like? He is, number one, made to look like some authoritarian bigot, or some cruel monster, or some Elmer Gantry hypocrite—the whipping boy, the whipping boy; I say of society today is the Bible-believing Christian. He may be the most widely hated species on this earth. Much of it comes from the radical, liberal median, radical sibyl libertarians and the pornography industry. The mainstream film and television producers are becoming overtly anti-Christian. That's the result of it.

## III. The Response to Persecution

Now, number three. I've talked to you about the reasons for it. I've talked to you about the result of it. "They will revile you. They will persecute you. They will say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake," the Lord Jesus said. Now, number three: What is your response? What is your response? How are you going to respond?

### A. Reign in Life

Well, number one, my dear friend: You need to respond like a king. Look at it, if you will. He says, in verse 10, *"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 5:10). Now, just underscore that. The very first thing you ought to do is reign like a king. When you're persecuted, never come down to their level. You are a part of a kingdom, and you need to live like it. You need to walk like it. You need to talk like it. Never get down on their level. Remember, yours is the Kingdom. You're one of the King's kids. And, learn to act like it and live like it.

There are three levels of life. First of all, there's what I want to call the hellish level. That's the level of Hell. That's the level that returns evil for good. That's what Jesus is talking about. We're persecuted for righteousness' sake. All of that is out of Hell. If you're one who persecutes the righteous, may God have mercy upon you! There is the hellish level. Then, there is the human level. The human level returns good for good, and evil for evil. Most people are on that. They're not on the hellish level; they're on the human level. But, my dear friend, there's the heavenly level—the heavenly level, the level of the

Kingdom, that returns good for evil. Now, that's the level you're to get on. When you're persecuted, then learn to return good for evil. That, my dear friend, is what we're called to do.

Look in Matthew chapter 5 and verse 43. You're there in Matthew 5; look in verse 43: *"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven"* (Matthew 5:43–45). That's what I'm saying. You're the King's kids. You are the King's kids. You act like your Father in Heaven. Don't get even. You see the problem with getting even is this: you're a child of the King; you're in the Kingdom. Here are these people: they're out of the Kingdom. You say, "I'm going to get even." You see what you do? Do you see what you do when you get even? That's what you do. You get even. Don't get even. Return good for evil. Reign in life.

### **B. Rejoice in the Lord**

Number two: Rejoice in the Lord. Look in verse 12. He says to *"Rejoice, and be exceeding glad"* (Matthew 5:12). Do you know what this word means? I did a word study on it. It literally means, "to leap and jump." I mean, "to dance." You're so happy you can't keep your feet on the ground. Why? Because you've been persecuted. You say, "That doesn't make sense." Oh, friend, when you realize they can finally see the difference, when you realize that somebody has discovered that I'm a Christian... Somebody said, "If most people were arrested for being a Christian, there wouldn't be enough evidence to convict them." *"Rejoice, and be exceeding glad,"* because somehow they have identified you with the Lord, and that ought to be a time of great joy.

I was reading the other day in Acts chapter 5, verse 41, about those early apostles who were persecuted, and the Bible says, in Acts chapter 5, verse 41, after they had been put on trial, the Bible says, *"And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing"*—rejoicing, rejoicing—*"that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name"* (Acts 5:41). Boy, isn't that a great verse? Have you ever said, "Oh, thank you Lord, thank you, thank you, I'm worthy to suffer shame for your name"? Reign in life. Rejoice in the Lord. Our Lord has commanded that you're to rejoice and be exceeding glad. The Bible says, in 2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 12, *"If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us"* (2 Timothy 2:12).

### **C. Respond in Love**

The third thing: not only should you reign in life, and rejoice in the Lord, but you should respond in love. Just respond in love. What a witness that is! You see, it's so much easier to

respond in love if you've done the first two things. Just reign in life, and rejoice in the Lord, and just respond in love. You see, my dear friend, the world needs love. The world doesn't need what it deserves. You know what love is? Love—love—is not giving people what they deserve; love is giving people what they need. And, Jesus said, *"Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you"* (Matthew 5:44). What a witness!

Let me tell you what happened. Saul, before he became the Apostle Paul, Saul hated a Christian. That Christian's name was Stephen. My son Stephen is named after this same Stephen, my son who played the piano today. Stephen stood up for the Lord Jesus Christ, and Paul hated him. And, Paul said, "If you guys want to stone him, I'll hold your coats" (Acts 7:58). There's old Saul over there holding the coats, looking with glee, as old Stephen is being stoned (Acts 8:1). And, here's Stephen over here, the stones are falling on him, he's crumpling to the earth, and he begins to pray, and he says, "Lord, Jesus, lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts 7:60). He's being stoned, and he's praying; he's praying for old Saul over here. Saul never forgot it. He never forgot it. Later on, when Saul got saved, Jesus said, "It's hard for you, isn't it, Saul, to kick against the pricks" (Acts 9:5). That is, it's so hard for you to rebel against what is happening in your heart and your life, because you saw the love of God released in a man who was being persecuted for righteousness' sake. He returned good for evil. The greatest Christian who ever lived came to Jesus Christ.

## Conclusion

You say, "I don't know if these people who are persecuting me are going to get saved. I don't know whether they'll be better or not if I return good for evil." I don't know whether they will or not, either. I don't know whether they'll be better or not myself, but I know one thing: you'll be better. You'll be better. You'll be better. You see, look, folks. We are not in this world to please other people. We're here to please Jesus.

I'm told that a concert violinist played a concert, and when he finished playing, the people stood to their feet in applause. But, the violinist put his face in his hands and wept. They said, "Don't weep! Look at the people! They loved it!" But, he kept weeping. They said, "Look! They're all standing!" He said, "They're not all standing." He said, "You see that man down there? He's not standing." They said, "He's only one man." He said, "I know. But, he's my teacher. And, if he's not pleased, I'm not pleased."

Friend, I want to tell you something. It doesn't matter if you please the whole world, and don't please Jesus. But, if you please Jesus, it doesn't matter whom you displease. That's it. I'm going to give you a chance right now to take a stand for Jesus Christ. No fine print in the contract. I'm going to ask you to come to Jesus Christ and commit your life to Him and to be

different, to receive persecution, yes, but to receive *“joy unspeakable and full of glory”* (1 Peter 1:8).



# When Christians Are Persecuted

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** July 9, 2000

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 5:10–12

*“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*

MATTHEW 5:10

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## Introduction

Take God’s precious Word and find the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter 5, and we’re going to look at a classic passage of Scripture on persecution. And, our message today is “When Christians Are Persecuted.” I believe that we’re living in the lengthening shadows of the last days, and one of the marks of the last days, according to the Word of God, will be increasing persecution on the children of God, the true Church.

Now, let me tell you something, and it may come as a shock to you: but you cannot be a genuine Christian and escape persecution. Now, at the close of the message today I’m going to be giving an invitation, and I’m going to be asking men, women, boys, and girls to say “yes” to Jesus Christ. I’m going to ask you to trust Him as your personal Lord and Savior—and not only trust Him in your heart, but I’m going to ask you openly,

boldly, plainly to take a stand for Jesus Christ by coming forward, to identify yourself with Jesus Christ; not to try to bootleg a blessing, not to try to sneak into heaven under camouflage, but I'm going to ask you to take a bold, clear stand openly for Jesus Christ. But, I want to say at the outset I don't want there to be any fine print in the contract. I'm telling you that if you give your heart to Jesus Christ—I mean, if you are a true Christian—you are going to suffer persecution.

Second Timothy 3:12—even before we get to our text, let me give you this: “*Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*” (2 Timothy 3:12) It doesn't say they *may*; it says they *shall*. And, it doesn't say *some*; it says *all*. “*All [who] will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*” (2 Timothy 3:12) Whether you've noticed or not, the whipping boy in today's society is the Bible-believing Christian. That is true today. Christians today—true Bible-believing Christians—may be the most widely persecuted people on earth. Everything from the limitation of their freedoms to verbal abuse, or anti-Christian groups or organizations—even to the point of death—Christians are being persecuted today. Now, of course, you can compromise, you can rub shoulders with this world, and not suffer any persecution at all. As a matter of fact, they'll like you very much. But, if you take a stand for the Lord Jesus Christ—an open, clear stand for Jesus—you will be persecuted.

When I was going to college and seminary, I had to work my way through eight years of school. Joyce and I were married for seven of those eight years, and we intentionally started our family. I wanted her to stay home with the children, and I worked. I've done many, many things. One of the things I've worked at was construction work—worked as a carpenter's helper when I was a college student, and even as a high school student. And, I worked alongside a profane man who used perverse language, gutter language, and he loved to ride me about the fact that I'm a Christian, and then especially the fact that I'd already given my heart and felt the call to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, even in high school. And, he would laugh and make all the preacher jokes. And, by the way, I've heard every preacher joke you've ever heard. Don't think you can tell me a preacher joke I haven't heard. You just may, but I doubt it. But, all of those preacher jokes and all of that—I heard all of that. And then, one day, in a moment of seriousness, he laid down his hammer, and he turned to me and he said, “Well, I'll tell you one thing.” He said, “If you're going to be a preacher, be a good one.” He said, “I knew a preacher one time; he was a good one. You could be around him all day long. He'd never speak to you about religion.”

That's what the world believes. I'm telling you that you can rub shoulders with this world. You can deny the Lord Jesus Christ, and the world will think you're wonderful. But, if you say, “I'm going to stand up for the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm going to hoist the blood-stained banner of Prince Emmanuel high, and I'm going to march under it,” then

this world will come down on you like a hammer. And, if you don't believe it, you haven't tried it. The Bible says, "*Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*" (2 Timothy 3:12)

Now, joy is the thermostat in your life that controls your life, but persecution is the thermometer in your life that measures your life. And so, we're going to look a little bit at persecution today, find out what the Lord Jesus Christ had to say about it. Matthew 5, and I begin in verse 10: Jesus said, "*Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake*"—well, already it sounds pretty good, doesn't it?—"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." (Matthew 5:10–12) Now, this is what Jesus Christ, our Commander-in-Chief, said about persecution. And, I want to think with you under three headings.

## I. The Reasons for Persecution

First of all, I want you to think of the reasons for persecution. Why would Christians be persecuted? Why would anybody want to persecute a Bible-believing Christian?

### A. The Lifestyle We Show

Well, in the passage that we just read, there are three reasons, and number one is the lifestyle that we show, or the light that we show. Look, if you will, in verse 10. Look at it quickly: "*Blessed are they which are persecuted for*"—what?—"righteousness' sake." (Matthew 5:10) If you live a righteous life, they will persecute you. Why is that? Well, the word *righteous* comes from a root word that means "to divide." If you are righteous, you are going to be different. And, if you're different, they're going to persecute you. You see, the Bible tells us in 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 9 that we are "*a peculiar people.*" (1 Peter 2:9) And, this world doesn't like peculiar people. It doesn't say we're odd. Now, I know some of us are odd, but that isn't what *peculiar* means. It means that we are different. We're children of light; they're children of darkness. We live by faith; they live by sight. We understand them; they don't understand us. We are salt, and salt stings and irritates. We are light, and light reveals.

¶ Have you ever been somewhere in a room, people sitting around, perhaps watching television or doing something else, and all the other lights are out, and people have maybe taken off their shoes or maybe loosened their garments, and then somebody comes in and throws on a light switch? They say, "Hey! Turn out that light!" The world doesn't like the light that reveals.¶

Now, we are to be persecuted, number one, for righteousness' sake and because of

the lifestyle that we live. *What we believe starts at a different source. It follows a different course.* It's headed toward a different conclusion. And, therefore, folks, if you're righteous in an unrighteous world, it makes sense: you're going against the tide. It just makes sense. You are different, and the lifestyle we live is one of the reasons you're going to be persecuted.

Now, that brings me to a point: a lot of people think they're being persecuted when they're not. They're being punished, and they deserve it. What is the difference between persecution and punishment?

### **1. It Must Be False**

We are punished by good people for doing wrong. We are persecuted by evil people for doing right. Now, make certain that it's persecution that you're getting. And, you know, Jesus said—look again in verse 10, if you will—*“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake.”* (Matthew 5:10)

Now, there are a lot of people who are persecuted, and they deserve it—at least, they're punished. Put in your margin “1 Peter chapter 4.” I'll read it; you just write it down. First Peter 4:14–16: *“If ye be reproached by the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and God resteth upon you: on their part he”—Jesus—“is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified”—*when you get persecuted for Jesus, Jesus is glorified. But now, listen to what Peter says—*“But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer”—*now, listen to this—*“or as a busybody in other men's matters”—*don't be a busybody Christian, sticking your nose in, because if you do, you might find a fist on the end of it. Now, listen—*“Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed.”* (1 Peter 4:14–16)

Now, some of us just suffer for other reasons, and we're not suffering as a Christian; we're not suffering for righteousness' sake. It may be some Messiah complex that we have. It may be arrogance on our part, and it may be laziness on our part. I've known of Christians who say, “Well, the boss won't let me witness on the job. I'm being persecuted.” Well, he didn't pay you to witness. He paid you to do what you do. Do it. And, don't call it persecution if you're being lazy and not doing what you're supposed to do on the job. Hey, friend, it may just be bad breath and body odor, and you think you're being persecuted. Hey, no! The persecution has to be because of the lifestyle that we show: we're like the Lord Jesus Christ. He says, number one, it must be false.

### **2. It Must Be for His Sake**

Number two: It must be for His sake. Now, if you let it be known that you're a Christian—I mean, where you work, where you live, in the club, if you let it be known that you're a Christian—you're going to be different, and they're going to be watching you. Now, if you're just like them, it's not going to bother them at all. But, if you are

different—really different—they’re going to persecute you. I said the word *righteous* comes from a word that means “to divide.” The word *persecute* comes from a word which means “to pursue.” They’re going to be pursuing you. They’re going to be tracking you. They’re going to be on your trail. They’re going to be watching you. They’re going to see how you react to that dirty joke that’s passed around in the office. They’re going to see whether or not you’re going to bet on the ballgames. They’re going to see whether you will flirt. They’re going to see what you’ll do at Christmastime when they’re having the big party. They’re going to be watching you, and they’re going to be trying to catch you doing something wrong. They’re going to be pursuing you.

One of my favorite stories in the Bible is the Lord Jesus Christ and His disciples on the Sabbath Day. They’re going through the wheat fields, and they’re hungry, so they take some grains of wheat, do *that*, get the husks off, and eat the wheat. The Pharisees saw Him, and they said, “Aha! Working on the Sabbath! You’re threshing wheat on the Sabbath!” Of course, Jesus taught them that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath, and so forth. (Mark 2:27) But, that’s not the point in this particular story. Have you ever thought, “What are a bunch of Pharisees doing out there in the cornfield anyway?” Following Jesus. I mean, they’re just watching Him, just following Him. I’ve said before, it kind of reminds me of *Hee Haw*. They come up—“Aha! There he is!”—watching, pursuing, trying to find fault. They will pursue you, looking for any blood in the water. They’ll be circling you like barracudas.

### **B. The Lies We Suffer**

Now, why are we persecuted? Number one: the lifestyle we show. Number two: the lies we suffer. Look in verse 11: “[*They will*] say all manner of evil against you falsely.” (Matthew 5:11) Now, let me tell you something about the world: the world does not play fair. Do you think that the world’s only going to tell the truth about you? No! They’re going to tell lies on you. How did they crucify Jesus? They lied about Him. The Bible says they brought false witnesses against Jesus. (Matthew 26:59; Mark 14:56–57) You remember that? And then what did Jesus say? Jesus said, “*The [servant] is [no better than] his master.*” (Matthew 10:24)

### **C. The Lord We Serve**

Now, don’t think the devil fights fair. He doesn’t. There’s the lifestyle we show, which is righteousness. There are the lies that we suffer. You say, “Pastor, people ever tell lies about you?” Is water wet? Sure! You say, “Well, they ought not to do that.” That’s not the point. They do. They’ll do that about you if you live for the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, there’s the lifestyle we show. There are the lies we suffer. But, let me tell you the main reason we’re persecuted: the Lord we serve. Jesus said, “*for my [name’s] sake.*” (Matthew 5:11) If you serve the Lord Jesus Christ, then you are going to suffer

persecution.

The world hates Jesus. Now, let me be careful here and tell you what Jesus the world hates. The world doesn't hate the baby Jesus. The world does not hate the baby Jesus. The world loves the baby Jesus—I mean, the little baby in the manger. Who doesn't love a baby? The world loves the baby. They love to get together and sing "Silent night, holy night." I'm talking about the biggest pagans will sing that song. They love to sing it. And, the merchants, whether they're Christians or not, they say, "Boy, the baby Jesus has done us good." The world loves the baby Jesus. That's not the Jesus they hate.

I'll tell you something else: they don't hate the Jesus that performed miracles. They don't hate the Jesus that walked on water, fed the multitudes, and healed the sick. They loved that Jesus. And, the world will contribute money to hospitals that have religious names that are in the ministry of healing. They say, "Well, that's fine." And, the world will love that Jesus.

I love the baby Jesus, and I love the Jesus that healed. But, I'll tell you, there is a Jesus that the world hates, and let me tell you why the world hates Jesus. Listen to John chapter 15, verse 19 and following. Jesus said, *"If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin"—now, watch this—"but now they have no cloak for their sin."* (John 15:19–22) Jesus, in another place, said, "The world hates me because I testify that their works are evil." (John 7:7)

Do you know why the world hates Jesus? Not because He was a baby, not because He healed the sick, but because He came to rip the mask off of sin and to testify to this world. The world hates the Jesus that's against pornography. The world hates the Jesus that's against abortion. The world hates the Jesus that's against racism. The world hates the Jesus that is against pride. The world hates the Jesus that is against sodomy. The world hates the Jesus that is against the murder of little babies. The world hates the Jesus that says, "This is wrong; it is sin." That's the Jesus this world hates. Jesus said, "The world hates me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil." (John 7:7) Now, if you go along, you'll get along. But, when you stand up with Jesus Christ and say, "This is right, and this is wrong"... Remember, the word *righteous* means "to divide."

And why, therefore, does a true Christian suffer persecution? The lifestyle we show—we're different—the lies we suffer, the Lord we serve—those are the reasons, right here in chapter 5 of Matthew. That's why you'll suffer persecution. Now, if your life

is not any different, there will be no need for them to lie about you. And, if you are not close to the Lord Jesus Christ, if you're not following Jesus, you're not getting any persecution. But, I remind you again of what the Bible says: *"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."* (2 Timothy 3:12)

## **II. The Result of Persecution**

Now, what is this persecution going to be like? We find it here in the Word of God—not only the reasons, but the result of this persecution. Look in verse 11, if you will. Look at it: *"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake."* (Matthew 5:11)

### **A. Personal Insult**

First of all, there's going to be personal insult. They're going to revile you. If you're a child of God, you're going to be a butt of jokes. You're going to be openly ridiculed. I've been ridiculed since I was in high school for standing up for the Lord Jesus Christ. I've been ridiculed by football players that I've played football with. I've been ridiculed by classmates. I don't say that feeling sorry for myself. The fleas come with the dog. I mean, you're going to be ridiculed; they're going to revile you. And, you know, some people can stand almost anything except to be laughed at. Do you know that? Does it bother you to be laughed at? The Bible says of the Lord Jesus Christ that *"they laughed him to scorn."* (Matthew 9:24; Mark 5:40; Luke 8:53) Can you imagine anybody getting a belly laugh at the Lord Jesus Christ? They did. *"They laughed him to scorn."* (Matthew 9:24; Mark 5:40; Luke 8:53) They were even mocking Him when He was on the cross dying in agony and blood.

### **B. Physical Intimidation**

What is the result of this persecution? Number one: There's going to be personal insult. Number two: There's going to be physical intimidation. They're going to persecute you. Did you know, while I'm speaking today, there are people in prison, languishing in prisons today, because they are being persecuted—many of them because they've stood up for the unborn? And, now they're in prison. They stood up against the murder of little babies in their community.

Did you know, around the world today, Christians are dying? James Dobson says more believers are martyred in recent years than we dare dream. Last year, approximately 160,000 believers in the world died for Jesus Christ—approximately 160,000. More people have lost their lives for Jesus Christ in this century than all the prior centuries since His birth put together. Did you think that that was for the first century? I'm telling you, all around the world today people are suffering for Christ—in China. And, the business people in China are saying, "Oh, how wonderful it would be if

we could just have more business with China!” Where is the politician, where is the president, where is somebody who will speak up against the butchering of Christians in China and the persecution of Christians in China? Listen, there are churches that are not state-run churches where those who will not register, they’re put in prison; they’re tortured. Some of them are forced to unimaginable horrors in China. In the Sudan today, some Christians often are sold into slavery, some for as cheaply as fifteen dollars a head—that’s in Sudan today—because they will not submit to Islam. Did you know in Pakistan there are laws against blasphemy—in Pakistan—where non-Muslims may be forced to convert with Islam or face death? All over the world today people are dying for the name of Christ. Physical intimidation. Most of us have *“not yet resisted unto blood,”* (Hebrews 12:4) but the day may come.

### C. Social Injustice

Personal insult. Physical intimidation. Social injustice. Look at it again. They’re going to *“say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my [name’s] sake.”* (Matthew 5:11) Jesus described it further in Mark 13—put it in your margin—verse 9: *“But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them. And the gospel must first be published among all nations. But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost. Now brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”* (Mark 13:9–13) Do you still want to be a Christian? When I give the invitation, do you still want to come forward and say “yes” to Jesus Christ?

Now listen, what’s He talking about here? Social injustice—it can come from the religious world. Jesus spoke of “councils” and “synagogues”—it can come from the governmental world. Jesus here spoke of *“rulers and kings for my [name’s] sake.”* (Mark 13:9) The world system, even the court system, is loaded against Christians. Out in California not so long ago, the ACLU said—quote—listen to this: “It is our position that teaching that monogamous, heterosexual intercourse within marriage is a traditional American value is unconstitutional establishment of religious doctrine in public schools.” If you teach in a school that people ought to get married before they have sexual relations, that is a traditional American value that they say is unconstitutional. That’s where we’ve come, folks. If we just simply say, “This is right, and this is wrong”...

There is a fixed standard. In many colleges today, there are professors who are



being dismissed and denied tenure because of their Christian stand. Graduate students cannot even get in. They are denied fellowships and even degrees because of their stand for the Lord Jesus Christ. And, it may be at home; it may be domestic. Jesus said in verse 12: *“The brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents.”* (Mark 13:12) Some of you right now I know in this building today are suffering at home because you’re here today—suffering at home; you’re being persecuted for the name of Jesus Christ. And so, what is going to happen today if you stand for the Lord Jesus Christ? What is the result? There’s going to be social injustice. There’s going to be physical intimidation. There is going to be open ridicule if you stand for Jesus Christ. The Bible guarantees it.

### **III. The Reaction to Persecution**

Now, let’s come to the end. We’ve talked about the reasons for it. We’ve talked about the results of it. Let’s talk just a little bit of the reaction to it. How should you as a child of God react to persecution—as a child of God?

#### **A. Reign in Life**

Well, this passage of Scripture tells us what we should do. Look, if you will, in verse 10 again: *“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake”*—now, notice the next phrase—*“for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”* (Matthew 5:10) You know what a kingdom is? A kingdom is where somebody rules and reigns. What do you do when you’re persecuted? Number one: You reign with Jesus in life, just rule with Him. Remember this world is not our home. There are three levels of living. The lowest level is what I want to call the “hellish level,” and the hellish level is where you return evil for good. And, there are a lot of people who will do that. That’s the lowest level—returning evil for good. But then, the human level is the next higher level, and that’s where most people live. That’s returning good for good and evil for evil. That’s the human level. “You get me; I’ll get you. You’re good to me; I’ll be good to you. You scratch my back; I’ll scratch yours. You hurt me; I’ll get you.” That’s the human level: *“An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.”* (Matthew 5:38) But, the heavenly level is this: “I will return, not evil for good, not good for good and evil for evil, but I will return to you good for evil.” When you do that, you begin to reign in life.

Now, you’re in Matthew 5; just pass on over to verse 43, and look in verse 43—Matthew 5 and verse 43—and see what our Lord says here: *“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you”*—listen to this—*“Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil*

*and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust.”* (Matthew 5:43–45) Just continue to reign in life. Don’t come down to their level. When somebody harms you or hurts you, don’t get even.

Remember that there are three levels. Here’s the lowest level: that’s evil for good. Here’s the human level: that’s evil for evil, good for good. Here’s the heavenly level: that is good for evil. Now, here you are up here, and here they are down here. And, you say, “Well, they’ve harmed me. I’m going to get even with them.” Now, watch this. Do you see yourself getting even? Do you see what you’ve done? You’ve gotten even with them; you have come to their level. Don’t do it. You’re children of the kingdom. You live in a different kingdom. We are to reign in life. You know, people with low self-esteem are the people who retaliate. The people who react, the people who resent, are the people who retaliate.

¶ I have a book in my library. The title of the book is *Some Dogs I’ve Known*. It’s a good book, written by a Methodist preacher of yesteryear. And, what caused him to write the book was one day he’d been preaching in a town and he’d been getting some criticism because he would not cut any corners—a good, old-timey Methodist preacher. And, he was standing out in front of the hotel where he was staying, and he saw one of these massive bulldogs—you know, one that’s got, you know, the great big front shoulders and the little whatever; one of these with the big jaws that hang down like that and his nose slanted back. Do you know why a bulldog’s nose is slanted backward? So he can still breathe while he’s holding on. And, this bulldog, walking down the street like this. And, he said—this preacher said in this story—he said, “I saw a little feisty dog come out and begin to yap at him, and begin to snarl at him, and follow along behind this bulldog, just yapping and snarling.” He said, “The old bulldog never turned around, never paid any attention to him.” He said, “One bite would have cut him in half. He could have turned around, put that little old feisty dog in his jaws and demolished him. But, he just kept walking like the little old feisty dog was not there at all.” And then, here’s what this man wrote, and I copied it down for you: he said, “I did not laugh. I went to my room and said my prayers. I prayed, ‘O God, whatever that bulldog’s got, I want. Oh, for the ability to walk with strong threats straight ahead and let them yap and snarl, growl and bark, to their hearts’ content.’” And then, he pointed out that we need—and I quote again: “Men who the acclaim or howling threat of the multitude do not move. Men who walk on amid criticism, condemnation, anathema, cursings, content to know that in their very molding and making there is something so royal as to defend them forever against such mouthing. Men who are too tall for stooping. Men whose ears are too close to heaven to hear the little growls from the throats of the wormlike things of earth.” That’s good, isn’t it? Think of that big old bulldog, and remember that you’re God’s bulldog.¶

## B. Rejoice in the Lord

Listen, folks, you are a part of the kingdom. Reign in life. Number two: Rejoice in the Lord. Look in verse 12: *“Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven.”* (Matthew 5:12) Why should you rejoice? Well, number one, if you’re getting persecuted, it’s evident that you’re living godly in Christ Jesus.

I remember reading about those apostles in the book of Acts, chapter 5, and they were persecuted. The Bible says, *“And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.”* (Acts 5:41) Thank God they can see the difference. Thank God they can. Reign in life. Rejoice in the Lord. You’re like the prophets: *“for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”* (Matthew 5:12) Think of your reward: *“for great is your reward in heaven.”* (Matthew 5:12) Friend,

*It pays to serve Jesus, it pays every day,  
It pays every step of the way.*

—FRANK C. HUSTON

The Bible says in 2 Timothy 2:12: *“If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us.”* (2 Timothy 2:12) You don’t have to go around trying to win popularity contests.

‡ There was a concert violinist, and he was good. He played a concert that brought everybody to their feet. He slipped off the stage. The people would not sit down. The people said, “Go back and take a second bow. They won’t sit down. They’re giving you an ovation.” He said, “I don’t want to go out there.” They said, “Listen, they love you. They all love you.” He said, “No, they don’t.” He said, “You see that little man sitting over there with his head down? He’s not standing. That is my teacher. He’s not standing. And, if he’s not pleased, I’m not pleased.” Let me tell you something: if you displease Jesus, it really doesn’t matter whom you please. And, if you please Jesus, it really doesn’t matter whom you displease. I mean if Jesus is pleased, that’s all that you really need to care about. If the Lord Jesus Christ is pleased, then He is going to say, “Well done.”‡

## C. Release Love

Now, here’s the final thing. Look, what do you do? You reign in life. You rejoice in the Lord. And then, you release love. Just release love. Again, Matthew 5, verse 44: *“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.”* (Matthew 5:44) You’re going to be like Jesus if you will do this. And, to do good to them doesn’t mean that you merely have sympathy for them but that you actually, literally, do them good. You know what you can say to your enemies? “I’m going to treat you the way that Jesus treated me.”

*“God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8)*

Do you know when we do that—when we reign in life, when we rejoice in the Lord, when we release love—do you know what we do? We bring the greatest witness that we can possibly bring. Do you know that the word *martyr* and the word *witness* are the same word in the Greek language?

Let me show you how it works. There was a young man named Stephen. Stephen—by the way, deacons, he wasn't an ordained preacher; he was a deacon—and Stephen preached, in Acts chapter 7, one of the mightiest sermons in the entire Bible. The religious council was out there to persecute him. He was standing up for the Lord Jesus Christ. He would not compromise. He would not back down. He preached the Lord Jesus Christ. They were so angry that they moved against him to stone him, to put him to death. There was a man there whose name was Saul, and Saul was holding the coats of those people who were doing the stoning. Saul, proud Pharisee, he's over there watching, now, these men murder Stephen. He was being stoned. You haven't been stoned yet, have you? Anybody here been stoned for Jesus? I doubt it. But now, Saul is there just holding their garments, holding their coats, persecuting these Christians. (Acts 7:58) You know what Stephen did? As he was falling to the ground, as those stones were falling on him, he looked up to heaven and he said, “Lord, don't hold this against them”—*“Lay not this sin [God] to their charge.”* (Acts 7:60) He looked up. He said, “I see heaven open. I see Jesus standing.” (Acts 7:56) You know, Jesus is supposed to be seated at the right hand of the Father. But friend, when this happened, Jesus stood up—stood up to welcome Stephen home.

Later on, on the road to Damascus, the Apostle Paul, the one who'd been standing there holding the garments, he saw a light above the brightness of the noonday sun, and out of that light came the voice of One who was the very Son of God, Jesus Christ, and He said to him, “Saul, it's hard for you, isn't it, to kick against the ox goad?” (Acts 9:3–5) What was the ox goad that old Saul was kicking against like a big old ox? It was the testimony, the shining face, of a man named Stephen, who said, *“Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.”* (Acts 7:60)

I'm telling you, when this world sees in us, not arrogance, but genuine love; when they see us being willing to suffer in the name of Jesus and not retaliate, but to reign in life, to rejoice in the Lord, and to respond in love, I'm going to tell you something, friend: that is different, and they're going to want the Jesus that we have.

## **Conclusion**

I believe that with all of my heart. We're going to be persecuted—no fine print. In a moment I'm going to ask you to give your heart to Jesus Christ and to suffer

persecution. You say, “Ooop, I don’t think I’ll come.” That’s your business. But, I’m going to tell you one thing: *if I had a thousand lives to live, I’d give every one to Jesus* with all my heart. He’s the only One worth knowing and worth serving.†

# How to Prepare for Persecution

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: May 18, 1997**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 5:10-13**

## Outline

Introduction

I. We Should Expect Persecution

II. We Must Endure Persecution

III. We Can Enlist the Persecution

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you be finding, please, Matthew chapter 5 in your Bible. We're going to be talking about one of the signs of the last days, and that is the persecution of the church. Did you know that's one of the signs that we're living in the last days? And I want to speak to you today about how to prepare for persecution, for as surely as I am standing here the church will know more and more and more persecution. And there is no way—no way—that you can be a genuine Christian and be exempt. For example, the Bible says, in 2 Timothy, *“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution”* (2 Timothy 3:12). That's a pretty clear statement: *“all”* and *“shall.”* No ifs, ands, and buts about it. The new whipping boy in the world today is the Bible-believing Christian. He may be the most hated and persecuted person on this earth. Bible Christians today endure everything from the limitations of their freedoms, their civil rights, scorn and ridicule in the media, and many are going through prison, and many through death.

Now, what does the Bible have to say about that? Well, look, if you will, please, in Matthew chapter 5, and hear the words of Jesus—verse 10: *“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake...”*—I'm glad that's there, aren't you? I'm glad that's there. Jesus said, *“Blessed”—“Blessed”—“are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing...”*—and may I suggest that we have too many good-for-nothing Christians—*“it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be to be cast*

*out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid” (Matthew 5:10–14).*

Now there is a way that you can escape persecution: just fail to be salt and light. Just compromise. Rub shoulders with this old world. Be conformed to this world. You won’t get any persecution.

When I was going to college, I had a job as a construction worker, a carpenter’s helper. And they asked me, those carpenters on that job said, “What are you going to do, son?” I said, “God’s called me to preach.” I began to get it in the neck from that time on: all the preacher jokes, and all of the dirty language and so forth. And then one man called me aside, and he looked at me very serious, and he said, “Young man, if you’re going to be a preacher,” said, “let me tell you how to be a good one.” He said, “I know a preacher. Everybody loved him.” He said, “He never talks about politics or religion. And so,” he said, “if you’ll be a preacher, just never talk about politics and religion.” You can be loved. Just rub shoulders with this old world and everybody perhaps will love you.

Let me tell you something. In the Christian life, joy is the thermostat. You can set the thermostat and decide that you’re going to live with joy, because joy is internal, and it doesn’t depend upon circumstances. But if joy is the thermostat, persecution is the thermometer. It shows how you are living for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now there are three things I want to lay on your heart today, and they come out of this passage. And, by the way, these are things you’d better write indelibly upon the hearts and minds of your children. Now you may make it. They may not, unless you write this upon their hearts: three things about persecution, as we get closer to the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **I. We Should Expect Persecution**

Number one: We should expect persecution. Now, why are we persecuted? Why will Bible-believing Christians be persecuted, and why have they been persecuted for 2,000 years? Three reasons.

### **A. The Lifestyle We Show**

Number one: the lifestyle we show. We are different. Look, if you will, in verse 10: “*Blessed are they which are persecuted for...*”—what?—“*for righteousness’ sake*” (Matthew 5:10). That’s why you’re persecuted: “*for righteousness’ sake*.” Do you know what the word *righteousness* means? It comes from a Greek word which means, “to divide, to be different.” We live in a world that breeds conformity, inclusivity. The world does not like people being different. But listen, friend. We are different. We’re children of light. They are children of darkness. We are alive in the spirit. They are dead in the spirit. We live by faith. They live

by sight. Therefore we understand them, but they don't understand us. And we are different. And they hate differences. We are salt. We know that salt flavors. But I want to tell you something else: you rub salt in a wound, and it irritates; it stings. And we are light. And when people are in a dark room, and you turn on the light, they say, "Hey, turn off that light." "Men hate the light because their deeds are evil" (John 3:19).

Now when we live a different lifestyle—and, by the way, we're twice-born people in a world of once-born people—what we have starts at a different source. It follows a different course. It arrives at a different conclusion. I used to think that there were two ways. Here's the broad way, and here's the narrow way. And some people are on the broad way, and we're on the narrow way looking over at them, and they're over here in the broad way looking at us. That's not the way it is, folks. Here's the broad way going this way. Here's the narrow way going this way, right against the tide. It starts at a different source. It follows a different course. It ends at a different conclusion. We're twice-born people in a world of once-born people. We are different, and the world does not like the difference. If we're righteous, they will try to dumb us down. They'll try to reach out and claim us.

Now when I'm talking about persecution, you must understand there is a difference between persecution and punishment. Some of us are getting what we deserve. It's just simply punishment. What is punishment? Punishment comes from good people when we do bad. Persecution comes from bad people when we do good. Now some of us, we're getting what we deserve. You know, Jesus said we're to be persecuted for what? For righteousness' sake, and for His name's sake. Just put in your margin what Simon Peter had to say about that in 1 Peter chapter 4, verses 14 and 15. Now, listen. Listen to what Peter said: *"If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he"*—that is, Christ—*"is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified."* But now, listen to the caveat he put here. *"But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters"* (1 Peter 4:14–15).

The reason some of us are being persecuted is we have simply earned it: full of ego, a messiah complex, arrogance, laziness, bad manners, and sometimes, bad breath. And we've got it coming to us. No, I'm not talking about punishment. I'm talking about persecution. Some of us try to witness like a prosecuting attorney. Jesus didn't say, "You'll be my lawyers." He said, "You'll be my witnesses." If we're being persecuted, number one, it's got to be false; and, number two, it's got to be for His name's sake. Do you know what the word *persecute* literally means? It means, "to pursue"—"to pursue." It doesn't necessarily mean they're going to put you in irons. It doesn't necessarily mean they're going to pour boiling oil on you. They're going to be pursuing you.



And the idea is a pursuit to find something that you're doing wrong. You fly the flag high for the Lord Jesus Christ where you work, you let them know that you're a Christian, let them know you're a Baptist, let them know you're a Bellevue Baptist, good night! They'll watch you. They'll watch you. In the life of Jesus—do you remember one day that Jesus was going through the wheat fields, and His disciples were hungry, and they got some wheat and rubbed it in their hands and began to eat that wheat? The Pharisees said, "Look, it's the Sabbath day. He's threshing wheat on the Sabbath." And Jesus reminded them that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. But here's the interesting thing. What were a bunch of Pharisees doing out in the cornfields anyway? You think about it. You see them down there, like Hee Haw, you know, rising up out of the cornfield. Following Him. Watching Him. Trying to find something they could blame Him with. One of the reason we'll be persecuted is the lifestyle we show.

### **B. The Lies We Suffer**

Another reason we will be persecuted, friend, is not only the lifestyle we'll show, but the lies we'll suffer. Look, if you will again. He says, in verse 11, "*Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake*" (Matthew 5:11). I'm going to surprise you. It may shock you, but do you know they'll tell lies about you? They will tell lies about you. How did Jesus manage to get crucified? False witnesses, isn't that right? False witnesses.

What started the first persecution on Christians in Rome? It was Nero, who told a big one. Nero burned Rome, according to history. He needed a scapegoat. He was in a vast remodeling project, and he wanted to get rid of the slums, so he said, "Here's a good way to do it: a match." Well, not a match. They didn't have matches. However they got fire started, and they burned Rome. It backfired on him—no pun intended. It backfired on him, and he's trying now to put the blame. He said, "Blame those Christians. They're the ones talking about setting the world on fire. Blame those Christians."

Now you might as well get ready, folks. They're going to lie about you. They'll lie about Jim Dobson. They'll lie about anybody. They'll lie about me. Don't believe everything you hear about any Christian, okay? "They will say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my name's sake."

### **C. The Lord We Serve**

The lifestyle we show: that's one reason. We're different. The lies that we suffer. Here's the third reason, and here's the main reason: the Lord that we serve—the Lord that we serve. The devil didn't primarily engineer it against you; he's just trying to get at Jesus by getting at you, because you're His representative. Notice what he says here. Look at it again.

He says, in verse 11, *“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake”* (Matthew 5:11). The Lord that you love. If you love Jesus, you’re going to be persecuted. The name of Jesus is always a point of offense.

That may surprise you to know that this world hates Jesus. “Oh,” you say, “not the world. The world doesn’t hate Jesus.” Well, the world does hate Jesus. Now, wait a minute. I have to qualify this and tell you which Jesus the world hates. The world does not hate the baby Jesus in the manger. All the world loves Christmas—most all the world. I mean, here’s a little baby in a manger, dimpled feet on straw. And here’s a mother nursing a baby. Why, the merchants love that. Hey, folks, let me tell you something. Christmas is a big business. It is a big business. The world doesn’t hate the baby Jesus. I’ll tell you something else. The world does not hate the Jesus that fed the multitudes and opened blind eyes and healed the sick. That’s not why the world hates Jesus. Do you want to know why the world hates Jesus? Let me tell you why the world hates Jesus. The world hates Jesus for why he came. And that was to destroy the works of the devil—to destroy the works of the devil. Jesus and His kingdom is against liquor, against abortion, against pornography, against pride, against racism, against hatred, against selfishness, the works of the devil. That’s why they hate Him.

Here’s what Jesus said, in John chapter 15, beginning in verse 19: *“If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you”—listen—“for my name’s sake, because they know not him that sent me”* (John 15:19–21). Why are we persecuted? The lifestyle we show. The lies we suffer. But primarily the Lord we serve: *“for my name’s sake.”*

Did you know that one of your gifts is the ability to suffer for Jesus? Philippians 1, verse 29: *“For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake”* (Philippians 1:29). Do you love Jesus? Then don’t complain when the persecution comes because of Him, His dear name’s sake.

## **II. We Must Endure Persecution**

So here’s the first point. Here’s what I’m trying to lay on your heart. We should expect persecution. Here’s the second point. Not only should we expect persecution; we must endure persecution. There’s no way, really, that we’re going to get around it. Now, let me tell you how it’s going to come, as you endure it.

## A. Personal Insult

First of all, it may be personal insult. Look again, if you will, in verse 1: *“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you”* (Matthew 5:11). They love to revile you. You’re going to be made the butt of jokes. You’re going to be ridiculed.

And now, you know, reviling Christians is big business. There’s a new rock star, Marilyn Manson. He has now made popular Christian-bashing. He sold more than a million copies of his production, *“Antichrist Superstar.”* He’s been on the front page of *Rolling Stone* magazine. The *LA Times* has done a feature article on him. He decorates his stage with Nazi style banners. He gets these young teenagers and young adults to pay twenty dollars or more to come to a concert. And then they begin to shout a mantra, which says this: *“We hate love. We love hate.”* And people come to hear this man. They dress in dark clothes, wear dark mascara, dark lipstick. And here’s what he said—and you listen: *“Don’t be oppressed by the fascism of Christianity.”* He’s the hottest thing going right now.

## B. Physical Intimidation

There will be this reviling. There will be this personal insult. But there will be something else. Not only will there be person insult; there will be physical intimidation. *“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you”* (Matthew 5:11). Now I said *persecute* means, *“to follow,”* but it means sometimes, *“to follow in order to imprison.”* There are people in prison right this moment because they’ve stood up for the unborn. I mean, they are in jail right now. Dr. James Dobson, who’s sitting out here, said, in his recent newsletter, that in 1996 more than 160,000 Christians have been martyred, killed, for Jesus. He pointed out that more people have lost their lives standing up for Jesus in this century than all other nineteen centuries before this one—in one century. Don’t get the idea that the martyrs lived in yesterday. We’re going to find physical intimidation. In China, if Christians will not line up behind a state-run church, they face prison, torture, maybe death. In the Sudan, some Christians, often children, are sold for fifteen dollars a head. Others are forcibly converted to Islam. In Pakistan, under blasphemous laws, non-Muslims may be forced into Islam or be killed. That’s in this twentieth century.

## C. Social Injustice

I’ll tell you what else we’re going to face: social injustice. He said, *“They’re going to say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake.”* Jesus elaborated on this in Mark chapter 13. Turn to Mark 13. Look, if you will, in verse 9—Mark 13, verse 9. Now Jesus is speaking to us as well as these who heard Him say this the first time: *“But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them. And the gospel*

*must first be published among all nations. But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost. Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. And ye”—believers—“shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved”* (Mark 13:9–13). What I’m talking about is, not only should we expect persecution, we should endure persecution.

It’s going to come from the religious world. He says, in verse 9, they’ll deliver you up to councils and synagogues. Don’t get the idea that the religious world really honors the Lord Jesus—not the Christ of the Bible.

It’s going to come from the governmental world—verse 9: “You’re going to be brought before rulers and kings for my sake.” Did you know the government is loaded against what you and I believe? I mean, the system. The ACLU recently said in California, “It is our position that teaching that monogamous, heterosexual intercourse within marriage is a traditional American value.” That is, if you teach that one man should be married to one woman, and that men should cohabit with women and vice versa, that, they said, is an unconstitutional establishment of religious doctrine in public schools. When you tell boys that God wants you to get married before you have sex, and that God wants sex between male and female rather than between male and male, and female between female, they say, “Hey, that’s a religious value, and therefore that is unconstitutional.”

It may come, friend, from religious circles. It may come from governmental circles. A lot of it will come from home. Look in verse 12: *“The brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents”* (Mark 13:12). Know what the devil is doing now? He has leveled all of the artillery of hell against the home. That’s the reason I’m so grateful for Focus on the Family. But some of you, some of you in this building today, sit here with a broken heart, because you have a husband, a wife, father, mother, son, or daughter who persecute you for the very fact that you come here on Sunday morning. It’s a fight just for you to get out of the house. And when you come back home, you get some smart remark about that church down there and what you believe.

Folks, it’s a part of being saved. It is a part of being a Christian. And don’t think it’s strange. You don’t say, “Oh, man, something has gotten wrong.” Nothing has gotten wrong. Peter said, concerning the fiery trial, “Don’t think that some strange thing has happened to you”—“as though some strange thing has happened to you” (1 Peter 4:12). It comes with the territory.

### III. We Can Enlist the Persecution

So the first thing, there is the persecution—listen—there is the persecution we should expect. There is the persecution we must endure. You're not going to get out of it—not if you live for Jesus. Now, here's the third thing: there is the persecution we can enlist. You know, we can use it. We can use it for the glory of God. Notice, if you will, what our Lord says here. He says, in verse 12, *“Rejoice,”—“Rejoice”—“and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you”* (Matthew 5:12).

How do you enlist persecution? How do you take what the devil meant for evil and turn it into good?

#### A. Reign in Life

Well, number one: just continue to reign in life. Notice what he says. Look at it. Go back to Matthew 5. He says, *“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the...”*—what?—*“the kingdom”* (Matthew 5:10)—*“the kingdom.”* We're in the kingdom. There are three levels of life. There is the hellish level. There is the human level. There is the heavenly level. What is the hellish level? That's when good people are persecuted by bad people for doing good. That is returning evil for good. That's the hellish level. There's a lot of hellishness around. Then there is the human level. Do you know what the human level is? Good for good, and evil for evil. That's the human level. What is the heavenly level? The heavenly level is those who are children of the king, and we return what? Good for evil—good for evil.

Now, look—you're in chapter 5; just fast-forward over there to verse 43—look at it. Oh, this is tough, but we've got to believe it, because it's in the Word. Jesus said, *“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.”* That's the human level—that's the human level. *“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust”* (Matthew 5:43–45). People persecute you? Don't get even. Don't get even. Why? Where are you? You are reigning with the Lord. You're in the kingdom. Where are they? They're either on the human level or the hellish level.

Now, watch it. You say, “I'm going to get even.” Here you are. Here they are. So you get even. You get even—you get even. No, don't get even. Reign. Rule. You're in the kingdom. You're in the kingdom.

I read a book one time, written by a man, called *Some Dogs I Have Known*. He was an old Methodist preacher. He had a lot of wisdom. He said one day he was in a town, he saw one of these massive bulldogs—you know, the guy's got big shoulders and little tiny hind legs—going down the road like this—a big old mouth. And, he said, a little feisty dog came out and began to yap at that bulldog. He said the bulldog never looked back going down the street. And he watched. He said he could snap him up; he could break him in half, have him for breakfast. The old bulldog never looked back. This preacher went home and he wrote this. He prayed, “Oh, God, whatever that bulldog's got, I want. Oh, for the ability to walk straight ahead, and let them yap and snarl, growl and bark, till their heart is content.” And then he said, “God, give us men whom the acclaim or howling threat of the multitude do not move; men who walk amid criticism, condemnation, anathema, cursings, content to know that in their very molding and making there is something so royal as to defend them forever against such mouthing; men who are too tall for stooping, men whose ears are too close to heaven to hear the little growls from the throats of the wormlike things of earth.” That's good, isn't it? God, help me not to stoop, to come down to their level.

### **B. Rejoice in the Lord**

But not only reign in life; rejoice in the Lord. Look, if you will, in verse 12: “*Rejoice, and be exceeding glad*” (Matthew 5:12). Why do you rejoice in the Lord? Well, listen, folks. As I said, you have to earn persecution. You're not going to get it if you don't live for Jesus. But if you're getting it, you say, “Hallelujah! Hallelujah, they see Jesus!” Do you remember when they took those apostles there, and they told them, they warned them, said, “Don't you preach any more in the name of Jesus. We'll put you in prison. You saw what we did to Him. You know what we can do to you.” The Bible says, “*They departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name*” (Acts 5:41)—“*rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.*”

### **C. Release Love**

Reign in life. Rejoice in the Lord, if it comes. And, thirdly, release love. Just release love. Just keep loving. This is not sympathy; this is love. And, you know, if we'll do this, we'll be like the prophets. He said, “That's the way they persecuted the prophets.” But thank God for the prophets. Did you know that the word *martyr* and the word *witness* are the same word in the Greek language?

There was a man who was being persecuted. His name was Stephen. He was a deacon. And he was being persecuted. They were stoning him. And you never heard such love to come out of a man's mouth. He began to pray as they were stoning him. He began to pray, and he said, “Lord, don't lay this sin to their charge.” And he prayed for those who were

persecuting him and stoning him (Acts 7:54–60). The Bible says, “His face shown like an angel” (Acts 6:15). He said, “I see heaven open. I see Jesus standing there.” I thought He was seated. He might have been seated most of the time, but He’s standing, saying, “Welcome home, son! Welcome home! Welcome home, Stephen! You weren’t ashamed of me.” I have a son named Stephen. “You were not ashamed of me.”

There was a man there, standing there, who watched all of that. As a matter of fact, he was holding the clothes for everybody. His name was Saul. He hated Christians. But he never got that sight out of his mind. Later, on the road to Damascus, Jesus appeared to him and said, “Saul, it’s hard for you, isn’t it? It’s hard for you to kick against the goad.” He was talking about the ox goad, because there was something goading him. Do you know what it was? A face like an angel, a bloody face shining like an angel; a man who showed supernatural love. We’re going to be persecuted, but you know what? Not only should we expect it, and endure it; we should enlist it for Jesus. Amen? Amen.

## **Conclusion**

Father, help us to stand up, stand up, for Jesus as soldiers of the cross. To lift high his royal banner, that it must not suffer loss. Lord Jesus, help me never, never, dear Savior, to be ashamed of you who died for me. Amen.

# Learning to Stand for Jesus

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: November 28, 2004**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 5:10-14**

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Reasons for Persecution

II. The Result of Persecution

III. Our Response to Persecution

Conclusion

## Introduction

I want you to take God's Word and find Matthew chapter 5. Would you turn to it—Matthew chapter 5. Many of us believe—I do—that we are living in the receding shadows of the end of the age, and we see signs of the times all about us. One of those signs is the persecution of Christians. So I want to talk to you this morning on this subject: "Learning to Stand for Jesus." So many Christians are folding up when they ought to be standing up. And one of the things that we need to teach our children, those of us who are settled in the faith, is to teach them to be settled in the faith, so they can stand on the solid rock of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now, begin reading with me, if you will, in verse 10 of this chapter: *"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake..."*—that's an amazing statement in itself, the blessing of being persecuted—*"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid"* (Matthew 5:10-14). What glorious words these are from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Now the point is clear and plain this morning. If you stand up for the Lord Jesus Christ, you're going to be persecuted. Now the Bible says, *"All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution"* (2 Timothy 3:13)—*"all"* and *"shall."* Now there is a way that you can escape persecution. Would you like to hear what it is? Just don't live godly. *"All that will*



*live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*” Now you can hobnob and rub shoulders with the people of this world, fail to take a stand, fail to be distinctive, and you perhaps will not suffer persecution.

I’ve done many jobs working my way through school. One of them is to work in construction as a carpenter’s helper. And I worked around some carpenters who were profane men. They loved to tell dirty jokes, and they loved to ridicule my faith, especially when they learned I was going to be a preacher. Finally, one of those men, though, turned to me and looked me straight in the eye, and said, “Well, if you’re going to be a preacher, be a good one.” He said, “I once knew a preacher who was a good one.” He said, “He never mentioned religion or politics.”

Now there’s a way that you can just not take a stand for anything, and people will call you a good preacher. But, friend, the persecution that you receive is the thermometer that registers your love and your courage for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now in this passage before us Jesus Christ is talking about the persecution that every mother’s child who loves the Lord Jesus Christ will receive if they stand for Him.

## **I. The Reasons for Persecution**

Let’s look for a moment at the reasons for this persecution.

### **A. The Life We Show**

The first reason is the life that we show. Look, if you will, in verse 10: “*Blessed are they which are persecuted*”—now, watch this—“*for righteousness’ sake*,”—“*for righteousness’ sake*”—“*for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 5:10). The world will persecute you if you live a lifestyle of righteousness, if that is the life that you show.

Now the root word for *persecute*—and I looked it up again yesterday—is a word which means, “to divide” or “to separate.” Now a person who is righteous is divided, separated, from this world, so not everybody is going to be persecuted. Friend, listen. You have to earn persecution. You have to earn it. And the way you earn it is to be different.

Now righteousness is already described in this fifth chapter by the Beatitudes. Look at the Beatitudes: be pure in heart, mourn, hunger and thirst after righteousness, and all of these things. Now if you do these things, all of these Beatitudes, the next Beatitude is axiomatic: “*Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake.*”

Now if you’re not righteous, forget it: you’re not going to be persecuted. But, you see, righteousness divides. That’s what the word *persecute* means. It means, “to separate, to divide.”

We are, the Bible says, a peculiar people. Now you can jot that down—1 Peter chapter 2, verse 9: we are a peculiar people (1 Peter 2:9). We’re different from the world. Our faith is

so different. It starts at a different source; it follows a different course; it ends at a different destination.

I heard of a lady who called her husband on the car phone. He was an elderly man. He'd gone to the grocery store. She said, "Now, Herbert, I've just listened to the news, and there is a crazy man on the expressway going the wrong way. Be careful." He said, "They're all going the wrong way!"

If you're a Christian, you're going to be like that man, in reverse. There is the wide road and the narrow road, and it doesn't mean that the narrow road and the wide road are running parallel. Here is the wide road, and the narrow road is going in the opposite direction. *When you stop being in collusion with the devil, you will find yourself being in collision with him.*

Now we are a peculiar people. We're children of light. They're children of darkness. We live by the Spirit. They live in sin. We live by faith. They live by sight. We understand them. They do not understand us.

The passage that I just read in verse 13 says we're the salt of the earth. Well, salt stings. It irritates when it's rubbed into a wound. We're the light of the world. Light reveals. Light exposes. And so the world, by nature, says, "Get that salt out of here, and turn off that light!" We're different. It's righteousness. Now we need to be very careful here. Some may go around saying, "Well, I'm persecuted," and you may be, but you're not persecuted for righteousness' sake. Jesus said it must be for righteousness' and for His name's sake. Put this verse down there in your margin—1 Peter chapter 4, verses 14 through 16: "*If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he*"—that is, Jesus— "*is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.*" Busybody: you stick your nose in somebody else's business and you might find a fist at the end of it. Don't suffer "*as a busybody in other men's matters.*" But look in verse 16: "*Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf*" (1 Peter 4:14–16).

The reason we suffer is for righteousness' sake. To suffer as a Christian, you're to be a witness, but you're not called to be a prosecuting attorney. You're to be different, but you're not to be odd. You see, the persecution must be false, and it must be for Jesus' sake.

Now this word *persecution* also means, "to pursue." You see, when you're different, they will pursue you. They'll be watching you like a hawk. They'll be trying to find some flaw, some difference, in you. And when they find it, it will make them feel better as they condemn you.

One time the Bible describes Jesus as going through the wheat field. And He was hungry, and it was on the Sabbath day, so He and His disciples plucked some ears of wheat and began to thresh it with their hand and to eat that wheat. It was on the Sabbath day. And there were some Pharisees who said, “Aha! Aha! Aha! You have broken the Sabbath.” Well, of course, He hadn’t. But the funny part of this whole story is, what were a bunch of Pharisees doing out in the wheat field, anyway? Kind of like Hee Haw. They stood up: “Aha!” They were following Jesus. They were pursuing Jesus. And they’ll do the same to you. When you fly the flag high, they’re going to be watching and trying to find something that they can criticize you for.

### **B. The Lies We Suffer**

Why are we persecuted? Number one: The life that we show. Number two: The lies that we suffer. Look again in verse 11: *“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake”* (Matthew 5:11). They will tell lies about you. They will say things about you that are not true. I remind you that the most righteous person who ever lived, obviously, was Jesus. And how did they crucify Him? With false witnesses. They lied about the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **C. The Lord We Serve**

Now you can expect to be lied about. You can expect your pastor to be lied about. You can expect any child of God to be lied about. And they will persecute you for the life you show. They will persecute you for the lies you suffer. Or that will be the reason that we’re persecuted: because we’re lied on. And then, a third reason, and the major reason, is the Lord we serve. Look again in verse 11: *“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely,”*—now, watch the last three words—*“for my sake”* (Matthew 5:11)—*“for my sake.”* The Lord we serve: that’s the reason that we are persecuted.

Now this world hates Jesus. You say, “Oh, no, pastor. No, the world loves Jesus.” Well, let’s get it straight. The world has no qualms with the baby Jesus. The merchants are happy for the baby Jesus. You can walk through the mall, and you can see the manger scenes, and so forth. And the world loves the baby Jesus. Why? Who doesn’t love a baby? What a sweet story that is, the little baby Jesus there in the straw in the crib! The merchants love Jesus. I’ll tell you why: because they are making gazillions on the baby Jesus, the birth of Jesus that we celebrate. The world does not hate the baby Jesus. No, not at all! And, also, the world doesn’t hate the Jesus who healed the sick. The world does not hate the Jesus who fed the multitudes. The world doesn’t hate that Jesus. As a matter of fact, again, millions of

dollars have been raised to help feed the multitudes and to heal the sick, and everybody says that is a good thing.

But why does the world hate Jesus? May I tell you very clearly and plainly? Because Jesus came—and He Himself said so—to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8), amen? Now Jesus came against liquor and abortion and pornography and pride and racism and hatred. Jesus is against that. And because of that the world hates Jesus. Put in your margin John chapter 15, verses 19 through 22. Jesus said, *“If ye were of the world, the world would love his own:”—*that is, just be worldly, and the world will love you—*“but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord.”* Do you think you’re better than Jesus? Do you think the reason that you’re not persecuted is that you’re better than Jesus? *“The servant is not greater than his lord.”* Now, listen to this: *“If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.”* Now, listen to this: *“But all these things will they do unto you for my name’s sake, because they know not him that sent me. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin”* (John 15:19–22).

That’s it! Jesus came to condemn sin. Jesus exposed their sin, and they hated Him. And they still hate Him. They hate the things that Jesus Christ stands against. He came to destroy the works of the devil.

Why are you persecuted? The life that we show, the lies that we suffer, and the Lord that we serve. It’s right there in this passage of Scripture. That’s why we’re going to be persecuted.

## **II. The Result of Persecution**

Now, what is the result of this persecution? Look now in chapter 5—Matthew chapter 5, verse 11: *“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake”* (Matthew 5:11). Now, what are the results of this?

### **A. Personal Insults**

Well, first of all, there are going to be personal insults. They’re going to revile you. They’re going to say some things about you that are not very flattering. You will find yourself the butt of jokes. Even now they’re dividing America up into the United States of Canada and Jesus Land. They look on us who live in the heartland of America as country bumpkins. We have the title of being the fly-over land. You’re just going from the east coast to the west coast, and the west coast back to the east coast. But we are looked down upon. We are reviled.

## B. Physical Intimidation

Now, folks, it may be personal insults. I've been insulted a good number of times for Jesus. Secondly, it may be physical intimidation. Look again. It says they will persecute you, there in verse 11. There are people right now in prison—right now—because they have stood against sin, stood up for the unborn. They are persecuted. They are in prison.

Dr. James Dobson, who is a personal friend of mine, has said that it is estimated that 160,000 Christians in a recent year died for the Lord Jesus Christ—160,000 Christians. They were martyred. Many of the others suffered unimaginable torture and deprivation. You're going to be persecuted.

Listen. In China, Christians who worship in churches that are not state-run face prison and even torture. In the Sudan right now, some Christians, often children, are sold into slavery for fifteen dollars a head, many of the little girls forced into prostitution. Others are forced to convert to Islam. In Pakistan, if some would refuse to convert to Islam, they would be put to death.

## C. Social Injustice

There will be the reviling: personal insult. There will be the persecution: physical intimidation. And there will also be social injustice—social injustice: They will *“say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake”* (Matthew 5:11). Jesus gave a warning about this. Put this verse down in the margin—don't turn to it, but listen to it—Mark 13, verses 9 through 13: *“But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them. And the gospel must first be published among all nations. But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up,”*—listen to this now—*“take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost. Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved”* (Mark 13:9–13).

Now this passage of Scripture deals with the Great Tribulation and the horrors of the Great Tribulation, but we see foregleams of that today.

### 1. From the Religious World

This injustice is going to come from the religious world. They're going to bring you before councils and synagogues, and the religious world will persecute you. I don't have a Messiah complex, but the religious world has persecuted me. Now you can have New Age

religion, and you can preach, as long as you leave out the lordship of Jesus Christ. But this will come from the religious world.

## **2. From the Governmental World**

Not only will it come from the religious world, it will come before the governmental world. Look in verse 9 of this chapter, Mark 13. *“Ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake”* (Mark 13:9). This world system is loaded against Jesus.

Recently, the ACLU has said in California—and I quote them—“It is our position that teaching that monogamous, heterosexual intercourse within a marriage is a traditional American value is an unconstitutional establishment of a religious doctrine in public schools.” That is, if you just teach in a public school that a traditional marriage—a man and a woman—is an American value, that is unconstitutional in America. Is that not something? Friend, this persecution is here.

## **3. From the Domestic World**

It may come from the religious world. It may come from the governmental world. It may come from your own family. It may be domestic persecution. Now, again, you have your Bible open to Matthew chapter 5, but here in this scripture in Mark chapter 13 and verse 12 it says, *“Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death”* (Mark 13:12).

You may be persecuted by those closest to you: family members. And some of you right now are suffering that kind of persecution. Not infrequently am I called upon to counsel with or give advice to people who find this animus in their own families. They’re hated. They’re persecuted in their families.

The persecution will come from the religious world. It will come from the governmental world. It will come from the domestic world. That’s black print on white paper.

## **III. Our Response to Persecution**

Now, finally, what should be our response? We’ve talked about the reasons, and the results. What is our response? How should we respond in these last days to the persecution that is going to get worse and worse and worse?

### **A. Reign in Life**

Number one: We should learn to reign in life. Look in verse 10. We’re back to chapter 5, Matthew 5—look in verse 10. When we are persecuted, God says, *“for [ours] is the kingdom of heaven”* (Matthew 5:10). The scripture literally says, concerning the persecuted, “for theirs is in the kingdom of heaven.” We have a kingdom. We reign with Christ in life, the

Bible says. When these people persecute us, remember who we are. We're children of the kingdom. And because we're children of the kingdom, we should reign in life.

There are three levels of life. First of all, there is the hellish level, that returns evil for good. Then there is the human level, that returns evil for evil, and good for good. Then there's the heavenly level, that returns good for evil.

Now you're in Matthew 5—fast-forward to verse 43: *“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;”*—He's still on the subject of persecution—*“that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust”* (Matthew 5:43–45).

When they persecute us, we're not to try to get even. Here we are up here in the kingdom. Here they are down here in the world. And they persecute us. “Well,” we say, “I'm going to get even with them.” Now, watch this. What do we do when we get even? *That's* what we do when we get even. We leave our status, we leave our position, and no longer are we reigning with the Lord Jesus Christ.

I read a book one time called *Some Dogs I Have Known*. It was written by an old Methodist preacher, Bob Shuler. Bob Shuler was in a town one time holding a revival meeting, and he was getting some criticism. But he happened to be standing there outside of a restaurant, and he saw a strange sight in the road. There was a massive bulldog. You know how they walk like this—big jaws, big shoulder muscles. And he's walking down the street, this old bulldog is. And right behind him was a little dog, a little yapping mutt, and that dog was yapping at this bulldog's heels, snarling and yapping and barking. The old bulldog just kept on walking. He could have snapped him in two with one bite, but he just kept on walking, paid no attention to this yapping mutt. Shuler went back and wrote these words: “I did not laugh. I went to my room and said my prayers. I prayed, ‘O God, whatever the bulldog's got, I want. Oh, for the ability to walk with strong treads, straight ahead, and let them yap and snarl, growl and bark, to their heart's content.’” He then pointed out that, “We need men who the acclaimed or howling threat of the multitude did not move, men who walk on amid criticism, condemnation, anathema, cursings, content to know that in their very molding and making there is something”—listen to this—“so royal as to defend them forever against such mouthings; men who are too tall for stooping, men whose ears are too close to heaven to hear the little growls from the throats of the wormlike things of earth.” That's a good lesson from the bulldog.

They will yap at you. Listen. You reign in life. Don't forget who you are. You're children of the kingdom.

## B. Rejoice in the Lord

And not only do you reign in life, you rejoice in the Lord. Again, in verse 12—look at it again: “Rejoice,”—“rejoice”—“and be exceeding glad” (Matthew 5:12). You’re to rejoice in the Lord.

This word *rejoice*, as I’ve told you a few Sundays ago, actually has the idea of leaping and dancing. Don’t sit in the corner and feel sorry for yourself. Don’t suck your thumb. Why? Think of the company we resemble. Verse 12 says, “*for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you*” (Matthew 5:12).

When I get to heaven, I don’t want to meet the Apostle Paul, and he say, “Adrian, where are your scars?” I say, “Well, I didn’t get any scars.” I don’t want to be ashamed. I want to be a prophet. Don’t you want to be a prophet? They persecuted the prophets. There’s a company we resemble. There’s the character we reveal that we’re living for Jesus. There is the compensation we receive. “*Great is your reward in heaven*” (Matthew 5:12). I learned to sing a long time ago,

*It pays to serve Jesus, it pays every day,  
It pays every step of the way.*

—FRANK C. HUSTON

You know, if I got no other pay, except to remind people of Jesus, that would be enough.

In the early part of the Book of Acts there were some disciples who were being persecuted, and they’d been put in prison. They’d been beaten—beaten. But they kept on preaching Jesus. You might as well have told the sun not to shine as to tell these men not to preach Jesus. And the Bible says of those who were persecuting them that they departed from the presence of the council, and the people in the council marveled that they were fisherman, unlearned—now listen to this—“*and took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus*” (Acts 4:13). They’d been persecuted, but they reacted in such a way that the people of this world said, “They are like the Lord Jesus Christ.”

## C. Release Love

Now, what do you do when you’re persecuted? Listen. You reign in life. Number two: You simply stay true to the Lord Jesus Christ and rejoice in the Lord. And, finally—listen: You release love—love—to those who persecute you. Look again in Matthew chapter 5, verse 44—look at it: “*But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven*” (Matthew 5:44–45). Release love—release love.



Now this will be so much easier if you do the first two things, if you will reign in life, understand who you are. Then you can release love. And this love is not mere sympathy; it's doing good to them. Notice what he says. See, God makes it to rain upon the just and the unjust (Matthew 5:45). Don't say, "Well, I'm going to treat some people nice because they're good people, and other people wrong because they persecute me." Be like God and love them! Aren't you glad that God loves sinners? Amen? Where would we be if He didn't love us? These people are blind. They don't have life. They don't understand. As a matter of fact, the Bible says, in the last days, those that kill us will think they do God service (John 16:2). They are blind, and they need love, and we need to treat them as God has treated us.

Last example, and I'll close this message. There was a preacher—well, actually it was a deacon—his name was Stephen. My son Stephen is named after this man. He was among the first deacons in the Bible. He was a powerful preacher of the Word of God. And they couldn't controvert him. They could not change him. They could not intimidate him. So they stoned him to death. Can you imagine what it would be like to be stoned to death? Now that's persecution. They stoned him to death. And there was a young man there holding the garments of these who were doing the stoning. You know, you take off your coat to do something like that. And this man was standing there holding their garments. His name was Saul. Later on, he became Paul, the mightiest Christian missionary theologian that the world has ever known. He was changed. What changed him? The way Stephen died. Stephen, as he was dying, looked up to heaven and said, "Lord Jesus, Lord Jesus, don't charge this terrible thing to their account. Lord Jesus, have mercy upon them" (Acts 7:60). Saul never forgot that.

When Jesus met Saul on the road to Damascus, Jesus said, "It's hard for you to kick against the ox goad, isn't it?" (Acts 9:5). What was goading this man? What was goading him? What was it that gave him this disquietude? It was the face of a man that shined like an angel who released love when he was persecuted.

## **Conclusion**

We are going to be persecuted. *"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution"* (2 Timothy 3:12). My brothers and my sisters, we need to believe this, but how much more do we need to teach our children to "stand up, stand up for Jesus, ye soldiers of the cross." Teach them. Show them. These are days of golden opportunity to share the Lord Jesus Christ.

# Salty Saints

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: September 20, 1992**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 5:13**

*“Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under the foot of men.”*

MATTHEW 5:13

## Outline

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## Introduction

Matthew chapter 5 and verse 13—would you find it, please? We’re continuing our series on the Sermon on the Mount. The title of the series: “Building on the Rock.” Today, we come to a very wonderful verse of Scripture, Matthew chapter 5 and verse 13. The Lord Jesus said, *“Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under the foot of men.”* (Matthew 5:13) What a verse! What a verse!

† A little boy asked his mother, so I’m told, “Mother, would you give me a dollar if I’ll be a good boy?” She said, “Son, why don’t you be good for nothing like your father?”†

There are a lot of Christians who are that way. They are good for nothing. Jesus said they’re like salt that’s lost its savor. They are cast out. They are *“good for nothing, but to be...trodden under the foot of men.”* (Matthew 5:13)

We’re thinking today about salt. Probably already today you’ve put some salt on your eggs. Maybe you had some oatmeal with salt in it. Salt is very necessary for life. But salt, you know, is a compound made of sodium, which is a metal, really. It’s about the

consistency of hard cheese. When I took chemistry, we'd take a little sodium and drop it in water, and we'd get a very explosive gas out of that sodium: we would get hydrogen gas. And then, chlorine, the other element, is a green poisonous gas. And, if you were to walk into a room full of chlorine, you'd be dead in a little while. These are two very dangerous things. If you were to ingest either that sodium or that chlorine alone, you'd die. And yet, God, in His chemistry, has put the two together: sodium chloride. We call it today "table salt." It's necessary for life. And, I think of what God has done by the chemistry of the cross, how He's taken that deadly part of my nature and God has made something new out of me, even given me a new name, just like sodium and chloride get a new name called "salt." And, Jesus said, "[You] are the salt of the earth." (Matthew 5:13) I want to talk to you today about "Salty Saints."

## I. The Dynamic of Pure Salt

I want you to see, first of all, what I want to call "the dynamic of pure salt." Why did Jesus use this metaphor? Why did Jesus use this figure of speech? Why did Jesus, when He described these people who were living like the Beatitudes, why did He call them "salt"? My dear friend, you'd have to understand the importance of salt in Jesus' time. If it's important in our time, how much more important it was important in Jesus' time! In that society, sometimes salt—pure salt—was more valuable than gold. As a matter of fact, pure salt was a rare delicacy. Pure salt was a medium of exchange. As a matter of fact, our English word *salary* literally means "salt money." You understand that expression today, "That man is worth his salt," or, "He's not worth his salt." Salt was so very valuable. Why? Because of what it did, and what it does.

### A. Salt Seasons

Number one: As you well know, salt seasons. Salt causes flavor to come alive. In the book of Job, we read this question: "*Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? Is there any taste in the white of an egg?*" (Job 6:6) The answer is obviously *no*. What does salt do? Salt seasons. The little boy said, "Salt is that which tastes bad when you don't have it." That's right. You see, Christians are to give to life, and Christians are to give to society, a flavor, a tang, a zest.

Most of the people in America are simply living bland lives; they're living flavorless lives. That's the reason they're always trying to do something to get themselves on some kind of a high. Most of the people that you go to work with tomorrow, as I've told you before, they're not all that interested in going to heaven or hell; they just want to know how to hack it on Monday. There is not excitement, no thrill. Their lives are tasteless. Their lives are flavorless. It is the bland leading the bland. And, we who are Christians, we are to be different. That's the reason the Bible says in Colossians

chapter 4 and verse 6: *“Let your speech [always] be...seasoned with salt.”* (Colossians 4:6) You know, there ought to be something about every Christian that’s absolutely exciting. Do you know why I think we have so many boring sermons? Because preachers are boring. Why we have so many boring Sunday school lessons? Because the teacher is bored.

† A preacher went to the doctor, and he said, “Doctor, you’ve got to give me something to help me because of my snoring.” The doctor said, “Is it keeping your wife awake?” He said, “It’s keeping the whole congregation awake.”†

*“Let your speech be...seasoned with salt.”* (Colossians 4:6) There ought to be zest about us. There ought to be a flavor about the children of God. Salt seasons.

### **B. Salt Preserves**

I’ll tell you what else salt does, my dear friend: salt preserves. When Jesus talked about being the salt of the earth, in that crowd there were fishermen. Jesus is right there by the Sea of Galilee. This is the Sermon on the Mount. And, Jesus is telling those fishermen right there, *“[You] are the salt of the earth.”* (Matthew 5:13) And, obviously, He’s talking about the preserving power of salt as well as the seasoning power of salt. Salt, in that day, prevented decay; it restrained corruption. It was necessary for those fishermen to keep their fish edible for them to salt them down. And oh, if ever there were a day when we need the preserving power of the gospel salt, it is this day of deadly decay.

### **C. Salt Heals**

Now, a third thing salt does: not only does salt flavor, not only does salt preserve, but salt heals. You remember reading there in 2 Kings where Elisha put a cruse of salt into some deadly, polluted waters, and those waters were healed, and where there was barrenness and bitterness there came blessedness. (2 Kings 2:20–21) Salt has an antiseptic about it. Salt has healing properties to it. As a matter of fact, in Bible times, when little babies were born, they would give that baby a saline bath. They would salt the baby with salt, that is, to hold down infection. And so, salt, my dear friend, is an antiseptic. Salt heals.

### **D. Salt Burns**

But, I’ll tell you what else salt does: salt burns; salt irritates. Have you ever gotten a little ulcer in your mouth and then eaten a tomato with some salt on it? Have you ever gotten a cut on your hand and then got salt in it? You see, the Bible says in Mark chapter 9 and verse 49: *“For every one shall be salted with fire.”* (Mark 9:49) What’s he saying? He’s saying fire and salt have something in common. My dear friend, salt burns. And, I want to tell you that the truth of God’s Word, when it is rubbed into this diseased and

putrefying old world, will sting. Now, there are a lot of people who want a nonirritating brand of the gospel. But, my dear friend, I want to tell you, no offense means no effect. You describe this world, you preach to this world, and you're going to be an irritant to this world. Salt burns; it irritates.

### E. Salt Penetrates

I'll tell you what else salt does, my dear friend: salt penetrates. You can take just a pinch of salt and put it into a gallon of water, and it will permeate that entire gallon of water. As a matter of fact, salt is one of the few major compounds that will dissolve equally well in hot or cold water. And, what we need to do is to get the salt to the source, where it can penetrate, where it can activate and change society. You know what happens in so many of our churches? We become just gigantic salt warehouses. You don't salt salt. We're salting one another when we need to salt society. *Many of our Sunday school classes have become sacred societies for snubbing sinners when they ought to be saltshakers, getting out here and changing the world.* Salt penetrates.

Jesus said here in this passage of Scripture, "*Ye are the salt of the earth.*" (Matthew 5:13) Look at it in verse 13. He didn't say, "You are the salt of the church." "[*You*] are the salt of the earth." (Matthew 5:13) We hear a lot today about "separation of church and state." Anytime any preacher stands up and begins to talk about the moral issues of today, when they have a political ramification, someone will say, "Oh, hush, hush! Separation of church and state! Separation of church and state! You go back under the rock where you belong, and shut up." My dear friend, I'm coming out from under the rock; I'm standing on the Rock. And, I want to tell this world, dear friend, that Christians are to be the salt of the earth. And, we may believe in the separation of church and state, rightly understood, but we don't believe in the separation of salt from society. Jesus Christ said, "*Ye are the salt of the earth.*" (Matthew 5:13) And, if God's people, good people, don't speak out and stand up, this nation is going to hell in a hand basket—and real quick. I hope you understand that. Separation from sin—yes. Isolation from sinners—absolutely not! You know the problem with us? We sit in these auditoriums like this all around America today, and all we have become is some sort of glorified saltshaker: the salt never gets out.

¶ In 1985, in New Orleans, Louisiana, there was a celebration. Do you know what they were celebrating? The park commission was celebrating that they had gone through the entire summer without one drowning in the city pools. They were so excited about that. There were two hundred people there. They were having a celebration. With those two hundred people, there were one hundred lifeguards. They were there celebrating. At the end of the celebration, the four lifeguards there that night looked in the bottom of the pool, and there was a fully dressed man that drowned in the midst of a

hundred lifeguards. Jerome Moody, age 31, died surrounded by a hundred lifeguards. And, I wonder how many souls are going to hell in our neighborhoods surrounded by people who claim to be the salt of the earth.†

Salt, my dear friend, penetrates. Now, that's the dynamic of pure salt.

## II. The Dissipation of Polluted Salt

I want to talk to you about the dissipation of polluted salt. Look again in verse 13: “*Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?*” (Matthew 5:13) And, in Bible times, they got much of their salt from the Dead Sea. There's more salt concentrated there than any other place on earth. When the sun would come out on that particular salt, it would evaporate the water, and the salt and the minerals would be left behind together. You couldn't use that on your table. As a matter of fact, it's polluted. It's terrible, noxious. I have been down there to put my finger in that, just put it to the tip of my tongue. It's bitter indeed. Salt—yes; but all of the purity of salt has leaked out and leached out, and the chemicals, the impurities, are left. It is valueless. Not only is it valueless; it is harmful. If you would take that salt and put it on your crops, they would die. If you were to pour it down the well, the water would be poison.

What would they do with that salt? I'll tell you one thing they could do with it: they could just cast it out on the roadway. That was the only safe place for it. You couldn't put it on the fields where it would leak down into the water supply, and so forth. Put it on the roadway. And, because it made a very good cement, the moisture would come and dampen it and it would harden. And, men would walk on it, and it would be trampled down. Nothing would grow there. But, it made very good pavement for men to walk on. Look at what he says here: “*Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour*”—it's saltiness—“*wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.*” (Matthew 5:13)

Do you know what is happening to the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ today, my dear friend? Do you know what is happening to Christians in this day and this age? We're being walked on like never before. You know as well as I know that the whipping boy in today's society is the Bible-believing Christian, isn't it true? People today have us beneath their feet. You say, “Well, preacher, they're never supposed to love us.” I don't care whether they love us or not. I don't want them to love us. Jesus said, “[*Beware*] when all men speak well of you!” (Luke 6:26) I want them to respect us. The problem is, today, my dear friend, that they no longer respect Bible-believing Christians, and I'll tell you why: because we have become good for nothing. We have lost our saltiness. The world has no respect for the children of God. We're trodden down under the foot of men.

### III. The Demand for Preserving Salt

The third thing I want you to notice—I have talked to you about the dynamic of pure salt; I have talked to you about the dissipation of polluted salt—let me talk to you finally, and a little more emphatically, if I might, about the demand for preserving salt—the demand. If there were ever a need, if there were ever a time, if there were ever an age for the salt to work, now is the need, now is the time, now is the age. I wonder if rivers of blood and oceans of tears are what it's going to take to bring this nation to her knees.

I am more concerned about America today than I have ever been in my life. Many people do not understand what is happening in America. My dear friend, if America was ever at the crossroads, she's at the crossroads this hour. And, many people do not understand because they themselves are saltless saints; they are good-for-nothing saints. They are being trodden under the foot of man. I am alarmed. I would to God—I would to God—that God would give me the power and strength to stir you and stir others who hear this message today.

What has happened in America? In 1962, the Supreme Court of the United States of America banned prayer in the public schools. My dear friend, the freeborn American ought to be able to pray anywhere: in the home, in your house, in the schoolhouse, the state house, church house, the White House. But, school prayer was banned in 1962. Then, the Bible—reading the Bible was banned in 1963. Then, the posting of the Ten Commandments was banned in 1980, so as to say, the kids, if they come and see the Ten Commandments on the wall, they may be influenced by that. They may be influenced not to kill. They may be influenced not to steal. They may be influenced not to commit adultery. Oh, we wouldn't want to do that!

So, in so-called “God-blessed America,” these things have tumbled down, and in 1987, the United States has become, by that time, a legally atheistic country. Did you know there is presently more religious freedom in the former Soviet Union than there is in the United States of America today? God, the Bible, the Ten Commandments, and prayer are illegal in our schools, but condoms, sex education, homosexuality, humanism are legal. America's public education system is becoming a snake pit. And, I'll tell you why, my dear friend: *“the salt [has] lost [its] savour.”* (Matthew 5:13) And, it's time for the salt to work.

In 1973, abortion on demand was legalized in America. January 22, 1973, will go down, in my estimation, as the blackest day in American history—when nine black-robed Supreme Court Justices—the high priests, the self-appointed high priests of the new humanism—classified little babies in the mother's womb as a nonperson. The little baby, therefore, is a nonperson; it has no rights. Since that time, more than twenty million little preborn babies have been slaughtered, and they have been sacrificed upon the altar of expediency.

Did you know that in the last fifteen years, at least half—and more than half—of all of the pregnancies among white Americans have been killed by abortion—most of them not even therapeutic, most of them convenient abortions? Beloved, it's time for the salt to work. Did you know that in the last twenty-five years, suicides among young people have increased 150 percent? It's time for the salt to work. Did you know that two-thirds of the graduating seniors in our high schools—I said two-thirds—confessed, when polled, that they have experimented with illegal drugs? It's time, my dear friend, for the salt to work. Did you know that in America one million of America's teenage girls get pregnant every year? It's time for the salt to work. In America, so-called "God-blessed America," sodomy has gone from a sin to a sickness to a socially accepted practice. It is time for the salt to work. In America, the divorce rate has risen forty percent from 1970 to 1992—forty percent! It is time for the salt to work. I am telling you that the cesspools of iniquity are full and running over. Love is forsaken as lust. Satan is worshipped as a saint. Man is magnified above his Maker. And, it is time for the salt to work.

I want to tell you something, my dear friend: not only is America ripe for judgment; America is now being judged. All of these things are the judgment of God. How does God judge us? He lets us have our way. Not only is God America's biggest hope, our only hope; God is America's biggest threat—the judgment of God. And, God not only will judge America; God is judging America. It's time for the salt to work. The only hope! The only hope! The only hope! It's not in Washington. It's not in the Pentagon. It's not on Capitol Hill. It's not in Tennessee. It's not in Nashville. It's not in our city hall. My dear friend, the only hope to keep the decay down is the salt of the earth, God's people. We need to apply the salt. The problem is not with Hollywood, the needy elite. The problem is not with the pornographers. The problem is not with the liquor dealer. The problem is not with the crooked politicians. Very frankly, my dear friend, if you want to know where the problem is, look around. It's saltless saints. That's where the problem is—*"salt [that has] lost its savour...it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under the foot of men."* (Matthew 5:13)

Let me tell you what has happened in America. The Zondervan publishing house presented these following items. Quote: "Some things to ponder about. 'The land of the free and the home of the brave.' In the wake of the Supreme Court stances, number one"—listen to this—"you may not display a cross on public property unless it's on fire, in which case such action is protected by the First Amendment of the Constitution"—that's a free expression of speech—"In most states, rather, a minor"—that is, a child, a young child—"may abort an unborn child without her parents' consent. Yet, without her parents' permission, she may not go on a school field trip to the zoo." You can't even take her to the zoo without parents' permission, but you can abort a child without the parents' permission, or even knowledge. We live in America today, where if you wanted



to use a dog for medical purposes, medical experimentation, there is going to go up around America a great cry. And yet, in the same so-called “God-blessed America,” we have those who are campaigning to use, to farm, to harvest the tissue of aborted babies for the same purpose. We save the whale. We kill the babies. We want to spare the rain forest, but we kill the babies. What is wrong in America? What has happened to this land of the free, this home of the brave? I’ll tell you what has happened: the salt has lost its savor. We are good for nothing. We are fit to be cast out and trodden under foot of men. And, that is what is happened. Friend, it’s time for the salt to work.

You say, “Pastor, are you an optimist or a pessimist?” I’m a realist. I believe as long as there is God, there is hope. I believe that we can have revival in America. I hope you believe it. Why? Because I believe in God. When you talk about revival in America, all you get from some people is a sympathetic smile. My dear friend, I want to tell you, God is not dead, and God is not old, and God is not sick, and God has not lost His power. And, we sang today about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, but you’d better stop using the Second Coming of Jesus Christ as a last resort and some escape cow, while meanwhile back at the ranch we’re living here. And, you don’t know—Jesus may not come for a hundred years. I want my grandchildren to live in the kind of a land that I had the joy of living in, only I want it to be better. You say, “But men are so wicked today.” Well, friend, let me tell you something: God has never had anything but wicked people to work with. Adam was totally depraved. You can’t get worse than that. It’s an insult to God to say that we cannot have revival in wicked times.

On Mount Carmel, Elijah decided that he would be soft. The priests tallied 450; Elijah, one man of God. He proposed a contest. He said, “*The god that [answers] by fire, let him be God.*” (1 Kings 18:24) And, that was the test—not fame, figures, or finances, but fire. And, God sent revival on Mount Carmel, and the fire came and burned that wet sacrifice. You remember the story? Don’t say we can’t have revival. My dear friend, a god that can’t burn wet wood is no good anyway.

God is still alive. In Nineveh... You think America is bad? My dear friend, the way the people in Nineveh were living in Jonah’s time was so terrible that God said, “I’m going to obliterate them all. I’m going to destroy them.” And, God sent a salty saint—by the way, he had to spend the night on a foam blubber mattress before he got right—God sent Jonah, and an entire city about the size of Memphis, Tennessee, repented in sackcloth and ashes.

God can do it. My dear friend, in Jerusalem there was a mighty revival in Jerusalem the Day of Pentecost. Never was there a city where they hated Jesus Christ more, for there they crucified Him. They were gospel-hardened. They had heard the preaching of the prophets and had turned from it. Not only that—there was scandal. Simon Peter cursed and swore on one of His closest friends and denied Him. Judas had sold Him for

thirty pieces of silver. And yet, on the Day of Pentecost, the Spirit of God fell, and those salty saints moved out. And, there was revival.

My dear friend, in the Dark Ages—we call it “the Protestant Reformation.” You think things are bad today? My dear friend, the boys and girls in our Sunday school know more about the Bible than the priests in those days. It was a terrible thing. And yet, God raised up Luther, God raised up Calvin, God raised up others, and there was what you call “the Protestant Reformation.” It was a mighty revival. It was a change in history. And, God sent revival, and I say, “O God, do it again!” It’s time, my dear friend, for the salt to work.

When Wesley was in England, my dear friend, in the eighteenth century, there was a complete breakdown in the government. The morals of France were about to take over. The immorality of France was just about to over take England. The clergy in England were drunk; they were gambling. They were profligate people. There was a state church. And, the Puritan preachers came in. They decided they would be the salt of the earth. Those Puritan preachers were put in jail. The slave trade was flourishing. It was a dark day. And, my dear friend, God sent Wesley and others, and there was a mighty revival in England.

Even in America, Dwight L. Moody—he was the Billy Graham of his day. Never was unbelief more firmly entrenched than when Dwight L. Moody was preaching. On one occasion, Dwight L. Moody preached to a congregation of infidels about the size of this congregation, all of them saying, “I’m an infidel. I don’t believe in God. I hate Christ. I hate the Bible.” Dwight L. Moody, a little uneducated shoe clerk, stood up and preached to all those infidels, and the power of God fell because of one salty saint.

Don’t tell me we can’t have revival. Don’t tell me it’s too late for America. You say, “Well, there’s so much sin.” There’s sin in Hollywood. There is sin in pornography. There is sin in the music industry. There is sin in the government. God help us, there is sin in the Church. But, I want to tell you, the Bible says, “*Where sin [did abound], grace did much more abound.*” (Romans 5:20) The problem is not that God cannot. God said, “*If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.*” (2 Chronicles 7:14)

## Conclusion

It’s time to blow the trumpet in America. It’s time! Oh, it’s past time for the salt to work! You know what? Do you know what? Do you know what? God took sodium, deadly and explosive; God took chlorine, noxious and deadly; and God, by His divine chemistry, put them together, and God made something incredibly wonderful—necessary for life, necessary for preservation, necessary for purity. My dear friend, the God who did that

with common salt is the God who, by the chemistry of the cross, can change you and make you a brand-new creature. There are millions in the world—billions—whose lives have been changed radically and dramatically for good, for God, and for heaven by faith in Jesus Christ.†

# Bright Lights in a Dark World

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** September 27, 1992

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 5:14–16

*“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.”*

MATTHEW 5:14

## Outline

Introduction

I. Who?

II. What?

- A. The Foolishness of Concealed Light
- B. The Faithfulness of Courageous Light
- C. The Forcefulness of Collective Light

III. How?

- A. Surrender
- B. Sacrifice
- C. Sanctification

Conclusion

## Introduction

Find in God’s Word Matthew chapter 5. In a moment, we’re going to begin reading in verse 14. The title of the message today: “Bright Lights in a Dark World.” Last week, we talked about the fact that Jesus said “[we] are the salt of the earth.” (Matthew 5:13) In this passage of Scripture Jesus is going to tell us we are the light of the world.

Now, both salt and light have to be applied. When salt is applied, it goes inward and disappears. Light comes from within and always appears. The salt speaks of character; the light speaks of testimony. And, what the world needs is both penetration and illumination, both character and confession. These are astounding words from the lips of Jesus; listen to them. Jesus says in verse 14: “*Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*” (Matthew 5:14–16) Now, I want us to think of three simple little words today: *who*, *what*, and *why*. Now, that’s an easy outline for us to follow.

## I. Who?

Who? Jesus Christ, in verse 14, says, “*Ye are the light of the world.*” (Matthew 5:14) Now, to whom was He speaking? Well, this is the Sermon on the Mount. And, where was the mount? Well, that was in northern Galilee, by the shore of Galilee. To whom was He speaking? To the villagers there; to His disciples, fisher-folk, a motley crew. And, He’s saying to them, “*[You] are the light of the world.*” (Matthew 5:14) Now, He’s not in Athens, speaking to the intelligentsia. He’s not in Rome, speaking to those with imperial and military might. Already Plato and Socrates and Aristotle and the others, the philosophers, had taught. And, Jesus is saying to these people, “*[You] are the light of the world.*” (Matthew 5:14)

Now, can you imagine that? On a hillside in Galilee? The Galileans, my dear friend, were the hillbillies of that day. They were the country cousins, the bumpkins, of that day. It is to these people that Jesus is saying, “*[You] are the light of the world.*” (Matthew 5:14) Now, either that’s one of the greatest statements ever made or a great statement of megalomania, where somebody is saying something that is absolutely absurd and ridiculous. And, I can just imagine them saying, if they were thinking at all, “Who...me? us? Are you talking to us? We are the light of the world?” Amazing! But, my dear friend, that’s exactly what Jesus is saying. As a matter of fact, the Greek scholars tell us that the word *you* is emphatic. It means “you and nobody else.” “*[You] are the light of the world.*” (Matthew 5:14) Do you know how God intends to get His work done, dear friend, in this world today? If Jesus Christ were to stand here on this pulpit platform this morning, He could very well say the same thing to those of you who are sitting in this place. He could look you right in the face and say, “*[You] are the light of the world.*” (Matthew 5:14)

You say, “Now, wait a minute, pastor. You may be the light, but I’m not the light. I’m excused.” Oh, no. My dear friend, you are the light of the world. And, what happens, so many times, is that our members don’t understand that.

† It’s like a general who calls his army together, and he lectures to them on the principles of war and tells them all about warfare. And then, he sends them off to eat a chicken dinner while he puts his rifle on his shoulder and goes off to war.†

Somehow we have the idea that there are just a few people who are the light of the world, or just a few people who are to preach the gospel. But that is not so. God’s plan is to take ordinary people just like you, just like me, and through us to do extraordinary things.

Now, the world thinks it lives in light. The world brags about being so enlightened. We have the high muckety-mucks of this world. But, the Apostle Paul, with a sense of sarcasm, said in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 20: “*Where is the wise? where is the*

*scribe? where is the disputer of this world?"* (1 Corinthians 1:20) What he is saying is, "All right, all of you statesmen, and you movers and shakers, and you philosophers, and you thinkers, and you scientists, and you educators, and you people in the think tank, where have you gotten us to?"

I was thinking the other day about the technology of our age, folks. The technology of today is the science fiction of when I was a boy. And, I leave this place to go home; I get in an automobile that is regulated by a computer. And, I put a tape in my tape deck, and I listen to music that comes from a little sliver of plastic—beautiful music—while I'm driving down a superhighway. I remember I'm supposed to say something to my secretary. I can pick up a telephone and talk to her while I'm driving down the highway. I get home; I walk into a house that has climate control—it is air-conditioned. I go and sit down, and sit down in front of a thing called a television set, and I have a space command—at least I used to have it before my grandson hid it, I have no idea where—and I can change the channels without ever having to get up. And, what kind of channels? Well, my dear friend, the news can happen across the ocean, and some sort of a television signal goes from the earth to a satellite, and comes out of that satellite down into my living room, and I'm in touch with the entire world. And, I'm doing this while my tea is being heated in the microwave. It's incredible.

But yet, we're in deeper difficulty than we've ever been. We call it an "enlightened age," but we're sinking lower and lower. The question is, if we're so smart and if we have so much light, why are we in the difficulty that we're in? And, everybody that comes along, he has a new idea. Now, if you've lived very long, you remember the New Deal. The New Deal was exchanged for the Fair Deal, the Fair Deal for the Great Society. And then, we had Camelot; and then, we had Camp David. And then, we had Reaganomics; and then, we had detente. And then, we had Glasnost; and then, we had "A Thousand Points of Light." And now, a fellow's come along proposing a New Covenant. And, we sink slower, and slower do we sink. What is happening, my dear friend, is that we have substituted intelligence for wisdom.

Somebody wrote these words: "Thus did Western man decide to abolish himself, creating his own boredom out of his own affluence, his own vulnerability out of his own strength, his own impotence out of his own erotomania, himself blowing the trumpet that brought the walls of his own city tumbling down, and having convinced himself that he is too numerous, labors with pill and scalpel and syringe to make himself fewer, until at last, having educated himself into imbecility and polluted and drugged himself into stupefaction, he keels over, a weary, battered old brontosaurus, and becomes extinct." That's poignant, isn't it? That's society today. That's enlightenment today.

And, Jesus says to common people—not to the statesmen and the philosophers, but to the common folks like us—"*[we] are the light of the world.*" (Matthew 5:14) That's the

wonderful thing about the gospel. You know, Jesus said, “I’ve hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, and I have revealed them unto babes.” (Matthew 11:25; Luke 10:21)

Do you know the wisdom of God? The Bible says, *“In the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”* (1 Corinthians 1:21) Now, *“foolishness of preaching”* (1 Corinthians 1:21)—what is it? He said, *“We preach Christ crucified.”* (1 Corinthians 1:23) You see, through the cross. Let me give you the wisdom of God; let me tell you why we have the light of the world: through the cross. Through the cross even a little child can know the heart of God. Is there any greater wisdom than knowing the heart of God? And, even a little child can understand, my dear friend, the mysteries of life and death.

*“[We] are the light of the world.”* (Matthew 5:14) Now, the world doesn’t understand this. The world looks at us, and the world says, “They don’t count.” The world puts the emphasis upon beauty, upon brawn, and upon brains, and upon bucks, but Jesus puts the emphasis upon character. *“[You’re] the salt of the earth.”* (Matthew 5:13) He puts the emphasis upon revelation. *“[You] are the light of the world.”* (Matthew 5:13) How wonderful that is!

Now, sometime ago, I was in Moscow. You prayed for me, and I want to thank you for that. I’ll be going back at the close of our trip to Romania. But, I preached in a beautiful music hall. And, after I preached there—there was a very fine congregation; some of the leaders in the city of Moscow were there, and they came to the platform and wanted to talk. A man stood there and said, “May I have a few moments with you?” And, I said, “Yes.” He said, “I am a philosopher.” He said, “I study philosophy, and I belong to a philosophical society.” I said, “That’s very nice.” He said, “Could you come and lecture to our philosophical society?” I said, “I would like to, but my schedule will not allow it. I cannot come.” He said, “May I ask you a question?” I said, “Certainly.” He said, “It seems to me that there are two ecologies: a higher ecology and lower ecology. Would you agree?” I said, “Yes, sir, I would.” He said, “It seems to me that these two ecologies are in conflict with each other. Would you agree?” I said, “Yes, sir, I would.” He said, “It seems that there’s a constant struggle between the higher ecology and the lower ecology.” I said, “That is correct.” And then, I just broke in, and I said, “Sir, what you call the ‘higher ecology’ is God, and what you call the ‘lower ecology’ is the power of Satan. And, these are in constant conflict one with the other. But,” I said, “sir, the Bible teaches that the Son of God is Jesus Christ, who died for our sins. And, the Bible teaches that if we will repent of our sins and receive Christ into our hearts as our personal Savior, then Christ lives on the inside. And then, the Bible says, *‘Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.’* (1 John 4:4) And, I said, “You can overcome the lower ecology because the One who is the Lord of the higher ecology, Jesus Christ

Himself, lives in your heart and gives you power day by day.” And, I said, “He lives in my heart. He wants to live in your heart.” “Oh?” He got out his pad, started to write. He said, “Give me that again. I want to hear that.” It was amazing because the boys and girls in our Sunday school know that, but he didn’t know it. He didn’t know it.

You know why he didn’t know it? The same reason you wouldn’t have known it unless somebody had taught you. You see? You didn’t figure it out. We don’t have anything we haven’t received. But see, that was such good news to a man who had lived all of his life, even though a philosopher, being taught there is no God, not understanding what we understand—very simple to understand.

So, that was the first man I talked with. I turned around. There was another man standing behind me. He had his card already out. It was his business card. He said, “Sir, I am a space scientist.” He was with the space agency there. He handed me his card. He said, “I want to talk with you.” He said, “I’ve been a scientist all of my life, and,” he said, “I want to tell you that, through the study of science and the laws of the universe, I have come to believe that there is a higher power. I have come to believe that there must be some supernatural higher power because all of this could not have happened—the intricate laws of the universe could not operate—unless there is some controlling force.” I said, “That’s very good, sir, and I agree with you that all of this world shows the marks of its Creator, Almighty God. But,” I said, “sir, all you can do is know about God through the study of science. You can see how God works, but you cannot understand who God is until God reveals Himself to you. And,” I said, “God has revealed Himself to you in a book called the Bible.” And, I said, “The Bible tells you that this God who made everything is a God of love. He sent His Son to die for you on the cross to redeem you from your sins.” And, I gave to that space scientist two big black Bibles. He hugged them to his chest and went off with those Bibles like he had received the grand prize. A scientist, but he needed to know Jesus.

I turned from him, and it’s almost like these three had been choreographed. And, they were standing right over there. Somebody said, “There is a lady who wants to speak to you.” She was about thirty-five, beautiful. Her eyes glistened with tears. She said, “Sir, I’m a lawyer.” She was a lawyer for the GUM department stores. She said, “This is the first religious service I’ve ever been to in my life.” She said, “Tonight, I’ve given my heart to Jesus Christ.” I had the joy of sharing with her and helping her to get started in the Christian life.

And, I thought to myself, “Isn’t it wonderful? Isn’t it wonderful that God can take people like we are, just plain ordinary folks, and yet fill us with the Lord Jesus Christ and give us His Word?” My dear friend, I want to say to every philosopher and to every scientist and to every lawyer that Jesus Christ is the light of the world. And, His light shines in us; and then, His light shines through us. And, God just takes normal people,



ordinary people—people like me, people like you—and Jesus says to you and to me, “You have the answer. *[You] are the light of the world.*” (Matthew 5:14)

## II. What?

And so, the very first question that we want to ask and answer is, “Who?” The answer: you—you. You say, “Not me, pastor.” Yes, you. Now, many of us, therefore, we try to get out of it. So, let’s go on and answer it a little bit further—not only who, but what: *“[You] are the light of the world.”* (Matthew 5:14) Now, you don’t light light. You don’t salt salt. The idea is that we are to get outside the four walls of the church, and we are to be the light of the world. And, our Lord, the Master Teacher, gives three illustrations here, and I want you to look at them.

### A. The Foolishness of Concealed Light

First of all, He talks about the foolishness of concealed light. Look in verses 14 and 15: *“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel”*—now, the bushel, of course, is like our bushel basket. It was something that you carried commodities in. Now, what I think our Lord is saying is, “You shouldn’t let business and possessions and things hide your light.” They don’t—*“put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine.”* (Matthew 5:14–16)

Now, what is He saying? He’s talking about, first of all, the foolishness of concealed light. You don’t light a lamp and put it under a bushel basket. And, my dear friend, when you got saved, you were saved to shine. Don’t hide your testimony. Are you ashamed to carry a Bible to work? Are you a businessman without a Bible on your desk? Are you a student who does not carry at least the New Testament? Sir, when you go out to lunch tomorrow and those other buddies are there around that table, do you bow your head and thank God for the food? Do you invite them to do so? Do people know that you are a Christian? Or, are you hiding your lamp under a bushel? Are you ashamed of the One who died for you? Oh, the light is burning; you love the Lord. But, you are hiding your light; you’re smothering your light. You have it under a bushel. The foolishness of concealed light. What’s a light for? A light is to shine. You say, “I love the Lord Jesus.” I know you do. You even have that “Jesus Saves” lapel pin. The only problem is you wear it on your underwear. You hide your light. You don’t let others know that you love the Lord Jesus Christ. Be bold! Be bold! The foolishness of concealed light.

### B. The Faithfulness of Courageous Light

And then, oh, my dear friend, there is the faithfulness of courageous light. He said, “You are to take your light and put it on a candlestick” (Matthew 5:15); that is, lift it up that it will give light to all that are in the house. You say, “But pastor, you don’t know where I

work. I work with a lot of pagans.” “Hey, pastor, if you only knew the dirty jokes, the things that are Xeroxed and passed around in our office; if you only knew the gossip; if you only knew the blasphemy, you’d understand why I want to get another job. I want to get out of this place. I’m just so oppressed there. There’s nobody saved there where I am. I want to go to an office that’s full of Christians.” You know what you want to do? You just want to light light, don’t you? You just want to salt salt, don’t you? Why do you think God put you where He put you? Why do you think you’re in that place?

I remember reading the book of Titus, and Titus is complaining about the Cretians, and he says something about the people who lived in Crete: “*The Cretians are [always] slow bellies.*” (Titus 1:12) Now, I don’t know what the word “slow belly” means, but that doesn’t sound good to me. “[*They*] are...*slow bellies.*” (Titus 1:12) And, Paul says to Titus, “*For this cause left I thee in Crete.*” (Titus 1:5) That’s why you are there—because of the way these people are. My dear friend, the Bible says we are to shine as lights in a dark world. That’s why we’re there. That’s why we’re there.

You say, “I’m not much, Brother Rogers. I can’t sing. I don’t have a lot of money. I’m not good looking. I didn’t make high grades in school.” It doesn’t make any difference. Just let your light shine. It’s not your light; it’s His light anyway. Christ is the light of the world, (John 9:5) and it is Him shining in you. I want to ask you a question: What is most important in a house—the chandelier in the foyer or the single light bulb that keeps you from breaking your neck on the basement steps? I mean, it’s not the ornamentation; it’s who you are. It’s where you are. You are a light in a dark place.

### **C. The Forcefulness of Collective Light**

There’s the foolishness of concealed light: you don’t light a light and put it under a bushel. My dear friend, there is the faithfulness of courageous light. You let your light shine, and it gives light to all that are in the house. There’s somebody—there is somebody—that you can influence for the Lord Jesus Christ. And then, my dear friend, look at it again—there is the forcefulness of collective light. Look, if you will, at verse 14: “*Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.*” (Matthew 5:14)

Now, what is a city? A city that is full of light is where men have lighted a light. They have not put it under a bushel; they have put it on a candlestick. But, this light has light. That house has a light. That house has a light. That house has a light. That house has a light. And, all over, first thing you know, there is a glow across the sky, because that city is an elevated place; it is up on a hill. What’s our Lord talking about? He’s talking about the Church. He’s talking about us now, collectively. He’s not talking about concealed light. He’s not talking only about courageous light. He’s talking about collective light. Did you see what happened when they started to pass that light up there in the choir? My dear friend, many of us together can glow for the Lord Jesus Christ and make an impact

that we cannot make by ourselves. We need one another, and we shine brightest when we shine together. And, a city that is set on a hill, it can't be hid. And, the Church is the city of God, and we are to be living in an elevated place.

I have gone to Israel and been there where Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount. And, you go out at nighttime and stand on those hills at Galilee, and there is a city in the distance. Its name is Safed, and you can see the lights of that city even today. And, it surely must have been the city when Jesus was talking about when he said, "*A city...set on [a] hill cannot be hid.*" (Matthew 5:14)

Oh, my dear friend, this is the what? "*[We] are the light of the world.*" (Matthew 5:14) If we don't shine, who is going to? It is our privilege, it is our duty, it is our responsibility to shine for the Lord Jesus Christ.

### III. How?

Now, last of all, how are we going to do it? How are we going to do it? Look, if you will, in verse 16: "*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*" (Matthew 5:16) Now, here, my dear friend, is the *how*. How are you going to do it?

#### A. Surrender

Well, first of all, there is going to have to be surrender—there's going to have to be surrender. Look at the little word *let*. Do you see it? Let it happen. You see, when you get right with God, when you get saved, when you get filled with the Holy Spirit of God, you don't have to make yourself shine; you will shine. Just let yourself shine. If you force it, it will be a glare and not a glow. You just let yourself shine. It's just your willingness to cooperate with God. It's not that difficult. "*Let your light so shine.*" (Matthew 5:16) Manley Beasley, who is now in heaven, used to say, "You get right with God—truly, thoroughly right with God—and you'll have to backslide to keep from winning souls to Jesus Christ." It's just automatic. You are going to shine if you are full of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Bible tells about Stephen, who was stoned. Remember, Stephen was stoned for his testimony. And, the Bible says that while they were stoning him, he looked up into heaven, and, the Bible says, his face shone like the face of an angel. (Acts 6:15) I don't think that Stephen had been to a seminar on face-shining. I don't think he had studied and said, "Now I'm going to make my face shine." He's just so full of Jesus, you just let Him shine. It's just surrender to Him.

† A little boy asked his daddy, I'm told, "Daddy, how tall am I?" And, the dad said, "Well, son, I don't know...about four-and-a-half feet." He said, "Daddy, how tall is Jesus?" "Well," he said, "son, I don't know. Maybe He's six feet tall." He said, "I'm four-

and-a-half, and He's six feet tall?" He said, "Well, then, if Jesus is in me, He'll stick out, won't He?" He really will. If Jesus is in you, He will stick out.†

My dear friend, you just let your light shine. You see, there has to be surrender. Just say, "Here I am, Lord Jesus." The Christ in you will not be contained if you will just let Him be Jesus in you.

### **B. Sacrifice**

But, not only will it be surrender; hey, there has to be sacrifice, because He said, "Let your light shine"—"shine." Did you know there is no shining without burning? No shining without burning. It was said of John the Baptist, "*He was a burning and a shining light.*" (John 5:35) You see, if we're willing to be consumed, if we're willing to be fuel for the Master's fire, that as it was on the Day of Pentecost, there set on every man's head a flickering flame of fire... They were like human candles burning for the Lord—"a burning and a shining light." (John 5:35) Are you willing to be consumed for Christ? Are you willing to burn out for the Lord Jesus Christ? There can be no shining without burning.

### **C. Sanctification**

And then, last of all, not only must there be that surrender, not only must there be that sacrifice, but all of these speak primarily about that sanctification. You see, what He says is this: "*that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*" (Matthew 5:16) That's sanctification. That's the Christ life. The life you live is Jesus in you, and they can see that.

†Hudson Taylor, the great missionary who founded the China Inland Mission, Hudson Taylor came back, and a newspaperman said, "Hudson Taylor, did you know that they are comparing you to the Apostle Paul? How does that make you feel?" He said, "That makes me feel really bad." He said, "I wanted to remind them of Jesus." Of Jesus, see?†

Let them see your good works, which is Christ in you. "*And the life which I now live...I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*" (Galatians 2:20) And, it's not my life, but it is His life—not only a changed life, but an exchanged life. And, people see Jesus Christ in me and in you.

## **Conclusion**

Now folks, listen—listen. We're coming to the end of an age. There is more darkness today than there has ever been in history, in my estimation. We know more science. We have more abilities. We have more technology. But, our world—our whole world—is lost in the darkness of sin. The light of the world is Jesus. Do you believe that? Do you? That was a weak *amen*. Do you believe that? Amen? The light of the world is Jesus.

¶ Some years ago in South Carolina, there was a terrible fire in a schoolhouse. Seventy children were burned to death. The people in that South Carolina community came to stand around that schoolhouse to do what they could do, but the raging inferno was such that they could not get in there to rescue the children from that terrible holocaust. There was a father who came there and looked in through the window. He could see his son in the flames. The son recognized the dad, and the dad recognized the son. And, the boy said to his daddy, “Daddy! Daddy! Save me, Daddy! Save me!” And, the dad began to go into the flames, and strong men held him back. There was no way. It was totally impossible. It was too late.

And, the little boy saw what was happening. He began to cry, and he said, “Daddy, can’t you save me? Daddy, can’t you save me? Daddy, daddy, save me!” And, that father watched his son wither like a flower with an acetylene torch turned on him. Night and day after that, that father could see with his eyes his son in those flames, could hear with his ears the pitiful cry of his son: “Daddy, can’t you save me? Daddy, can’t you save me?” He lived about two years after that. He died prematurely because he died of such an anguish of heart and soul.

Now friend, I want to say something about this world in which we live: this world is in a perishing state. And, this world looks at science, and this world says to science, “Science, can’t you save me?” And, science says, “No, I can’t save you. I can tell you how far it is from Earth to the sun, but I cannot tell you how to remove sin from your heart. I can’t save you.” And, the world looks at philosophy, and the world says, “Philosophy, can’t you save me?” And, philosophy says, “I can’t save you. I can tell you more and more about less and less until you know everything about very little, but I can’t save you.” The world looks at education and says, “Education, can’t you save me?” Education says, “I can make you smart, but I can’t make you wise. I can’t save you.” The world looks to culture, and the world says, “Culture, can’t you save me?” And, culture says, “I can’t save you. All I can do is make the world a better place to go to hell from, but I can’t save you.” Friend, there’s only One who can save, and He’s mighty to save. And His name is Jesus. He’s the light of the world.¶

In your home, you’ve tried everything. You need Jesus. In your life, you’ve tried everything: you’ve tried religion; you’ve tried church membership; you’ve tried turning over a new leaf, but you’ve never ever bowed at the feet of Jesus. You’ve never truly received Christ into your heart. I am telling you, my dear friend, that Jesus, and Jesus alone, is the answer to your heart hunger. Jesus Christ, who saved me when I was a teenage boy, is the Jesus who wants to save you. And, He will save you today if you’ll trust Him. The light of the world is Jesus, and He is light for you, for your darkness.¶

# A Bible-Believing Church

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: February 20, 2005**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 5:17-18**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Jesus Fulfills the Old Testament in Its Predictions
- II. Jesus Fulfills the Old Testament in Its Perfection
- III. Jesus Fulfills the Old Testament in Its Purpose

Conclusion

## Introduction

**W**ould you take God's Word, please, and open to Matthew chapter 5. In a moment, we're going to be reading verse 17 and verse 18. In these Sundays—the ones that precede us, and the ones that will follow us for a short time—I'm going to be speaking to you about my desires for this church. We're talking really about, "Milestones and New Horizons," looking backward a little bit, looking forward a whole lot. And I've tried to talk to you about what kind of a church I want us to be: a victorious church, a Spirit-filled church, a united church. Next Sunday, I'm going to be talking to you about a Christ-honoring church, God willing, if we're still here and the Rapture hasn't come. But, today, I want to speak to you about a Bible-believing church. I do not have enough vocabulary to tell you how important it is that your faith must rest in the Word of God.

Now what I want you to see today is what Jesus thought of His Bible. Now what Jesus thought of His Bible is so very important to you; for the servant must be like his master (Matthew 10:25). But Jesus had a Bible. It was the Old Testament. And I want you to hear Jesus' testimony to the Old Testament. Now, listen, folks. Only ignorance scoffs at the fact that Jesus Christ was a historical character. We know that beyond the shadow of any doubt. Now, just who was this Jesus? Well, scholars are still scratching their heads and thinking. We know, because we have a Bible. Now, listen very carefully to this next statement. Jesus authenticates the Bible, and the Bible authenticates the Lord Jesus. These rise or fall together. I want you to see what Jesus said about His Bible.

I'm talking to you about the time that Jesus was here on earth before the New Testament was ever written. Jesus said—verse 17, "*Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you...*"—now,

folks, listen. When Jesus says, “*verily*,” everything that Jesus says is true; but when Jesus says, “*verily*,” He’s saying, “Pay attention!” That word *verily* means, “truly” or “amen and amen”—“*verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled*” (Matthew 5:17–18). Now that’s what Jesus said about His Bible. He said, “I didn’t come to destroy the law and the prophets.” The law and the prophets were the names for the Old Testament. That’s what the Jews called, and still call, the Old Testament: the law and the prophets.

Now I want you to see what Jesus said about His Bible. I’m going to call it the Old Testament. Now I want to lay three things on your heart today. I pray God that you will receive them. I pray God that He will rivet them upon your soul. I pray God He will etch them in your psyche. I pray God that you will never, never, never waiver on these truths. Bellevue Baptist Church has been, is, and must be always, a Bible-based church. Congregation, amen? Now this Search Committee is looking for a man who stands foursquare on the Word of God.

Think with me about three things in this passage that we see concerning Jesus and His Bible.

## **I. Jesus Fulfills the Old Testament in Its Predictions**

First thought: Jesus fulfills the Old Testament in its predictions. The Old Testament is a book of prophecy. It is a book of predictions, and it predicts the Lord Jesus Christ. “*Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil*” (Matthew 5:17). Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of every Old Testament prophecy concerning Him. Do you want a key to understanding the Bible? The key to understanding the Bible is to look for Jesus in the Bible. Jesus is the hero of the Bible. If you read the Bible and you don’t find Jesus, re-read it! The Bible has one hero: His name is Jesus; one villain: that is Satan; one problem: that is sin; one solution: that is salvation. That is what the Bible is all about. Let me give you some scriptures for your margin just to point out what I’m talking about that Jesus and the Bible rise or stand together.

Now Luke chapter 24, verse 27—Jesus is speaking, and the Bible says, “*And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself*” (Luke 24:27). That is, Jesus took the Old Testament. He started with Moses—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—and then He went on to the prophets, and He began to expound the things in these Scriptures. Now it says that He did this in all of the Scriptures. It doesn’t say that He showed them all the things concerning Himself in the Scriptures, but He showed them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. That’s the reason I say that the Bible is a Jesus book. Sometimes people say, “Have

you read the four Gospels?" Friend, I've read all sixty-six. They're all about the Lord Jesus Christ: *"in all the scriptures."*

Now you may not see Him literally there on any page. If you're reading some of the list of names in Genesis that sound like a Hebrew telephone directory, and you say, "Where is Jesus there?" well, friend, if you understand the history—Bible history and all of it—you'll understand ultimately it is written to present the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, put down this verse also—Acts chapter 10 and verse 43: *"To him"*—that is, to Jesus—*"give all the prophets witness..."*—don't get the idea that the Old Testament was written about one thing and the New Testament is written about something else—*"To [Jesus] give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive the remission of sins"* (Acts 10:43). The Savior, and the salvation that the Savior provides, are presented in the Old Testament.

And then here's what Jesus says to the church called Bellevue. Now, you listen. John chapter 5, verse 39: *"Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me"* (John 5:39). Did you hear that? Jesus said, "You search the scriptures." And I want to remind you that His Bible was the Old Testament. And He says, "These are they which testify of me." God *has no* program, *no* plans, *no* purposes, *that do not ultimately* center *in the* Lord Jesus Christ. And Jesus is in all of the Bible; and you'll find Him especially in prophecy.

Now I said that Jesus fulfills the predictions of the Old Testament. Jesus Christ is unique. He's the only person ever born to this world whose ancestry, birth time, forerunner, birth place, birth manner, infancy, manhood, teaching, character, preaching, reception, rejection, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension were all prophesied centuries before He was born. Now, friend, what a testimony—let me say it that way—what a testimony to the character of the Bible and the character of Jesus, how they rise and stand together!

You know, in the Bible there are a great number of prophecies in the Old Testament concerning Jesus Christ: 333 precise prophecies. A man named Peter Stoner, who's a statistician, didn't take 333. He took only eight. And he figures the possibility that eight of these prophecies could have been fulfilled by chance—only eight out of 333. Now he wrote in the book *Science Speaks* this amazing fact. He said the mathematical chance that eight of these prophecies could be fulfilled in one person, eight—now, listen to this—is ten to the seventeenth power. You say, "Now I know exactly how many that is, pastor." Well, I don't know that we even have a name for that. Gazillion, I guess.

But he illustrates it. And this I can understand. He said if you were to take the state of Texas from border to border, and cover the state of Texas with silver dollars—now the Texans would like this—with silver dollars two feet high—now, just in your mind think of



the state of Texas. One week I drove across Texas. It seemed like a week driving from border to border. It's a big state. Now, just imagine Texas covered with silver dollars two feet high—and then you take a man and blindfold him, and drop him down somewhere by helicopter—El Paso, Dallas, it doesn't matter where—and there's one silver dollar in all those silver dollars that has a special mark on it—and he's blindfolded and cannot see: the chance that he would reach down and pick up that one silver dollar is about the same mathematical probability that these eight prophecies could be fulfilled by mere chance. And only eight of them that he deals with. What about 333 of these prophecies?

You see, look. One prophecy: you say, "Well, He may be the Son of God." Two prophecies: "Well, it's a little more different." Three, and so forth: you see, when you add them up, then the possibility of chance greatly diminishes.

Joyce and I have a son named David who lives in Spain. When I want to call to David, I pick up the phone and dial a specific number, and he's on the other end. But think of how the mathematical situation works out. When I pick up the phone, I eliminate everybody who doesn't have a telephone. So I know I'm not going to call anybody who doesn't have a telephone when I lift up the phone. And then, when I dial the overseas operator or number, I know that I'm not going to talk to anybody in North America. Three hundred million people are cut out of the equation right now. And then, I dial the country number. And then, we eliminate all of the millions and billions of people who live in other countries. And then, I dial the area code. And then, I eliminate everybody in that country, the country of Spain, that doesn't have that particular area code. And then, I begin to dial his personal number. When I dial the first number, I eliminate everybody whose phone number doesn't begin with that first number. And then, the second number: we eliminate everybody whose phone number doesn't begin with the next two numbers; and on, and we keep narrowing and narrowing the scope until the phone rings and I hear this voice I love to hear say, "*Diga*"—"Speak"—and there's David.

Now, do you think that anybody could pick up a telephone and just dial numbers and get their loved ones; I mean, just at random, overseas somewhere? No! Well, friend, it's a mathematical impossibility that such would happen. Well, let's call the Lord Jesus Christ. Are you ready to call Jesus and get Him on the phone?

Well, first of all, when we pick up the phone and begin to speak to the Lord Jesus Christ, we're looking for someone from the human race. You say, "I thought He was God." Yes, He is God; but He is human. The Bible says that this Savior is to be the seed of the woman, in Genesis 3, verse 15, the very first prophecy we have that He's a man, not an angel or some other creature (Genesis 3:15). And so, first of all, we have to dial someone of a certain race. And then, we dial someone who is of a section of that race. Three sections came out of the

ark: Ham, Shem, and Japheth. But Jesus is of Shem. Genesis 9, verse 26: *“Blessed be the LORD God of Shem”* (Genesis 9:26). So He must be a Semite, or Shemite. But now, not only do we have a race and a section of that race; but we tighten the focus, and we have a nation of that section. And we see there in Genesis chapter 12 where God says of Abraham He’s going to make of him a great nation, and He’s going to be the one, through him, that all the nations of the world will be blessed (Genesis 12:2–3). That is, Messiah is going to come through Abraham. But then, not only do we have a nation, but we have, friend, a tribe of that nation. Out of that nation is going to come a tribe, and that tribe is going to be the tribe of Judah; and we tighten the focus a little bit more. Genesis chapter 49, verse 10, says that, *“The sceptre shall not depart from Judah”* (Genesis 49:10). And so we have a tribe.

So now, notice what we’re saying. There’s a tribe of that nation, of that section, or that race. But now, wait a minute. We narrow it just a little bit more. There’s a family of that tribe from whom the Messiah will come. In 1 Samuel 16, verse 3, we find out that it is one of the sons of a man named Jesse, who’s going to have a son named David, who’s going to be the progenitor of the Savior of the world, according to the flesh. But now we notice not only is there a family; there is a woman of that family who’s going to give birth to the Messiah. Isaiah chapter 7, verse 14, says that, *“A virgin shall conceive, and bear a son”* (Isaiah 7:14). And then, we find out that there is a Son born of that woman, of that family, of that tribe, of that nation, of that race. “Hello, Jesus!” There He is!

Now, listen. Do you think for one minute that happens by chance? Jesus said, “You search the Scriptures; these are they which testify of me” (John 5:39). And Jesus fulfills the Old Testament in prediction. It’s there. You see Jesus there in the Old Testament in prediction.

## **II. Jesus Fulfills the Old Testament in Its Perfection**

But now here’s the second thing I want you to see. Jesus fulfills the Old Testament in its perfection—not only in its prediction, but in its perfection. Jesus said here, in verses 17 and 18, that not a jot or a tittle will fail from the law till the law be fulfilled. Listen to it. *“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled”* (Matthew 5:17–18). You say, “Well, pastor, tell me what a *jot* and a *tittle* is?” Well, the *jot* is the smallest letter in the Greek alphabet we call an *iota*. That’s the smallest marking in Greek or Hebrew. That’s a *jot*. And then, a *tittle* is the smallest punctuation mark, almost like a fly scratch. And Jesus is saying, “Look, this thing is so inspired, this Bible, that the smallest, most minute marks, punctuations, are there, and they will never, never, never fail.”

Now Jesus held the highest view of the Bible. We have some people today who tell us, “Well, the Bible is inspired in spots,” and they think they’re inspired to spot the spots. Friend, I want to tell you, if you can’t trust all of it as God originally gave it, you cannot trust any of it. Jesus said, “Not a jot or a tittle shall fail from the law till all be fulfilled.”

Now I want to give you two words. You may not be interested in these. They’re a little bit technical. But, first of all, the Bible is verbally inspired. That means, not just the thoughts, but the words. *Verba*, in Latin, means word for word, the Bible is inspired. Jesus said, in Matthew 4:4, “*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*” And don’t let anybody just tell you, “Well, the thoughts are inspired; you can fool with the words.” Friend, you can’t have thoughts without words any more than you could have mathematics without numbers. God gives the word. So the Bible is verbally inspired. Say, “verbally.” All right now, that’s a word you’ve learned about the Word of God.

Now the Bible is also plenary inspired. We believe in the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Word of God. Now, what do we mean by *plenary*? Say, “plenary.” That means, “full.” It means all of it. That means Genesis to Revelation, the Bible is verbally, plenary inspired: “Not a jot, not a tittle, shall fail from the law till all be fulfilled.” Got it?

All right now, don’t ever slip. You go off there, and some of these people with their verbal gymnastics and their use of words are going to plant doubt in your mind concerning the Word of God. Anybody who puts doubt in your mind concerning the Word of God is doing the work of the devil. Put it down. You kids going off to college, you’d better get a grip on the Word of God. And your view of the Bible had better be the view of your Savior, who said, “Not a jot, not a tittle, shall fail from the law till all be fulfilled.” And that—that moves me.

Now, you see, if that’s not true, you’ve only got one of two conclusions: either the Bible was not true, and Jesus was so ignorant He didn’t know it; or else Jesus knew it, but He was so dishonest He wouldn’t admit it. Well, your Savior may be ignorant or dishonest, but not mine. I don’t think yours is either.

### **III. Jesus Fulfills the Old Testament in Its Purpose**

Now I want you to see a third thing. Jesus fulfills the law of God, friend, not only in its prediction, and not only in its perfection; but Jesus fulfills the Bible, and especially the Old Testament, in its purpose. What is the purpose of the Old Testament law? Well, the Bible says that the Old Testament law is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ (Galatians 3:24). The law can’t save us. The Ten Commandments cannot save us. But all they do is to show us our need for the dear Savior. Put down this verse—Romans 10, verse 4: “*For Christ is the*

*end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*" (Romans 10:4). Jesus said, "I didn't come to destroy the law or the prophets. I'm not going to say, 'Well, the Ten Commandments don't matter anymore' forget about that.' I didn't come to destroy it, but I have come to fulfill it" (Matthew 5:17).

Now when you understand this, you understand what the cross is all about, why Jesus Christ died. When Jesus Christ died, He bowed His head, and He said, "It is finished; it is fulfilled" (John 19:30). That's what He's saying: "I have fulfilled it; I have met every demand of the law." You see, if Jesus had not met every demand of the law, He could not be your Savior. God demanded a perfect, sinless sacrifice that was born of a virgin with none of the Adamic nature in Him; and He lived a sinless life. Jesus Christ met every standard of the law of God—every one of them. Jesus met every requirement of the Word of God. And that's the only reason that Jesus can be my Savior, and yours. Had Jesus not fulfilled the righteousness of the law, I could never be righteous. You see, Jesus did this for me. Jesus fulfilled the law for us, that grace might fulfill it in us.

Let me tell you the difference between the law and the gospel. When you think of the law, you think of the Ten Commandments, because that summarizes the law. You see, listen. The law says, "Do this, and you will live." The gospel says, "Live, and you will do." The law says, "Pay me what you owe." The gospel says, "I forgive all." The law says, "You shall love the Lord with all of your being" (Deuteronomy 6:5). The gospel says, "*Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son*" (1 John 4:10). The law says, "*Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them*" (Galatians 3:10). If you are going to try to be saved by keeping the law, and you break one little point, there's a curse upon you. Listen to it again. The law says, "*Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.*" But the gospel says—and I thank God for this—"Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered" (Romans 4:7). The law says, "*The wages of sin is death*" (Romans 6:23). But the gospel says, "*The gift of God is eternal life*" (Romans 6:23). The law says, "Do." The gospel says, "Done." Jesus fulfilled it. He died upon the cross. The law says, "Run," but it gives us no legs. The gospel says, "Fly," and it gives us wings.

## **Conclusion**

You see, listen. Why the Old Testament? To show that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that He fulfills the Bible in its predictions; to show that He is the Son of God who fulfills the Bible in its perfection, and who believed it; and then, He's the Son of God who fulfills the Bible in its provision. The law is just here to tell us that we're sinners, that we're lost. We cannot save ourselves. You say, "Well, my religion, pastor, is the Ten Commandments." Then you're

going to die and go to hell. You say, "That's blunt." I meant it to be. Jesus said, "*For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all*" (James 2:10). Is there anybody here who would have the audacity, the unmitigated gall, to stand and say, "I have never broken one of the Ten Commandments?" Of course not! Of course not! If you've broken one, in spirit you've broken them all. The law is a unit, and God doesn't grade on the curve.

Imagine yourself hanging over a ferocious furnace of fire suspended by a chain: nine links in that chain are made of forged steel, and one link is made of crepe paper. How safe are you?

"*Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.*" I am a sinner. You are a sinner. Jesus came to save sinners. He suffered, bled, and died on that cross, and paid every debt that we owe. And He fulfilled the law in its purpose, where the law is but a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, to say we're poor, lost sinners. We can't save ourselves; but Jesus died to save us. And we say, "In my hand no price I bring; simply to thy cross I cling." That's the gospel. The gospel, friend, is good news. Well, you say, "Does that mean, pastor, it doesn't matter how I live, that the Ten Commandments are obsolete?" No, they're absolute. And every day of my life I want to live by God's blessed commandments. But the Bible says, "The righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us" (Romans 8:4). You can't do that without Jesus Christ in you. That's what it's all about.

# A Bible-Believing Church

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** February 20, 2005

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 5:17–18

*“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.”*

MATTHEW 5:17

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Jesus Fulfills the Old Testament in Its Predictions
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Conclusion

## Introduction

Take the Word of God and find, if you will, Matthew chapter 5. When you’ve found it, look up here, and let me tell you something. We have been in a series of Bible lessons, studies, sermons—whatever you want to call them—called “Milestones and New Horizons.” We’ve been looking backward to see what God has done. We haven’t done a lot of that, but we have been looking forward to see what God wants to do. But, we know that we have been trying for thirty-something years to build some foundations into your life. So, I’ve been talking to you about the kind of a church that I have endeavored to lead this church to be and the kind of a church that I want it to be. I’ve talked to you about a unified church. I’ve talked to you about a steadfast church. I’ve talked to you about a Spirit-filled church. I have talked to you about a militant conquest church. But today, I want to talk to you about a Bible-believing church. The thing that has made and kept Bellevue through the years is her unwavering, steadfast faith in the inerrant, infallible Word of God—and may it ever be so. May this church, ’til Jesus comes, take a stand without stutter, stammer, or apology for the Word of God.

Now, let me tell you something: only ignorance scoffs at the fact that Jesus Christ, as a historical figure, walked upon this earth. Everybody with a modicum of brains or any understanding of history knows that. But, the question is, who was, and who is, Jesus? Now, every so often, you’ll find something in *TIME Magazine* or *Newsweek* or

something, and the scholars will get together to determine who Jesus is. Friend, it's already been determined. They call that scholarship! I'd just as soon trust a bunch of blind men in a dark cave with a jarful of lightning bugs trying to find something as I would these men trying to find out who Jesus is. I want you to listen very carefully: the way you're going to know who Jesus is is the Bible, and the way you're going to know the Bible is the Word of God is Jesus. Now, it may sound like circular reasoning to you, but it is not. Jesus and the Bible stand together. Jesus testified of the Bible, and the Bible testifies of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now look, if you will, here in Matthew chapter 5, and let's begin reading in verse 17: *"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."* (Matthew 5:17–18) Now, these are the words of Jesus concerning the Bible. Jesus said, *"Verily, I say unto you..."* (Matthew 5:18) Now, when Jesus prefaces something with the word *verily*, that means "perk up your ears; listen. This is not incidental; this is fundamental. Don't pass over this." *"Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth shall pass, [not a] jot [nor a] tittle shall [fail] from the law [or the prophets], till [the law] be fulfilled."* (Matthew 5:18) "I didn't come to destroy the law and the prophets: I came to fulfill." (Matthew 5:17) Now, when Jesus said, "the law and the prophets," He was talking about the Old Testament. That was the Bible of the Lord Jesus. The New Testament had not yet been written. So, Jesus here is talking about what we would call today "the Old Testament," beginning in Genesis and ending in Malachi. And, the term that the Jews use for that was "the law and the prophets." Now listen, Jesus came to fulfill all of that. Oh, how I pray God that you will understand this truth that the key to the Bible is the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible has one hero: His name is Jesus; one villain—he is Satan; one purpose—salvation; one end—to the glory of God. And, you'll never be victorious as a Christian until you have a steadfast, rock-ribbed assurance about the Word of God.

Now, if you call yourself a follower of Jesus Christ—now listen—if you call yourself a follower of Jesus Christ, then His view of the Bible must be yours. What right do you have to call yourself a follower of Jesus if His view of the Bible is not yours? Now, when Jesus looked at the Bible, He said, "I came to fulfill it." (Matthew 5:17) You see, the key to understanding the Bible—I say it again—is Jesus Christ.

After His resurrection, Jesus was walking on the road to Emmaus with two forlorn disciples. They were perplexed and bewildered. They didn't know what was happening. But, Jesus had already risen from the dead. It was after His crucifixion and resurrection. And Jesus, in a form that they did not recognize, began to walk with them, and He began to open the Bible to them. I would love to have been a part of that Bible conference. I would love to have had a tape recording or a transcription of that Bible

conference. But, listen to what it says here in Luke chapter 24 and verse 27: *“And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.”* (Luke 24:27) Now, He started with Moses. What He means by “Moses” is the five books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. He started there, and He went all the way through to Malachi. And, He said, “Now look, here’s the Messiah here. Here’s the Messiah here. Here’s the Messiah here, here, and here.” It doesn’t say He showed them all the things concerning Himself in the Scriptures. It says, *“he [showed] them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.”* (Luke 24:27) That means somewhere hiding in the shadows, or somewhere in plain type and illustration, you’re going to find the Lord Jesus. You read the Bible and don’t find Jesus, reread it—you missed it! *People say, “Have you read the four Gospels?” I’ve read all sixty-six of them.* It’s all about the Lord Jesus.

How do I know it’s all about Him? Because He said so. Acts 10, verse 43—here’s what the prophet said: *“To him”—that is, to Jesus—“give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.”* (Acts 10:43) All of the prophets—you name them: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Hosea, Ezekiel—all of them are saying, “Look to Jesus and receive remission of sins.” That’s what the Word of God says. Jesus said in John chapter 5, verse 39: *“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life.”* (John 5:39) There were some people who thought just a knowledge of the Scripture would give them eternal life. Jesus said, “Oh no!” You can go to hell with a Bible under your arm. *“Search the scriptures”—see what it means. Don’t think that Bible study is going to bring you eternal life—“Search the scriptures...[these] are they which testify of me.”* (John 5:39) Now, if you read the Bible and you don’t see Jesus, you missed it. *“Search the scriptures...in [these you] think [you] have eternal life”—but, listen—“[they’re the ones, the things, the truths that] testify of me.”* (John 5:39)

Now, with that in your mind, I want to tell you three things about Jesus and His Bible. And again, I want to tell you that the views of Jesus concerning the Bible must be your views and, by God’s grace, shall be the views of this church.

## **I. Jesus Fulfills the Old Testament in Its Predictions**

Number one: Jesus fulfills the Old Testament in its predictions. Now, the Old Testament is a book of prophecy, and it predicts the coming of a Messiah. And, Jesus is the fulfillment of all of those predictions. Prophecy upon prophecy upon prophecy says that a Messiah is coming.

Now, scholars tell us that there are at least 333 exact, precise prophecies in the Old Testament that were fulfilled by the Lord Jesus in what we call “New Testament times.” Centuries before Jesus Christ was here in the flesh, the Bible spoke of Him.



¶ How would you like to paint a picture of someone you'd never seen and paint it in the greatest of detail, and not only would the picture be painted by one person, but the picture would be painted—the portrait—by over twenty people, and none of them had seen what the other one had painted? Let me tell you, that's what the prophets did as they gave us in the Old Testament a prophetic portrait of the Lord Jesus Christ.¶

Precious church, Jesus is the only person born into this world whose ancestry, whose birth time, whose forerunner, whose birthplace, whose birth manner, whose infancy, whose manhood, whose teaching, whose character, whose preaching, whose reception, whose rejection, whose death, burial, and resurrection, and ascension were all prophesied in a marvelous way before He was born. Now, when you see how Jesus fulfilled the Scriptures, you have to say the Scriptures are the Word of God. When you see the Scriptures being fulfilled in Jesus, you have to say Jesus is the Son of God. You see, there is no way—congregation, there's no way; none, not a little bit—that these things could happen apart from divine inspiration: 333 direct prophecies.

A man named Peter Stoner, who's a mathematician and statistician, began to study this, and he worked out the laws of mathematical probability, which is a true science. Now, he didn't take 333 prophecies; he took eight—eight of them—and he said, "What is the mathematical probability that these eight prophecies could be fulfilled by chance?" He said, "It is one in ten raised to the seventeenth power." Start putting the zeros there. How many is that? I don't know. I don't think there's a name for it. A "gazillion," I guess. One in whatever that number is.

So, since we can't understand it, Peter Stoner gave us an illustration. He said, "Suppose you take the state of Texas and cover it with silver dollars"—now, the Texans would like that—"cover it with silver dollars two-feet-high from border to border"—do you know how big Texas is? Friend, I drove across Texas, and it took me one hundred years just to get across Texas. Now, just think of Texas, that big state, covered in silver dollars two-feet-high—"One of those silver dollars has a marking on it. Then, you take a man and blindfold him and take him by helicopter and drop him down into Texas somewhere"—in Dallas, El Paso. It doesn't matter. Laredo, wherever. That's a city in Texas. Laredo, Texas? Yeah, all right—"drop him down and say, 'Now, you find that silver dollar'"—now remember, there are billions of them, and they cover the state two-feet-deep—"And, he comes up with the one silver dollar. Blindfolded, he reaches in and finds it." Peter Stoner said, "That's the chance that eight of these scriptures could be fulfilled."

Not eight that we're thinking about now, but 333. It is astronomically impossible that these prophecies concerning the Lord Jesus Christ could be fulfilled apart from divine inspiration. And, it is also impossible that anyone should willingly, intelligently deny the deity of Jesus Christ when we see these prophecies fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, you see, look, one prophecy—you might understand it; two—you say, “Possible”; three—it’s getting harder; four—it’s getting more difficult. But, after a while it gets impossible.

¶ Joyce and I have a son who lives in Spain. He’s a missionary. He and our daughter-in-law and grandsons live there. We like to call David. Now, suppose I want to call David long distance. I want you to see how the law of probability begins to work. When I pick up a telephone, immediately I dismiss the billions—and I said billions—who don’t have a telephone. They can’t answer it because they don’t have a telephone. So immediately, some are excluded. And then, I dial the overseas number. Well, immediately that excludes everybody in North America. And then, I dial an area code, and immediately that excludes everybody else that’s not in that area when I dial the number of that nation and then the area code. And so, we’re tightening the focus more and more. And then, I begin to dial one number, his personal number: everybody else whose number doesn’t begin with that number that is in that area code that is in that nation, they are excluded. Then, I dial the next number, and everybody that doesn’t have two numbers exactly like that is excluded. And then, another and another and another. And finally, I get to that last digit, and I dial that. And, a voice that I love to hear picks up the phone and says, “Diga,” which means, “Speak.” It’s our son David. Now, do you think that anybody wanting to find David could pick up a telephone at random and just start dialing numbers? Of course not! You see, the more complicated it gets, the lower the probability that this could be fulfilled just by chance.¶

Would you like to dial up Jesus? All right, let’s see how we’ll dial up Jesus. First of all, we have to dial and say this has to be a person of the human race, for Genesis 3, verse 15 says that it is the seed of the woman that will be the Messiah that will bruise the serpent’s head. (Genesis 3:15) And so, we have to start with a race. No angel can do it. No other creature can do it. The Messiah has to be a son of man.

But then, we tighten the focus a little bit more, and we say not only must this person be of that particular race, but He has to come from a division of that race. You see, all humankind was divided by the flood into three streams: Ham, Shem, and Japheth. Well, the Bible says that Shem is the one who is blessed. It is through Shem that the Messiah will come. (Genesis 9:26) And, you can find that, if you wish, in Genesis 9, verse 26.

So, we have a race. Then, we narrow the focus: a section of that race. And then, we narrow the focus a little bit more: a nation out of that section out of that race. He’s got to come from the Hebrew nation. The Bible tells us in Genesis chapter 12 that God has chosen a man named Abraham who is going to be the father of the Hebrew nation and out of him is going to come a Messiah. (Genesis 12:1–3) And so, we have a nation out of that section out that race.

But, we’re not finished yet. There has to be a tribe out of that nation out of that

section out of that race. So, our Lord is coming from the tribe of Judah—Genesis 49, verse 10. (Genesis 49:10)

But, we're not finished yet. Not only must there be a tribe out of that nation out of that section out of that race, but there must be a family out of that tribe out of that nation out of that section out of that race. It's the family of Jesse. And, God appointed Samuel to go to Jesse's house and appoint a king over Israel who would be, according to the flesh, the progenitor of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, in 1 Samuel chapter 16. (1 Samuel 16)

So, there's a family, but we tighten the focus more. There is a woman that comes out of that family that comes out of that tribe, that comes out of that nation, that comes out of that section, that comes out of that race. And, she's to be a virgin—Isaiah 7, verse 14—and she is to give birth to a son. (Isaiah 7:14) And then, there is a son who is to be born of that woman of that family of that tribe of that nation of that section of that race—one person whose birthplace, and birth time, and miraculous birth is prophesied. “Hello, Jesus?” There He is! There He is! Are you telling me that happens by chance? Jesus said, “I fulfill the law and the prophets.” (Matthew 5:17) He does! He fulfills it. He fulfills the predictions of the Old Testament.

## **II. Jesus Fulfills the Old Testament in Its Perfection**

Secondly, Jesus fulfills the perfection of the Old Testament. The Old Testament is a perfect book. Jesus said, “Not a jot or a tittle shall fail from the law.” (Matthew 5:18) Now, the linguists call this in our day a “yod and an iota.” These are the smallest markings. *lota*—a very small letter; a *yod*—a little inflection, a little marking, a little pinpoint that looks almost like a fly scratch. What Jesus is talking about is the Bible in its minutia, and He says, “None of that's going to fail.”

Now, we have people today who tell us that the Bible is inspired in spots, and they think they're inspired to spot the spots. No. Remember what I said? “[*Jesus showed them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.*” (Luke 24:27) Put it down big; put it down plain; put it down straight: every word is from God. Now, I'm not talking about somebody's mistranslation; I'm talking about the Word that God gave, the Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. Jesus said in Matthew chapter 4, verse 4 that “*man shall not live by bread alone, but*”—now, listen to this—“*by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*” (Matthew 4:4) When the Bible speaks, God speaks, and God is not wrong in a jot or a tittle, an iota or yod. Everything comes from God.

### **A. The Verbal Inspiration of the Bible**

Now, I want to give you a word I want you to learn, and the word is *verbal*. And, of course, you obviously know what *verbal* means, but I want you to learn what it means in

theology. It comes from the Latin *verba*, if you took Latin as I did and forgot, but it means “word.” So, the words of the Scripture are inspired, not just the thoughts, because, you see, you can’t have thoughts without words any more than you could have mathematics without numbers. So, Jesus said—not Adrian, but Jesus—“*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*” (Matthew 4:4) We call that “verbal inspiration.” Say “verbal.” Say “Pastor, I’ll never forget it.” Nod your head. That means, “I’m not going to forget it.” The Bible is verbally inspired—every word, every jot, every tittle.

### **B. The Plenary Inspiration of the Bible**

But, not only is it verbally inspired; it is plenary inspired. Now, I know that every day you use the word *plenary*, but the word *plenary* means “full.” It is “fully inspired.” First Samuel is no more inspired than the seventeenth chapter of John, and the seventeenth chapter of John is no more inspired than 1 Samuel or anything else. All of it is inspired. “*Every word [comes from] the mouth of God.*” (Matthew 4:4) That means there is a full inspiration. That’s the reason I told you Jesus said He “[*showed*] them in all the scriptures”—not some of them, but in all the Scriptures—“*the things concerning himself.*” (Luke 24:27)

Now forever, as a believer, you say, “I believe in the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Word of God.” Say “amen.” Verbal, plenary inspiration of the Word of God—that makes the Bible the infallible, inerrant Word of God. “Well,” you say, “pastor, that’s your opinion.” No, you’re missing it. That’s Jesus’ Word, not my opinion. It’s His Word. Jesus said it. If you’re a follower of Jesus, His opinion of the Bible has to be your opinion of the Bible. And, if you are a lover of the Bible, what the Bible says about Jesus you’re going to have to believe. And, Jesus and the Bible rise or fall together. And so, I want you to understand that Jesus fulfills the Old Testament in its perfection.

Now, if Jesus believed the Bible to be perfect and it’s really not, you have only one of two conclusions: either Jesus was ignorant if He believed it and it was not, or if He knew it was not and He taught that it was, then He was dishonest. I don’t know about your Savior, but my Savior is not ignorant or dishonest. He believes the Word of God. It is impossible to accept Christ’s authority without accepting the Scripture’s authority, and vice versa.

### **III. Jesus Fulfills the Old Testament in Its Purpose**

Now, we’ve talked about Jesus fulfilling the predictions of the Old Testament. We’ve talked about Jesus fulfilling the perfections of the Old Testament. Now finally, we’re going to think about Jesus fulfilling the purpose of the Old Testament. What is the purpose of the law and the prophets? The Bible says that the Old Testament is “[*a*] *schoolmaster to bring us [to] Christ.*” (Galatians 3:24) There used to be, in Bible times, a

person who walked children to school. That's what the Old Testament does: it takes us by the hand and brings us to Christ. It presents the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the purpose. And so, Romans chapter 10, verse 4 says, *"For Christ is the end of the law"*—talking now about the Old Testament—*"for righteousness to everyone that believeth."* (Romans 10:4) If you never get past the Old Testament to Jesus, you don't get the purpose of it.

Now, what did Jesus do? He fulfilled the law. Jesus kept every commandment. Jesus lived up to every standard. Jesus did whatever the law commanded. The law was the law of God. The law is not evil; it's good. But, none of us can keep it. None ever has, except the Lord Jesus Christ. And, Jesus could look people straight in the eye and say, *"Which of you [can convict] me of sin?"* (John 8:46) I wouldn't say that to my friends, much less to my enemies. *"Which of you [can convict] me of sin?"* (John 8:46) Jesus Christ fulfilled the law in its purpose so He could bring us to Christ. *"The law [is a] schoolmaster to bring us [to] the [Lord Jesus] Christ."* (Galatians 3:24) The law is here to tell us that we cannot do it by ourselves. The law is here to convict us. Is there anybody here who would have the audacity, the unmitigated gall, to say, "I've always kept the Ten Commandments"? Of course not! "Well," you say, "pastor, I've kept a lot of them." Well, God doesn't grade on a curve. Do you know what the Bible says? *"[If anyone will] keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."* (James 2:10) Well, that wipes us all out. Friend, you see, the law is a unit.

¶ If a policeman stops you for running a red light, it does you no good to tell him about all the times you did stop, or the time you had your blinker on when you turned right. No.¶

¶ Suppose you are hanging over an inferno, a roaring fire that wants to consume you, and you are suspended by a chain of forged steel—that is, nine links are forged steel and one is crepe paper. How safe are you?¶

You see, if you *"keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, [you're] guilty of all."* (James 2:10) If you're trying to go to heaven by keeping the commandments, you're not going to make it; you're going to go to hell. The law is there to tell us that we need a Savior. But, what kind of a Savior do we need? A righteous, perfect, sinless Savior, who kept all the law so He could be the sacrifice for sin. Had Jesus failed in fulfilling the law, He could not have been our Savior. Jesus fulfilled the law for us, and by grace He fulfills it in us.

The law says, "Do, and you will live." The gospel says, "Live, and you will do." The law says, "Pay what you owe." Grace and the gospel say, "I forgive you all." The law says, "Love God with all of your being." (Deuteronomy 6:5) The gospel says, *"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent his Son."* (1 John 4:10) The

law says, *“Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.”* (Galatians 3:10) If you think that you’re going to be saved by being a good boy or girl and you break one of the smallest laws, there’s a curse upon you. But, the Bible says—and thank God for this: *“Blessed [is he] whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.”* (Romans 4:7) The law says, *“The wages of sin is death; but”*—the gospel says—*“the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”* (Romans 6:23) The law says, “Do.” The gospel says, “Done.” The law says, “Run,” but it gives us no legs. The gospel says, “Fly,” and it gives us wings. You see, I’m not saying that the Ten Commandments are not important. I try to live by the Ten Commandments. But, I know if I’m depending upon my living by the Ten Commandments to get me to heaven, I will never—no, never; no, never—make it.

## Conclusion

But, I thank God for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who fulfilled the predictions of the Old Testament, who in His life showed us the perfections of the Old Testament, and who offers to us the provision of the Old Testament, which is the New Testament—the Son of God.

Do you want to be saved? Stop trying and start trusting. Salvation is the gift of God. And, Jesus fulfilled the law and paid it all that He might die upon the cross, bow His head, and say, “It’s done; it’s finished: I fulfilled the law.” (John 19:30) And so, *“the law [is a] schoolmaster to bring [you to] Christ.”* (Galatians 3:24)

Now, let me just conclude by saying, folks, that what Jesus believes about the Bible is what you need to believe, and what the Bible says about Jesus is what you need to receive. And, I want to tell you, the Bible says clearly, plainly, sweetly, sublimely—listen to me—if you will receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord, He will blot out every sin, every transgression of the law; every broken commandment will be buried in the grave of God’s forgetfulness, because Jesus paid that in full for you. He suffered, bled, and died as the perfect, sinless sacrifice to pay for my sin and your sin. If you will believe and receive the Lord Jesus Christ, He will put His Spirit into you. That’s not an emotional feeling, but it is an awareness that He is there. And then, you begin to live a righteous life, not in order to be saved, but because you are saved. And, the righteousness of the law is fulfilled, not so much *by* us but *in* us—by the Holy Spirit. And then, when we die and stand before that Final Judgment, thank God, we don’t have to stand before Ten Commandments and be judged by them, but we can see the nail-pierced hands of Jesus, who fulfilled the law for us. Isn’t that wonderful? That’s wonderful! That’s glorious! Hallelujah!†

# The Secret of Fulfillment

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: October 25, 1992**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 5:17-18**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Jesus Prophetically Fulfills the Word of God
- II. Jesus Practically Fulfills the Word of God
  - A. Jesus Fulfilled the Moral Law
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  - C. Jesus Fulfilled the Judicial Law
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Conclusion

## Introduction

Now, we've been in the Sermon on the Mount, and would you open to Matthew chapter 5. Be finding verses 17 and 18. The theme for our entire study is "Building on the Rock," for Jesus said, "When anybody hears these words of mine, and he does them, he's like a wise man who builds his house upon a rock. The winds and the floods and the rain may come, but that house will stand, for it is built on a rock" (Matthew 7:24-25).

Today I want to talk to you about fulfillment. How many truly fulfilled people do you know? How many people do you know who are satisfied, filled with joy and peace, assurance, spiritual satisfaction? How many? Well, I want to talk to you today about "The Secret of Fulfillment." And, we're reading here in chapter 5, verses 17 and 18. Jesus Christ said, *"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled"* (Matthew 5:17-18).

My heart has been blessed as I have meditated on these scriptures. They speak of the Lord Jesus, the great fulfiller. And, whoever you are today, if you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ, you are behind in your education. No one is truly educated who is ignorant of the Lord Jesus Christ. You may know biology and the study of life, but how sad if you don't know Jesus, the giver of life! You may know astronomy and how the heavens go, but how sad if you don't know Jesus and how to go to Heaven! You may know botany, the study of flowers, but how sad if you don't know Jesus, who is Sharon's sweetest rose

and the lily of the valley (Song of Solomon 2:1)! You may know geology and the ages of the rocks, but friend, it is sad indeed if you don't know Jesus Christ, who is the Rock of Ages! You may know history and all of the record of mankind, but how sad if you don't know Jesus Christ in whom we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28)! It is said of history that history is His story. So all of Bible points us to the Lord Jesus Christ, and I want you to look at these two verses today that have been such a blessing to my heart.

## **I. Jesus Prophetically Fulfills the Word of God**

The Bible tells us that Jesus is the great fulfiller. Jesus prophetically fulfills the Word of God. Look again, if you will, in this verse, verse 17: *"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil"* (Matthew 5:17). Now, Jesus is the fulfillment of all that the prophets wrote about. Do you want to understand the Bible? Would you like the Bible to burst aflame in your hand? Would you like for the truth of God's Word to leap off of the pages into your heart? Would you like to find a key that would help you to unlock all of the rest of the Bible? Well, the key is a person, and His name is Jesus Christ. He is the One who fulfills the prophets.

Now, put these verses in your margin. They are great and wonderful verses. The first is a verse that comes out of Luke chapter 24. Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead, and after His resurrection He's on His way to Emmaus. And, there are two weary, forlorn disciples who are walking along that road, and Jesus joins them. He catches up with them, and He gets into a discussion with them. They don't know who He is. They don't recognize Him in His resurrected form, and so they're walking along. It's about a seven-mile journey, and Jesus begins to talk with them about the Word of God. I would like to have a tape recording of that conversation, that seven-mile Bible conference. And, the Bible says, in Luke chapter 24 and verse 27—here's the verse—*"And beginning at Moses and all the prophets..."*—now, that's what we call here in this verse "the law and the prophets." *"Moses and all the prophets"*: that just means all the Old Testament—*"Beginning at Moses and all the prophets..."*—that is, He stepped into the Bible at Genesis 1:1, and He began to talk—*"Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself"* (Luke 24:27).

Wouldn't you have loved to hear that? Wouldn't you have loved to hear the Son of God just open the Bible, walking along for seven miles, talking to them and expounding to them in all of the Scriptures the things concerning Himself? Can you imagine what that would have been like to hear the Son of God? I only say that to say this: that, friend, if you don't read the Bible, and you don't see Jesus, you'd better go back and re-read the Bible. Standing somewhere in the shadows you'll find Jesus.



And then, the Apostle Paul said, in Acts chapter 10, verse 43, *“To him”*—to Jesus—*“give all the prophets witness”* (Acts 10:43). All of the prophets spoke about the Lord Jesus Christ. Prophecy centers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Prophecy is not primarily about some thing; prophecy is about someone.

The Bible says that, *“The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy”* (Revelation 19:10). And, the Lord Jesus Christ challenged the crowd. There in John chapter 5 and verse 39, He says, *“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think that ye have eternal life.”* Jesus said, *“[these] are they which testify of me”* (John 5:39). And, I want to remind you that when Jesus said this He was not talking about the New Testament. It had not yet been written. He was talking about the Old Testament. Don’t get the idea that the Old Testament is about something else, and the New Testament is about Jesus. Every scripture that I have been giving you has been telling you that the Old Testament is about the Lord Jesus Christ. When you step into the portals of God’s Word, in Genesis 1:1, you begin to meet the Lord Jesus Christ.

*“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth”* (Genesis 1:1). And yet, the Bible says that all things were made by Jesus (John 1:3). And, you see, it’s all about the Lord Jesus Christ. You know, in Genesis, He’s the seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15). In Exodus, He’s the Passover lamb (Exodus 12:21). In Leviticus, He is our atoning sacrifice. In Numbers, He is the smitten rock (Numbers 20:11). In Deuteronomy, He is that prophet who is to come (Deuteronomy 18:15, 18). In Joshua, He is the captain of the Lord’s hosts (Joshua 5:14). In Judges, He is the deliverer of God’s people (Judges 3:9, 15). In Ruth, He is our kinsmen redeemer (Ruth 4:5–6). In 1 Samuel, He is the anointed One (1 Samuel 16:13). In 2 Samuel, He is the king enthroned. In 1 Kings, He is the glory of the Lord filling the Temple (1 Kings 8:11). In 2 Kings, He is the royal seed. In 1 Chronicles, He is the glorious king. In 2 Chronicles, He is the Lord who appears to Solomon (2 Chronicles 7:12). In Ezra, He is *“the LORD God of our fathers”* (Ezra 7:27). In Nehemiah, He is the restorer of Israel. In Esther, He is the advocate who pleads for His people. In Job, He is my Redeemer that I know lives and shall stand upon the earth (Job 19:25). In the Book of Psalms, He is the Shepherd (Psalm 23:1); He is the King of glory (Psalm 24:7–10). In Ecclesiastes, He is the significance of life. In Song Of Solomon, the Lord Jesus Christ is the heavenly bridegroom. In Isaiah, He is Immanuel, God with us (Isaiah 7:14). He is *“Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace”* (Isaiah 9:6), the virgin-born Son of God (Isaiah 7:14). In Jeremiah, He is the divine potter who is molding and making our lives (Jeremiah 18:1–6). In Lamentations, He is the brokenhearted Jehovah who weeps over us. In Ezekiel, He is the glory of God. In Daniel, He is that stone cut out of a mountain without hands that will smite the image of this ungodly world upon it’s feet and then become a kingdom that

will fill this earth (Daniel 2:34–35). In Hosea, the Lord Jesus is the child called out of Egypt (Hosea 11:1). In Joel, He is the Lord that roars out of Zion (Joel 3:16). In Amos, Jesus is the judge of the nations. In Obadiah, He is the Lord of the coming Kingdom. In Jonah, He is God’s messenger to the Gentiles. In Micah, He is Bethlehem’s baby, the One who is going to be the ruler of Israel (Micah 5:2). In Nahum, He is “*a strong hold in the day of trouble*” (Nahum 1:7). In Habakkuk, He is the Lord in His holy temple (Habakkuk 2:20). In Zephaniah, He is the king of Israel (Zephaniah 3:15). In Haggai, He is the Lord of hosts. In Zechariah, He is the Lord coming into Jerusalem riding upon a colt (Zechariah 9:9). In Malachi, He is the coming messenger (Malachi 3:1), the Sun of righteousness with healing in His wings (Malachi 4:2).

All of the Bible—all of the Bible—is about the Lord Jesus. Jesus said, “I didn’t come to destroy the law and the prophets.” When He said, “the law and the prophets,” He meant the Old Testament. He said, “I didn’t come to destroy it. I came to fulfill it. It is all about Me” (Matthew 5:17). Such a wonderful book is the Bible! Oh, the prophecies of the Old Testament are fulfilled in the Lord Jesus.

The other day Joyce and I picked up the phone and called our son David, who is a missionary in Spain. Well, that’s an amazing thing that we in Memphis, Tennessee, can pick up a telephone and push some numbers, and on the other end one person will answer. Well, maybe two. Jonathan may answer. But, one household answers. There are five and a half billion people on the earth, and we can just push some numbers, and we eliminate everybody else.

Did you know I was thinking that the Bible is that way, prophecy is that way, that by the process of elimination all prophecy centers in the Lord Jesus Christ? For example, let me tell you how Jesus is prophesied in the Bible. You step into the Bible, and in Genesis chapter 3, verse 15, you find the first prophecy of the coming of our Lord. And the Bible says that He is to be the seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15). That is, the Messiah is not going to be an angel. He is not going to be God sitting in Heaven. But, it is going to be someone of the human race. So, right away you eliminate all the billions of angels and all of the other created beings. None of them are the redeemer. So, first of all, a certain race.

And then, you go to Genesis chapter 9 and verse 26, and you see that there’s a certain section of that race. You see, you push the next number, and you eliminate the sons of Japheth, and you eliminate the sons of Ham, and you just come to the sons of Shem. Out of that section of that race the Messiah is going to come (Genesis 9:25–26). And then, you punch another number, and it brings up a nation of that section, because the Bible tells us, in Genesis chapter 12, that this Messiah is going to be a descendant of Abraham. So, what you have now is a race, and you have a section of that race, and then you have a nation out

of that race (Genesis 12:1–3). And then, you push another number, and up comes a tribe of that nation. Genesis chapter 49 and verse 10 tells us that Messiah is going to come of the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10).

And then, you continue to dial, and you push another number, and you find out that the Messiah is going to come out of a certain family of that tribe. And, 1 Samuel chapter 16, Messiah has to be a descendant of Jesse (1 Samuel 16:1). Then, you push another number, and you find out that the Messiah is going to be of a woman of that family—Isaiah chapter 7, verse 14—a very unusual woman; she is going to be a virgin (Isaiah 7:14). You push another number, and you find out where this woman is going to be when Messiah is born. In Micah 5, verse 2, it must be in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). Then, you push another number, and you get the time where Messiah is going to be born in Bethlehem of this woman of that family of that tribe of that nation of that section of that race. The phone rings, and Jesus is on the other end. I mean, dear friend, God just keeps on tightening the focus. It's incredible how the Scripture is fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "I didn't come to destroy the Old Testament. I came to fulfill it."

It is amazing how these Old Testament prophets painted a portrait of the Lord Jesus. Could you paint a portrait of somebody, having not seen Him? Well, they painted a portrait of Jesus and filled in such detail it's incredible. And, not just one person worked on that portrait; 20 to 25 people painted that portrait centuries before the Lord Jesus Christ ever came, and they painted a word portrait of the Lord Jesus Christ and filled in all of the details.

Did all of that happen just by chance? Peter Stoner has written a book called *Science Speaks*. And, he takes the prophecies of the Lord Jesus Christ—and, by the way, let me tell you in the Old Testament there are about 333 precise details that tell about the Lord Jesus Christ; 333—he, Peter Stoner, just takes eight of these—not 333, but just eight of these. And, he's a mathematician, and he figures out the probability, the likelihood, that all eight of these prophecies could have been fulfilled in one person by chance. Do you know what that chance is? It is one in ten to the seventeenth power. You just keep on adding 17 zeros. I don't even know what number that is. I don't even know how to pronounce the number. I can't even figure it out. Just put 17—one and ten—followed by 17 zeros. How do you do it? Well, Peter Stoner said for people like me who are not mathematicians—I can picture this—he said, if you were to take the state of Texas and cover it with silver dollars two feet deep... Now, I'm sure the Texans would like this, but if you were to take the state of Texas and cover it from border to border with silver dollars two feet deep, and then blindfold a man and let him walk as far as he wanted after you've stirred all of those silver dollars, and he were to pick out the one silver dollar that you had marked, that is approximately the

same chance that he's talking about that these eight prophecies could have been fulfilled by chance.

But, my dear friend, it is not one in eight; it is one in 333 exact precise details about the Lord Jesus Christ. It's amazing. When you study the Bible, friend, it's about Jesus. You know, the Bible speaks of God creating the heavens, the stellar heavens, the great galaxies that sweep across velvet blackness and night and from this direction to that direction and that direction on into infinity; the billions and billions and billions of stars. You know how God describes that in His Word? He made the stars also. That's it. That's it. I mean just five words. He made the stars.

But, He takes a little tent in the wilderness, the tabernacle, just a little tent, and He takes about 50 chapters describing that little tent. Why is that? Because that tent, that tabernacle, is a picture, a prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, as you study the tabernacle, you understand what the Bible means when it says, "*And the Word was made flesh, and [tabernacled] among us*" (John 1:14). You see, all of that Old Testament, all of it, was a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. He didn't come to destroy the law and the prophets; Jesus came to fulfill the law and the prophets.

## **II. Jesus Practically Fulfills the Word of God**

So, put it down. Jesus, number one, prophetically fulfills the Word of God. Number two: Jesus practically fulfills the Word of God. Now, not only did He fulfill the prophets; He fulfilled the law. And, the law is God's demand on us. The law speaks of God's righteous demands, because not only was the Old Testament full of prophecy; it is full of requirements. And, Jesus, to the letter, fulfilled the law.

### **A. Jesus Fulfilled the Moral Law**

Jesus fulfilled the moral law. The law is full of moral demands, but Jesus Christ was the only man who ever lived who absolutely, totally, to perfection, kept every point of the law. No one could point to the Lord Jesus Christ and say He broke the law of God. Jesus Christ could stand before them all and say, "Who can convict me of sin?" (John 8:46). "*Sin is the transgression of the law*" (1 John 3:4), my dear friend, and Jesus fulfilled it in spirit and in letter. He fulfilled the moral law.

### **B. Jesus Fulfilled the Ceremonial Law**

Jesus fulfilled the ceremonial law. All of those Old Testament ceremonies were about the Lord Jesus Christ. All of the Old Testament sacrifices pointed toward the Lord Jesus Christ.

There was a Russian psychologist that I studied about when I was in school, and I'm sure you did: his name was Pavlov. And, Pavlov did experiments on what we call conditioned response. You remember that? What Pavlov did, he got some dogs, and he put them in a pen. And, before he would feed his dogs he would ring a bell, and then he would put down the dog food. Each day he'd come in and ring the bell and feed the dogs. Now, the time came when all Pavlov had to do was just ring the bell, and the dogs would begin to drool; they'd just salivate. He had built into those dogs what he called a conditioned response. And, the ringing of the bell meant food.

God, in the Old Testament, was building into His people a conditioned response. And, every time one of those animals was slain, and the blood was poured out, and that animal was offered on a smoking Jewish altar, what was God doing? God was building into His people a conditioned response. God was teaching them that sin means death. "*The wages of sin is death*" (Romans 6:23). "The soul that sinneth, it must surely die" (Ezekiel 18:4, 20). And, the Lord Jesus Christ—the Lord Jesus Christ—was the answer to the conditioned response that God had been building through the centuries. Every Old Testament sacrifice, every Old Testament ritual, was God's bell ringing, teaching that sin meant death, and man needs a redeemer.

Jesus, my friend, fulfilled the moral law. Jesus fulfilled the ceremonial law of the Old Testament. And so, it's been filled up in the Lord Jesus. We don't need that anymore. My dear friend, in Christ, it's fulfilled. I don't need a high priest anymore. He is my high priest. I don't need a bloody altar anymore. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses me from all sin (1 John 1:7). I don't try to keep the Sabbath day, Saturday, which is the seventh day, because every day for me is a holy day because Christ is my rest.

### **C. Jesus Fulfilled the Judicial Law**

You see, Jesus fulfilled the moral law. Jesus fulfilled the ceremonial law. And, oh, my dear friend, Jesus fulfilled the judicial law of God. What is the judicial law of God? The judicial law of God is that "*the wages of sin is death*" (Romans 6:23). "The soul that sinneth, it must surely die" (Ezekiel 18:4, 20). And so, the Lord Jesus Christ took my sin, your sin, carried that sin to the cross, and Jesus fulfilled the law by dying for our sin. And, the Bible tells us, in Galatians chapter 3 and verse 13, that He has redeemed us from the curse of the law, because He was made a curse for us (Galatians 3:13). He carried my sin to the cross. And, you see, He paid and met the righteous demands of the law, and that's what He meant when He hung His head when He died and said "*Tetelestai*" (John 19:30). That means, "It is paid in full. I have fulfilled the judicial demands of the law. I've fulfilled the law. I've paid in full. Man's sin has been paid for." Therefore, the Bible says, in Romans chapter 10 and verse

4, *“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth”* (Romans 10:4). Why? Because He fulfilled the law. We’re not under the law anymore, because Jesus has fulfilled the law.

The law says, “Do this, and thou shalt live.” The gospel says, “Live, and then thou shalt do.” The law says, “Pay me all that you owe.” The gospel says, “I freely forgive thee all.” The law says, *“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind”* (Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30), but the gospel says *“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation”—the satisfaction—“for our sins”* (1 John 4:10). The law says, *“Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them”* (Galatians 3:10). The gospel says, *“Blessed [is the man] whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered”* (Romans 4:7). The law says, *“The wages of sin is death”* (Romans 6:23). The gospel says, *“The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord”* (Romans 6:23). The law demands holiness. The gospel gives holiness. The law says, “Do.” The gospel says, “Done.” The law makes blessing the result of obedience. The gospel makes obedience the result of blessing. The law puts the day of rest at the end of the week. The gospel puts it at the beginning of the week, because we have new life in Christ. The law says “If.” The gospel says, “Therefore.” The law says, “Run,” but it gives us no legs. The gospel says, “Fly,” and it gives us wings.

Why? Why? Because Christ fulfilled the law. He said, “I didn’t come to destroy the law and the prophets. I came to fulfill it.” And, when God forgives my sin, God doesn’t overlook His law. God doesn’t say the law doesn’t matter. Oh, my dear friend, listen. Jesus paid in full for my sin debt. Now, listen. Jesus fulfilled the law for me, and now He fulfills it in me—in me. He paid my failure. He paid my sin debt. And now, the righteousness of the law is worked out in every one of us who love the Lord Jesus Christ and love is the fulfillment of the law. How wonderful that is!

### **III. Jesus Perfectly Fulfills the Word of God**

You see, Jesus prophetically fulfills the Word of God. Jesus practically fulfills the Word of God. One last thing: Jesus perfectly fulfills the Word of God. Look at it again in verse 18: *“For verily...”*—and, by the way, when Jesus says *“verily,”* that’s the time to put up your antenna. That means, “Pay attention.” That means, “truly.” That means, “I am emphasizing this.” Now, listen—*“For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass...”*—friend, one day it will, and if this world is your hope, you’re just arranging the deck chairs on the Titanic—*“Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled”* (Matthew 5:8).

Now, what's a *jot* and a *tittle*? He's talking about an *iota* and a *yod*, the smallest Hebrew letter and the smallest little marking, little stroke of the pen. Jesus said, the smallest part of all of this, none of it's going to pass. The Word of God stands. Did Jesus believe in the inerrancy of the Scripture? You'd better believe He did. Did Jesus believe in the infallibility of the Word of God? You'd better believe He did. Did Jesus believe in the indestructibility of the Word of God? Of course He did! Did Jesus believe in the authority of the Word of God? Of course He did! My dear friend, if Jesus is your Master and your Lord, then your Master and your Lord's view of Scripture must be yours. And, remember, we're not talking about the New Testament here. The New Testament is inspired too, but you know the battle is today over the Old Testament. This is what Jesus is talking about. Jesus here is talking about the Old Testament. And, He is saying, not the smallest pen marking will fail till all be fulfilled.

I heard about a man who absentmindedly in a meeting after he read the Scripture—he had been used to presiding—said, “If there are no additions or corrections, the Scriptures stand approved as read.” Well, friend, they do. And they don't need your additions or your corrections. Jesus said, not a jot, not a tittle, not an iota, not a subscript, will fail from the law until all be fulfilled.

Now, friend, if there are errors in the Bible—listen to me—if there are errors in the Old Testament, you must conclude one of two things about the Lord Jesus Christ. Put this scripture down in front of you, verse 18, and to conclude this, if there are errors in the Old Testament, either Jesus Christ was ignorant of those errors, therefore He was not omniscient, could not have been God in human flesh; or else Jesus knew there were errors and pretended there were not, and therefore Jesus was dishonest and a fraud and a fake; or else the Bible is exactly what Jesus believed it to be: the inerrant, infallible Word of God.

Now, Jesus said—listen—“Not a jot, not a tittle, shall fail from the law till all be fulfilled.” That is, there's more yet to be fulfilled. You see, Jesus, who came the first time—and I said there are 333 precise details that prophesy His first coming; there are many more that prophesy His Second Coming—and Jesus said, “You can bank on it. Not a jot nor tittle will fail till all be fulfilled.” That encourages me, because the Old Testament says somebody is coming, but it also says somebody is going to come again.

I was talking to a man with the newspaper the other day. He called me up to interview me, and he asked me about the coming election. He said, “Do you have any prognostications? Do you have any prophecies? What's going to happen?” I said, “Well, there's an old Chinese proverb that says, “Never make predictions, especially about the future.” Now, my dear friend, we have people today telling us that Jesus is going to come on this date, or Jesus is going to come on that date. There's one man who is saying that Jesus is

coming in a few days, some Korean prophet. Well, if I were God, and had intended for Jesus to come on that day, I'd just change my mind, wouldn't you? The Bible says, "That day and that hour knows no man, not even the angels" (Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32). But, oh, my friend, I am telling you He is coming. It will all be fulfilled, and our Lord is coming, and "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as waters that cover the sea" (Habakkuk 2:14). And, you can put it down big, and you can put it down plain, and you can put it down straight, that the same Bible that was minutely and gloriously fulfilled will be fulfilled in the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

## Conclusion

Now, I said I wanted to speak to you about the secret of fulfillment. Listen, friend. The Christ who fulfilled the prophecies, and the Christ who fulfilled the law, and the Christ who will come again to fulfill history, is the One that you are longing for, that God made you for, the One that you are hungry to know. You may not know it, but He's what you're longing for. He really is.

Friends all around me are trying to find  
What the heart yearns for, by sin undermined;  
I have the secret, I have know where 'tis found:  
Only true pleasures in Jesus abound.

...

Jesus is all this poor world needs today.  
Blindly they strive, for sin darkens their way.  
O to pull back the grim curtains of night,  
One glimpse of Jesus and all will be bright! (Harry D. Loes)

Christ is what you long for. Christ is what you hunger for. He fulfilled the prophecies and He fulfilled the law that He might fulfill the deepest need of your heart.

If I could give my heart to Jesus Christ for you, I would. If I could trust Him on your behalf, I would. But, I cannot. If I could walk down this aisle and openly stand for Jesus on your behalf, I would. But, I can't. Nobody can do it for you. And, I don't think anyone could keep you from doing it. I know there are not enough angels in Heaven to drag you down this aisle, because God wouldn't allow it. There are not enough demons to keep you from doing it, because God would not allow that. He simply says, "Whosoever will may come." Are you saved? Are you a child of God? I didn't ask if you were a Baptist or Methodist or Presbyterian or something like that, Jewish or Roman Catholic. Are you saved? Does God's Spirit bear witness with your Spirit that you're a child of God? You can be saved by trusting



Him right now. And, you can be fulfilled, and realize why God made you, and for the first time in your life have the deepest longing of your heart met.

# It's What's Inside That Counts

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** November 8, 1982

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 5:20–22

*“For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”*

MATTHEW 5:20

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## Introduction

Take God's Word and turn, today, to Matthew chapter 5 as we continue our series in the Sermon on the Mount. And, the title of the message today: "It's What's Inside That

Counts.”

¶ When Howard Carter discovered the tomb of ol’ King Tut in 1924, he found that King Tut was buried in a coffin. I have seen the coffin. I have been to Egypt, to an Egyptian museum, and seen this huge sarcophagus, this coffin that they buried ol’ King Tut in. First of all, there was the large outer coffin. When they opened that, they looked inside, and there was another coffin overlaid with gold. They looked inside of that, and there was another coffin. Inside that one was another coffin of solid gold. When they looked inside there, there was King Tut, wrapped in gold cloth. And, he had a gold mask on his face. You’ve seen that beautiful solid gold mask covering his face. But, when they took that off and unwrapped the gold cloth, inside was a dead, shriveled, leathery corpse. Outside—very beautiful; inside—a dead man’s bones. It’s what’s inside that counts, not the outer covering that we sometimes wear and the façade of gold that we put on to try to hide the decaying spiritual life.¶

The Pharisees were past masters at this: outwardly, they looked so good, but Jesus said, “On the inside, you are a dead, putrefying, spiritual corpse.” Begin to read here in Matthew chapter 5 and verse 20. Jesus said, “*For I say unto you...except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*” (Matthew 5:20) Now, I’ve tried to think what a church full of scribes and Pharisees would be like. Well, number one, Brother Dan: They’d be here every Sunday. Number two: They’d be on time. Number three: They’d all be carrying Bibles. Number four: They’d all be tithing. Number five: They’d never curse, or swear, or drink, or get drunk, or commit adultery. Number six: They’d all go to hell. Outwardly, they were very righteous, but Jesus said, “*Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*” (Matthew 5:20)

Now, He’s talking not about what’s on the outside, but He’s talking about what’s on the inside. And then, He gives six illustrations, and these six illustrations are used by the Lord Jesus just to rip away the façade of self-righteousness and show the Pharisees what was truly down deep in their heart.

Now, the first of these six illustrations we’re going to talk about today is in verses 21 and 22. Here’s the first one: “*Ye have heard that it was said of them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.*” (Matthew 5:21–22)

Now, I want to say again that the Pharisees had a form of religion that was outward. It was external. It was superficial. It was hypocritical. Don’t turn to it, but let me tell you

how Jesus described them. It's really humorous the way Jesus described them. In Matthew chapter 23—just put it in your margin—verses 23 through 25, Jesus said, *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin.”* (Matthew 23:23) Do you know what they did? They were so careful. If they have a little mint plant—you know, mint like you put in your iced tea—they'd say, “Well now, that plant belongs to God so I've got to count the leaves: one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine—this tenth leaf, that belongs to God.” So, they'd pick off the tenth leaf, and they'd tithe that tenth leaf. I mean, everything belonged to God. The tithe belonged to God—and it does. Jesus didn't say they were wrong to tithe. He said, *“These ought ye to have done.”* (Matthew 23:23)

But, let me back up and give the whole verse: *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith”—now, tithing, that's external; judgment, mercy, and faith, that's internal—“these ought ye to have done”—you ought to tithe—“and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides”—can you imagine anything more ridiculous than somebody who is supposed to be a guide who's blind?—“which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel”—don't tell me Jesus didn't have a sense of humor. I'm sure this one had them in the aisles. Here's a guy gagging at a gnat; and then, on the other hand, here comes a camel all the way down. I see his tail going in. And, you strained at a gnat; you gagged at a gnat. You swallow a camel. And then, He says (evidently, He'd been watching a man wash dishes)—“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.”* (Matthew 23:23–25) Here's a man who does dishes. All he does is wipe the outside and put them back in the cupboard, and on the inside, he hasn't touched them. And, Jesus said, “That's the way your religion is. You're a blind guy; you're gagging at gnats, swallowing camels. When you do the dishes, all you're doing is wiping the outside; you're leaving the inside full of filth.” And, our Lord's first concern is not the outside; our Lord's first concern is the inside. It's what's inside that counts. Sin is an inside job, and so is righteousness an inside job.

¶ I've often used this illustration about a log in the sawmill. You may take a crooked log out of the forest, put it in the sawmill, lop off one side, lop off the other side, lop off the other side, lop off the other side, and it's perfectly straight. But, if you look at it from the end, the heart is still crooked—the heart is still crooked.¶

And, the Pharisees, their lives were so straight on the outside. But, on the inside, their heart was still crooked.

¶ One time, years ago, I was working in a Billy Graham crusade as a counselor. After

the service, a girl came forward, and she wanted to give her heart to Christ. And, we dealt with her back there in the back after the service. And, the girl's mother was a socialite, and she was mortified that her daughter had come down there with the rest of those sinners to give her heart to Christ because to this woman that was an affront. It actually embarrassed her that her daughter "needed to be saved." And so, the mother was back there in the counseling room protesting, and she was saying, "Sweetheart, you don't need this. Darling, Mamma knows you. You're a good girl." And, I never will forget what that teenage girl said as she looked into her mother's face. She said, "Mother, you can't see my heart." This girl knew that she was a sinner, and she knew that she needed to be saved. But, the mother was so much like these Pharisees so long ago. It's what's inside that is the problem.<sup>f</sup>

Listen to me, my dear friend: a man is not a sinner because he sins; he sins because he's a sinner. A man is not a thief because he steals; he steals because he's a thief. A man is not a liar because he tells lies; he tells lies because he's a liar. Jesus said, "All of these things come out of the heart." (Matthew 15:18) And, that's the reason Jesus said that our righteousness has to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees. And, many of those people that Jesus witnessed to and talked to never got saved because they never did see that they were sinners.

First of all, you've got to get a man lost before you can get him saved. And, the Apostle Paul wrote about these same people when he said in Romans chapter 10 and verse 3: "*They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.*" (Romans 10:3) And so, what our Lord Jesus Christ is going to do here in the Sermon on the Mount—He's going to rip away the veil; He's going to shatter the self-righteousness of these people, and He's going to show them their need of Him and their need of regeneration. That's the reason He says down in verse 20: "*Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*" (Matthew 5:20)

## **I. The Malice of Murder**

And then, He gives the first of six illustrations. This first one has to do with murder. Now, He speaks in verse 21 of the malice of murder: "*Ye have heard that it was said of them of old time, Thou shalt not kill.*" (Matthew 5:21) And indeed, that is true—indeed, it is true. No one should commit murder. Of course, our Lord is quoting from Exodus chapter 20 and verse 13, the Ten Commandments, that simply say, "*Thou shalt not kill.*" (Exodus 20:13)

## **A. Not All Killing Is Forbidden**

Now, let me say parenthetically here that the Ten Commandments do not forbid all killing. When the Bible says, *“Thou shalt not kill,”* (Matthew 5:21) that literally means “Thou shalt do no murder.”

### **1. The Bible Does Not Forbid the Killing of Animals**

For example—and you might want to turn to Exodus chapter 20, where this is found—the killing of animals is not forbidden. Some people think that it’s wrong to kill animals, but the Bible doesn’t tell us that it’s wrong to kill animals. As a matter of fact, in Exodus chapter 20 and verse 24, right after He says, *“Thou shalt not kill”* (Exodus 20:13) in verse 13, in verse 24, He says this: *“An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.”* (Exodus 20:24) There was nothing wrong with the sacrificing of these animals. When God said, *“Thou shalt not kill,”* (Exodus 20:13) He wasn’t referring to animals. No one should be cruel to animals, but it’s all right to use animals for food. Jesus ate fish and a honeycomb, did He not? Don’t tell me Jesus was a sinner. Don’t tell me Jesus did wrong. He did not. There is no sin found in the Lord Jesus. The Bible does not proscribe or forbid the killing of animals.

### **2. The Bible Does Not Forbid Capital Punishment**

The Bible does not forbid capital punishment. In Exodus chapter 20, where the Bible says, *“Thou shalt not kill”* (Exodus 20:13)—and read this and mark it if it’s not marked in your Bible—the Bible also says in Exodus 21 and verse 12: *“He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death.”* (Exodus 21:12) That’s what God’s Word says: you kill somebody, you have committed a crime worthy of death. And, when the Bible says in the Ten Commandments, *“Thou shalt not kill,”* (Exodus 20:13) it does not forbid capital punishment.

Now, no Christian should ever take personal revenge. That’s not up to us. We never have a right—we never have a right—to take the life of another person. And yet, the government is ordained to do that. Read Romans chapter 13, (Romans 13:3–4) and read also Genesis chapter 9 and verse 6: *“Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.”* (Genesis 9:6) You see, God did not save us because He doesn’t value human life; it’s because He does value human life. Capital punishment is clearly taught in the Bible, and the person just has to deny the Word of God to deny capital punishment.

### **3. The Bible Does Not Forbid Killing in Self-Defense**

When the Bible says, *“Thou shalt no kill,”* (Exodus 20:13) it doesn’t proscribe the killing of animals; it does not forbid, tragic as it may be, capital punishment; and the Bible does

not forbid, tragic as it may be, the necessity to defend your loved ones sometimes by taking another life. If you go on in Exodus chapter 22, verses 2 and 3, God says, *“If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die, there shall no blood be shed for him”*—that is, if somebody is breaking into your house and you smite him and he dies, you’re not going to die because of that. But, the Bible says—*“If the sun be risen upon him, there shall be blood shed for him; for he should make full restitution.”* (Exodus 22:2–3) Now, what does that mean? It means that if you kill a thief when it wasn’t necessary to kill him—just because he was stealing in broad, open daylight; you’re not in danger—then you are guilty. The thief is guilty, but you have no right to take his life. But, you do have a right to protect your loved ones. You have an obligation to protect your children. You have an obligation to protect your wife and family—a responsibility.

## **B. Types of Killing That the Bible Forbids**

But Jesus, here, is speaking to the Pharisees, and the whole time He is saying this first part, “You’ve read, ‘Thou shalt not kill,’” (Matthew 5:21) they’re all nodding their heads because the Pharisees would not think of committing murder. As a matter of fact, what is forbidden when it says, *“Thou shalt not kill”*? (Exodus 20:13)

### **1. Homicide**

First off, obviously, the crime of homicide. And, America has become the murder capital of the world. We have coldblooded people who are gunning down innocent citizens—and armed robberies. We have people who are taking revenge on people they do not like. We have rapists and others who are murdering people and sacrificing them on the altar of their lust, and their blood cries out from the ground to a holy God. And, God is not deaf to these cries, and God is going to avenge the blood of these people who are killed by homicide. Homicide is what is forbidden.

### **2. Suicide**

Suicide is forbidden. *“Thou shalt not kill.”* (Exodus 20:13) You don’t have a right to kill yourself. You don’t have a right to take your own life because it is not your own; it belongs to God. You say, “Well, I have problems that are incurable.” No, my dear friend, you have no right to play God. The most incurable disease, the most constant pain, the most severe trouble, the deepest heartache, the worst persecution—no matter what is—and my heart goes out and my heart is broken for what some people are suffering—but let me tell you, my dear friend, suicide takes the matter out of God’s hands and puts it into your hands, and you have no right to do that. God alone is wise enough, God alone is strong enough, God alone is good enough to handle your problem. But, I’m talking to somebody here who has ever contemplated such a thing. Do not do it! Do not do it! You do not have the wisdom, the judgment, to do this. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 13: *“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common*

*to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted*—that word means “tested”—“*above that ye are able; but will with the [test]*”—“*will with the temptation*”—“*make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*” (1 Corinthians 10:13) God will give you grace, and God will meet your need. Wait on Him. Wait on Him! There’s hardly anything anyone can do that would cause more shame, and more sorrow, and more heartache to a family than suicide.

“Say, pastor, could a Christian commit suicide?” Well, if a Christian is mentally deranged or takes his or her eyes from the Lord, that is a possibility—but a tragic possibility! My dear friend, a person who commits suicide will be so ashamed when he faces God.

### **3. Infanticide**

*“Thou shalt not kill.”* (Exodus 20:13) You have no right to take another’s life because of the value of human life. You have no right to take your own life. This would include homicide, suicide. It certainly includes infanticide, taking the lives of little babies. And, my heart is so sick. Last Friday night, I went to Dallas to speak in a rally for the unborn. Thank God for these who are standing up for those who won’t stand up—or cannot stand up—for themselves. I am heartsick that in America we are so concerned about the spotted owl, we are so concerned about the whale, we are so concerned about the snail darter, we’re so concerned about the bald eagle—and we ought to be; nothing wrong with that—but what is wrong with a nation that will slaughter the innocent and make all this fuss about a spotted owl? Something very sick in America! Something very wrong in America!

You say, “Well, it’s legal.” Everything that’s legal is not right. I think maybe we ought to abort the court. These people who kill these little babies, I feel like saying, “Why don’t you pick on somebody your own size?” It’s wrong to do that. I want to tell you what Dr. Gallup, the researcher and pollster, said. He said, “If a doctor will take money for killing the innocent in the womb, he will kill you with a needle when paid by your children.” God is going to judge—God is going to judge—America.

## **II. The Acid of Anger**

And, while Jesus is saying, “You’ve heard it said, ‘Thou shalt not kill,’” (Matthew 5:21) the Pharisees were there nodding their heads, saying, “That is right—that is right. We would not commit homicide. No, we would not commit suicide. No, we would not commit infanticide.” And so, they wrapped themselves in the robe of self-righteousness, and they are saying, “We are fine.” But, Jesus didn’t stop there. Not only did Jesus speak of the malice of murder; then Jesus began to speak of the acid of anger. And look, if you will, as Jesus continues now in verse 22: *“But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever*



*shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.” (Matthew 5:22)*

Now, Jesus is going to destroy the illusion of self-righteousness. Do you see? There was one sin that the Pharisees were sure that they were not guilty of, and that was the sin of murder—just like many of this congregation who are so sure that you don’t have murder in your heart; at least, murder on your record. But, what the Lord Jesus is going to show is that hatred is an acid that destroys its container. And, our Lord goes beyond the act of murder to the attitude behind it—beyond the murder to the motive—to show what really causes people to kill.

¶ A little boy was doing his homework, so I’m told, and he asked his dad—he said, “Dad, what causes people to go to war? Why do people kill each other in war?” “Well,” he said, “son, it’s like this. If you want to know what causes war,” he said, “for example, in World War I,” he said, “Germany invaded Belgium.” And, the mother came in. She was drying her hands, and she had been doing dishes. And, she said, “No, no, father, that’s not the way it is. Here’s the way that war started.” He said to her, “Look, do you want to answer the question or do you want me to answer the question? Did he ask you or did he ask me? Besides that, you don’t know anything about it. Why don’t you butt out of this conversation?” She said, “What do you mean I don’t know anything about it?” And, she threw her dishtowel on the floor, turned around, and slammed the door. You could hear the dishes rattling in the cabinet. And, he said, “Now son, let me tell you how wars start.” He said, “No thanks, Dad. I already know.” You know, it comes out of the heart.¶

### **A. Types of Anger That Come Out of the Heart**

And, that’s what our Lord Jesus is about to show, and He speaks here of angers.

#### **1. Caustic Anger**

First of all, He speaks of caustic anger, where, He says, you’re angry with a brother. (Matthew 5:22) That is, somebody’s done something to you. I don’t know what they did to you, but they did something; they did you wrong. And so, you’ve got that caustic anger. You feel that corrosive acid, that caustic acid, building up in you.

#### **2. Contemptuous Anger**

And, that caustic acid, that caustic anger, turns to contemptuous anger. What you say there is “*Raca*.” (Matthew 5:22) You say, “What does that mean?” Did you know we don’t have an English translation for that? That’s an untranslatable word. That’s the reason they just put in the Bible, “*Raca*.” (Matthew 5:22) Do you know what it means? It means, “You don’t have any value. I don’t value you.” Some translations translate it this way: “worthless one.” It’s actually a term of contempt. Racial prejudice is wrapped up in

this word. When you look down on other people, you feel that you are superior to other people—whatever it is, that air of superiority. You see, somebody takes somebody else's life because they do not see the worth, the value, of every single human being.

### 3. Condemning Anger

There's caustic anger. And then, there is contemptuous anger. And then, there is condemning anger. Our Lord says, "You say, 'Thou fool,' you will be in danger of hellfire." (Matthew 5:22) The word *fool* here—He's not talking about saying somebody is foolish, but you have to understand what the word *fool* meant in the Bible. The word *fool* here actually involves moral perversity and godlessness and wickedness. A person who is a fool, unless he gets redeemed and saved, is certainly going to hell, certainly damned, certainly lost. The Bible says there's no hope for the fool. (Proverbs 26:12; Proverbs 29:20)

So, you see what a person has done? Caustic anger, contemptuous anger, condemning anger. Somebody's hurt, and something begins to burn and boil and seethe in his heart. That is very wrong. Now, the Bible says in 1 John chapter 3 and verse 15: "*Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.*" (1 John 3:15)

You say, "Pastor Rogers, is all anger wrong?" Of course not! Some anger is very good. Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 26 says, "*Be ye angry*"—that's a command—"and sin not"—that's a command too—"Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath." (Ephesians 4:26) Your wrath is wrong, but righteous anger is different. You see, there is a righteous anger. In the Old Testament, eighteen times you read of the anger of the Lord. We read in the New Testament where Jesus was moved with anger when He drove the moneychangers out of the temple. (Matthew 21:12–13; Mark 11:15–17)

You can tell the size of the man by what makes him angry. What makes you angry? You miss a putt—do you wrap your putter around a tree? Is that what makes you angry? Somebody gets your parking place, and you blow a fuse? You tell the size of a man by what makes him angry. Do you know the way to be angry and sin not? It's to be angry only at sin. Jesus was moved with anger, but the anger that Jesus warns about is the anger that gives Satan a foothold in his life.

Now, I want you to just put a bookmark there in Matthew 5, like I'm going to, and I want you to turn to Ephesians 4 here. Let me show you something about anger—when our Lord speaks of being angry without a cause and the danger that will cause. Turn to the book of Ephesians, and I want you to look in verses 26 through 31. Do you have it? All right, look in verse 26: "*Be ye angry*"—see, there's our command—"and sin not"—there's the first responding command—"let not the sun go down upon your wrath"—now, if you were angry for the wrong reason, don't go to bed angry. Husbands and

wives, never go to bed back to back—*“let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil”*—when, my dear friend, you get this anger in your heart, this wrath there, and you go to bed with it, you don’t deal with it, you give it a place there, do you know what you have done? You’ve just cleared off a space for the devil to come encamp. You have given the devil a campground, a lodging place, a sanctuary in your life. That is the devil’s lawful, rightful place, is your anger, and he’ll move into it. Now, verse 28—*“Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth”*—now, you wouldn’t think of stealing, or you wouldn’t think of cursing, I hope—*“but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption”*—most Pharisees would not steal, and most Pharisees would not let corrupt communication come out of their mouth. But now, watch what our Lord says in verse 31—*“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice.”* (Ephesians 4:26–31)

## **B. The Progression to Malice**

Now, I’ve shown you this before, but I want you to slow down and see how wise the Scriptures are. I want you to see why anger is behind murder. Now, watch this progression; watch these five steps.

### **1. Bitterness**

First of all, *“all bitterness.”* (Ephesians 4:31) Do you see the word *bitterness*? Do you see it? Look at it in verse 31: *“Let all bitterness...”* (Ephesians 4:31) Do you know what bitterness is? Bitterness is a feeling of resentment that settles down in your heart when you feel somebody has done you wrong. Maybe they have overlooked you; maybe they have abused you; maybe they have insulted you; maybe they have hurt you in some way—and you get a feeling that the Bible calls “bitterness.” Now, it’s not yet anger; it’s just bitterness. You just feel bad in here, and you’re carrying that resentment.

### **2. Wrath**

But now, the word *bitterness* is followed by the word *wrath*. Do you see it? Look in verse 31: *“wrath.”* (Ephesians 4:31) Now, what is wrath? Wrath comes from a Greek word that means “to burn.” You’re doing a slow burn. Did you ever feel that slow burn on the inside? A lot of antacid companies are happy that you have it. It’s that slow burn that’s in there. It’s just that heat that comes. First, bitterness; and then, that bitterness turns to wrath. It’s kind of like smoldering rags in a closet—just doing that slow burn.

### **3. Anger**

And then, the next word is *anger*. (Ephesians 4:31) Somebody opens the closet door,

and oxygen comes to those smoldering rags that are in a state of spontaneous combustion. And, suddenly the flame just bursts and begins to flame brightly, and that which is smoldering bursts into flames. That's anger. People fly off the handle. Have you ever seen anybody just fly off the handle just like that? I mean, they'll tell you off in a second, or they'll pick up things, or throw things, or slam a door, or pound their fist, or kick something. And, you say, "Man, what got into them?" I'll tell you what has gotten into them: already—you couldn't see it—but there was bitterness; and then, there was wrath. After the bitterness came the wrath, and then came the anger. What you thought happened at a moment had been happening a long time ago. That bitterness was there. That bitterness turned to wrath. And finally, those smoldering rags of wrath opened into the fires and flames of anger.

#### **4. Clamor**

But, the devil is not finished yet. After that anger comes clamor. Do you see the word *clamor*? Look at it verse 31: "*clamour*." (Ephesians 4:31) Do you know what the word *clamor* means? It means "loud talking." You raise your voice. You shout or you cry. A person says, "Why did you do that?" You say, "Well, now wait a minute. Don't shout." "I'm not shouting." And, your voice gets louder, and you begin to clamor and to say all kinds of wicked things, loud things. You just find yourself expressing yourself in a way that's unbecoming.

#### **5. Evil Speaking**

But, you're not finished yet. You're on a roll now; and so, the next thing is "*evil speaking*." (Ephesians 4:31) You see, once you raise your voice, once you get into this attitude, then you begin to evil speak. You begin to say things that you ought not to say. You will say to a child, "You will never amount to anything." You'll say to a wife, "I am sorry that I married you." You'll say to a brother, "I wish you were dead." Now, you say terrible, horrible, hateful, hellish things, and the devil's just sitting over there in the corner just laughing and saying, "Tell them this, also." And, it's evil speaking. You're out of control.

Do you know there's a school of psychology that says it's good for you to vent your anger? Have you ever heard that—that you should just ventilate your anger, just let it all get out? that it's good for you? That's a lie, my dear friend. The Bible says you're not to do that. And, in a new book, *Anger: The Misunderstood Emotion*, Carol Tavris writes this: "The psychological rationale for ventilating anger does not stand up under experimental scrutiny. The weight of the evidence indicates precisely the opposite: expressing anger makes you more angry, solidifies an angry attitude, and establishes a hostile habit." That's the reason the Bible says, "*A soft answer turneth away wrath*" (Proverbs 15:1)—not ventilating your anger.

## 6. Malice

But see, look, here it is: First of all, there's bitterness. That bitterness turns to wrath. That wrath turns to anger. That anger turns to clamor. That clamor turns to evil speaking. And then, what's the last one? Malice. (Ephesians 4:31) Do you know what malice is? Malice is doing something evil and hurtful. Malice is what leads to murder. That's the reason why I spoke of the malice of murder. After you've said those wicked and vile things that begin to come out of your mouth, then you have a desire to reach out and strike somebody, to hurt somebody, to hit somebody, to harm somebody. And, that's what's behind this thing of murder. It all starts in the heart. It all starts with a root of bitterness.

And, so many people are carrying around this load of bitterness, and there are people who are sitting in this congregation this morning who have in your heart the seeds of murder—your bitterness. Now, you may never kill anybody. It's far better to carry the seed in your heart than to do it. Don't just say, "Well, I'm already guilty before God so I might as well kill somebody." No, that's not the thing. It's not what it does to them we are talking about; it's what it does to you, primarily, right now. You see, listen—listen, my dear friend. Jesus is dealing with Pharisees, and He only takes one illustration. We're going to take many more. You may say, "Well, I don't have that problem, Pastor Rogers." Well, come next Sunday. We'll find yours. Jesus has six illustrations right here. But, what Jesus is saying here is that it is what is on the inside, but not what is on the outside, that makes men the sinners that they are.

## III. The Requirement for Righteousness

So, we see the malice of murder. We see the acid of anger. Now, we can see the requirement for righteousness. Jesus said—listen—*"Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."* (Matthew 5:20) That is, you cannot behave your way into heaven.

☞ Do you know what's wrong with self-righteousness? Self-righteousness is like trying to fill a bottomless cup. You see, suppose you had a bottomless cup and you start trying to fill it. You'll never fill it; it has no bottom. Trying to fill yourself with yourself adds nothing to yourself because nothing plus nothing equals nothing.☞

You can never—you can never—have righteousness, never be righteous, never be right with God—never, never, never—until you have the righteousness which is from above.

Now, remember what Paul said in Romans 10, verse 3, concerning his people: *"They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."*

(Romans 10:3) Self-righteousness in God's sight is as filthy rags. The Pharisees needed to see this. They didn't understand it. They did not understand it.

How righteous are you? Let me tell you what real righteousness is.

### A. Imputed Righteousness

Now, listen to me. Real righteousness—God's righteousness—is, first of all, imputed righteousness—imputed righteousness. Because Jesus died, because Jesus paid your sin debt, God just imputes righteousness to you. God puts righteousness on your account. God says, "Adrian is righteous"—not because of anything I've done; I mean, nothing I have done. It is because Jesus suffered, bled, and died, and paid for my sins on the cross. And, God imputes righteousness to me.

### B. Implanted Righteousness

Now, wait a minute. Not only is it imputed righteousness; it is implanted righteousness. Then He gives me a new nature; and then, I do what I do because I am what I am. And, I have been made new and clean and pure on the inside. And, God has worked a miracle in my heart, and God has worked a judicial miracle and a spiritual miracle. Imputed righteousness—a judicial miracle. He says, "Put righteousness on his account. Forget all of his sins; they are blotted out. He is righteous as my Son is righteous." And then, implanted righteousness—He puts His righteousness into me, and then the love of God begins to come out of me. And, it is no longer "*I, but Christ [that] liveth in me.*" (Galatians 2:20)

## Conclusion

¶ Let me just tell you this story. A man dreamed, so I'm told, of the gates of heaven, and there were people who were trying to get into heaven. Someone knocked at the gate of heaven, and a voice from within said, "Who is it that seeks entrance into heaven, and what is the password?" And, the man at the pearly gates said, "I am a righteous man, a moral man." And, He said, "What is the password into heaven?" He said, "Honesty." And, the voice from within said, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity. I never knew you." Another knocked at the gate of heaven, and the voice within said, "Who is it that seeks entrance into heaven, and what is the password into heaven?" And, the man at the gate said, "I am a religious man." And, He said, "And, what is the password into heaven?" And, he said, "Ritual and religion." And, the voice within said, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity. I never knew you." Another knocked at the pearly gate, and the voice within said, "Who is it that seeks entrance into heaven, and what is the password?" And, this man said, "I am a humanitarian." He said, "What is the password into heaven?" He said, "Love, charity." And, the voice within said, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity. I never knew you." At last there came one other, and he knocked at

the gate. And, the voice within said, “Who is it that seeks entrance into heaven, and what is the password?” This man said, “In my hand no price I bring. Simply to thy cross I cling.” And, the voice within said, “Open wide the gate, and let him in, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”†

That’s what our Lord meant when He said to the moralists, to the religionists, and to the humanitarians, “*Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*” (Matthew 5:20) Our Lord is not against these other things. He’s not against religion—if it’s His religion. He’s not against morality. He’s not against love. He’s not against the keeping of the commandment that says, “*Thou shalt not kill.*” (Exodus 20:13) He’s very much for it. But, what God is saying, my dear friend, is *the heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart.* And, the only answer to that is the new birth, the righteousness of God that is imputed and implanted when we are saved.†

# Priorities Are Important

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** May 23, 1999

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 5:23–24; 6:25–33; 7:1–5; 12:24–29; 23:25–26

*“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”*

MATTHEW 6:33

## Outline

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- I. Fellowship Before Worship
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  - A. Worry Is Needless
  - B. Worry Is Senseless
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- III. Purity Before Ministry
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Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take your Bibles and turn to Matthew chapter 5? And, when you’ve found that place, just hold it there and look up because we’re going to stay in the Gospel of Matthew, and it will help you very much tonight if you will keep your Bible open to the Gospel of Matthew.

¶ I heard about a man who went into a pet store, and he’d always wanted a parakeet. And, he saw that a parakeet was on sale for only twenty-five dollars, and the parakeet was guaranteed to talk. The man thought that was a bargain. He bought the parakeet and took it home and waited a day, and two days, three days—the parakeet never uttered a word. The man went back to the pet store, and he said, “I thought you said that the parakeet could speak.” “Well,” he said, “he does speak. But,” he said, “you know, he always first gets on the little swing and swings before he speaks. Don’t you have a little swing?” He said, “No.” He said, “Well, here’s a little swing. It costs ten dollars. You need a little swing for the parakeet because he swings before he speaks.” And so, the man bought the swing and went back. The bird still didn’t speak. He came



back to the pet store, and he said, “The bird is still not saying a word.” He said, “Well, you know, he always swings and then looks in the little mirror before he speaks. Don’t you have a little mirror?” He said, “No, you didn’t say anything about a little mirror.” He said, “Well, there’s a little mirror that we have here. It costs fifteen dollars, and you need a little mirror.” And so, the man bought the little mirror, went back, waited a while, and came back. He said, “The parakeet still has not said a word.” He said, “You mean that he sits on the swing and swings, and looks in the mirror, and pecks the bell, and then doesn’t say anything?” He said, “What do you mean ‘pecks the bell’?” “Oh, he always pecks the little bell before he speaks. You need a little bell. We have a little bell here for twenty dollars, and we’d like to have you have this little bell.” And so, the man bought the little bell and came back. And, after a while, he said, “Look, the parakeet has not said a word.” He said, “Do you mean that that parakeet sits on that swing, looks in that mirror, pecks that bell, and runs up and down the little ladder, and never says a word?” He said, “Little ladder?” He said, “Yes, you have to have a little ladder. He runs up and down the little ladder before he ever speaks.” And, the man begrudgingly spent some more money for a little ladder. After a while, he came back into the pet store, and the man said, “How is the parakeet?” He said, “The parakeet is dead!” He said, “Dead?” He said, “Yes, dead!” He said, “Well, did he ever speak?” He said, “Yes, he did speak.” He said, “What did he say?” He said, “Just before he fell over dead, he looked at me and said, ‘Don’t they sell any birdseed in that pet store?’”<sup>f</sup>

Priorities are important. Well, for the parakeet, birdseed is more important than a bell, a mirror, a ladder, or a swing. And, in life, many times we just don’t get our priorities straight. Let’s just imagine now that you could go way back into time before the world was ever created, and you are with God the Father in eternity past. And God, if we could speak in human terms, has a plan board out there, and He has a design out there. And, an angel is looking over His shoulder, and the angel says to God the Father, “What are you going to do?” And, God says, “I am going to make a man. This is my plan for a man.” And, the angel says, “Holy Father, why are you making a man? What is the purpose of a man? What are you going to use that man for? Why are you making him?” Now, God obviously had a purpose when He made man. You would agree, wouldn’t you? And, we need to understand what a purpose is for anything.

<sup>f</sup>For example, what did man make a pen to do? Well, that pen is to write. Now, this pen is a nice pen. I didn’t buy it, but somebody gave it to me. But friend, if this pen, whose purpose is to write, will not write, a twenty-cent Bic would be better than this pen. Is that not correct? A twenty-cent Bic that writes would be better than this pen if it doesn’t write, for the purpose of a pen is to write. And, if it won’t write, if it doesn’t do its primary function, then that pen is a failure.<sup>f</sup>

Now, if God had a purpose for you and you don't fulfill that purpose, what are you? Failure. You're a failure. No matter how nice you may look, if you do not fulfill the purpose that God created you for, you are a failure. Do you know what the word *sin* means? One of the Greek words for *sin* means "to miss the mark." It's the idea of archery. And, the archer pulls the bow and lets fly the arrow, and if the arrow misses the mark, that's the same word that is used for *sin*. It is "missing the mark." Now, you're not going to hit the mark if you don't even know what the mark is, if you don't ask yourself, "Why did God create me?" What did God have in mind when God made a man? We know what a man would have in mind if he made a pen, what a man would have in mind if he made an automobile. It would be transportation. What did God have in mind for you?

Now, I want to say this: that you will never experience genuine fulfillment until you fulfill the purpose for which you were created. You cannot be fulfilled unless you fulfill the purpose for which God made you. And, you can never have success, you'll always be a failure, if you do not fulfill that purpose. A pen is successful when it writes. An automobile is successful when it transports us. And, you're successful when you do that for which God made you.

Now, it is your purpose—understanding your purpose, why you were created—that will help you to prioritize to see what things are important and what things are not important. Many of you young people here are graduating. And, you're getting out of school, and you're facing life. And again, fulfillment—again, success—is finding out what God had in mind, what God wants to be in first place.

In our Baptist churches, we talk a lot about being saved—and well we might, for the Bible says, "*The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost.*" (Luke 19:10) That's why Jesus came—to save us. But, what did He save us for? You see, most of us are interested in what He saved us *from*. We say, "We're saved from hell." No, what did He save you *for*?

¶ Now, what is the purpose of an automobile? The purpose of that automobile is transportation. Well, if the automobile is wrecked, or if the automobile, for whatever reason—the engine, or the drive train, or whatever—it doesn't work, you bring it into the shop, and they repair it. They fix it. They put it back. Now, when they repair it, they fix it and they put it back. Then, what does that mean? Is it just to sit there? No, it is repaired. It is restored. It is put back as it was so that it can do what it was made to do to begin with. So many people, all they think about in their salvation is what they've been saved *from*—the wreck—not what they're saved *for*, which is God's purpose for them.¶

So what you need to understand is that God has a purpose for your life. God has some things that He wants to be in first place.

Now, we're going to look in the Gospel of Matthew, and we're going to find five times

where our Lord tells us to put first things first. And, if you don't put first things first, they're not going to work. And really, the Christian life is not that complicated, but while it is not that complicated, it is very precise in what it says. Now, here are five things that I want us to learn how to put first. Are you ready?

## I. Fellowship Before Worship

Turn, first of all, to Matthew chapter 5, and look, if you will, in verses 23 and 24. Jesus here is speaking of worship, and He is warning us about being out of sorts and out of fellowship with a brother or a sister while we worship. And so, He says in verse 23: *"Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way"*—now, here it is. Underscore this if you don't mind marking in your Bible. It's marked in mine. Mark it in yours—*"first"*—first, first—*"be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."* (Matthew 5:23–24) Now, we're talking about priorities here. And, what is the priority here? It is fellowship before worship. Write it down: "My priority is fellowship before worship."

Now, I quoted to you a scripture a while back that said, *"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"* (Psalms 133:1) The devil knows that, and he wants to sow discord in the rank of the redeemed. The devil knows that no Christian can be right with God if he is willingly and consciously wrong with his brother. There is a lot of worship on Sunday morning and Sunday nights that is vain and that God does not accept. You may give your money—you may have put money in the plate this morning or tonight, but God did not accept it. You may pray, but God did not hear your prayer. You may sing, but God was not pleased with your music. Why? Because you were not reconciled to your brother. You willingly and deliberately would not go and endeavor to make it right. And so, fellowship comes before worship. That is God's priority.

Notice it doesn't say, "If you have something against someone else, go and see him." If you bring your gift to the altar and remember there that your brother has aught against you, you go and first be reconciled to your brother. Is there someone that you have wronged? Is there someone that thinks you have wronged them? God's goal, God's plan, is not to prove who's right or wrong; God's plan is the reconciliation of His children.

Now, let's think a little bit about priorities. Now, you're in church. You look holy. You look very sanctified. And, don't answer these questions out loud, but is there somebody who has something against you? Is there an unjust debt that you owe, something you've not paid? Are there harsh words and criticism that you've made against someone that you've not put right? Is there gossip that you've spread? Is there any duty

to someone else that you've neglected? Have you wronged somebody, and you sit in church tonight? Now, it seems strange for a preacher to say this, but, you know, you don't have a right to make an offering and to give that offering to God if you're not right with somebody else. That's what Jesus said: "Before you make your offering, before you come to bring your gift to the altar," He said, "you leave your gift." (Matthew 5:23–24)

Now, this is very important. He doesn't say, "Spend it." He says, "Leave it." (Matthew 5:24) Why do you leave it? Because it's tainted money: *'t ain't yours*. It belongs to God. It's tainted. You can't offer it, but you can't keep it. You leave your gift there at the altar. Then, you go make it right with God and right with your brother, and then you come and offer your gift to God. You go make it right. That is a priority. None of us should ever, ever, ever come to church to worship God—never—when we have aught in our heart against someone else or know that someone else has aught against us and we have not endeavored to make it right. So, first priority of these five: first fellowship and then worship. Who said that? Jesus.

## II. The Spiritual Before the Material

All right. Now, let's look at the second priority. Turn to Matthew chapter 6 and verse 33—Matthew chapter 6 and verse 33. Here are the words of Jesus: "*But seek ye*"—what's the next word?—"first"—"*seek ye first*"—"the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6:33) What's the second priority that all of us need to remember? First the spiritual and then the material. "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God*"—the spiritual—"and all these things"—the material—"shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6:33)

Now, this is a great and a wonderful verse. Most of us don't believe this. An old, old saint one time had a habit of taking her Bible and marking the good verses. And, the real good verses, she'd put "T&P" by them in the margin. Somebody asked her, "What does 'T&P' mean?" She said, "That means 'tried and proven.'" This is one that is tried and proven. Now, if you have not tried it and have not proved it, don't say it is wrong, because it is not Adrian, it is Jesus Christ Himself, who said, "*[You] seek...first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things [will] be added unto you.*" (Matthew 6:33)

Now we, in America, just have things so out of whack. Do you know what we do? We worship our work; we work at our play, and then we play at our worship. And, we wonder why it doesn't work out. We worship our work. That's number one to most people. I mean that if people had to make a choice between the two, they would say, "Well, my job comes first. After all, a man's got to live." No, he doesn't; he's got to die. But they—we—worship our work. And then, we work at our play. It is amazing what

people are doing today to try to have a good time. Have you ever seen anybody ever try to have a good time working at it? So, we work at our play, and then we play at our worship. We don't really put our Lord first and seek first the kingdom of God. And, do you know what the fruit of seeking things first rather than God first is? It is simply worry. Just back up here before verse 33, and let's go look in verse 25. Jesus says in verse 25: *"Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life"*—now the word *thought* here is not talking about a happy-go-lucky person, but it's talking about anxious thought; it's talking about worry. And, our Lord is saying—*"Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat"*—that is, "food"—*"and the body than raiment?"* (Matthew 6:25)—or "clothing." Now, these are the things that He's talking about in verse 33. Look at them here in this verse. He's talking about things: eating, drinking, clothes. He's saying these are the things that so many of us worry about.

### **A. Worry Is Needless**

Now, let me tell you something about worry. Anybody here worry? Don't lift your hand. Number one, according to verse 25: because of warped priorities. And, the best thing you can say about it is it is needless—because Jesus said, "Don't do it." And, if Jesus said, "Don't do it," then you don't need to do it.

### **B. Worry Is Senseless**

But secondly, not only is it needless; it is absolutely senseless. Look in verse 26: *"Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and yet your heavenly Father feedeth them"*—notice the logic of Jesus—*"Are ye not much better than they?"* (Matthew 6:26) Now, what's He talking about? He's saying, "The little birds, they don't worry. They don't. They're not farmers. They don't plant. They don't sow. They don't reap. But, God takes care of them." Inference: What farmer would feed his chickens and starve his children? What Heavenly Father will take care of the birds of the air and not take care of His children?

### **C. Worry Is Useless**

Worry—verse 25—is needless. Verse 26: It is senseless. Verse 27: It is useless. Look in verse 27: *"Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?"* (Matthew 6:27) That is, if you're not tall enough—you want to be 6'2" and you're 6'1"—can you worry yourself an inch taller? What Jesus is saying is worry doesn't do any good. It is absolutely useless. It never solved a problem. It never dried a tear. It never lifted a burden. It's absolutely useless. There are two kinds of things you should never worry about. You want to tell you what they are? The things you can't do anything about—that's the first kind. The second kind is the things you can do something about.

Only two things you should never worry about. I mean, if you can't do anything about it, why worry about it?

*For every evil under the sun,  
There is a remedy or there is none.  
If there be one, seek 'til ye find it;  
If there be none, never mind it.*

Just don't worry about the things that you can't do anything about; don't worry about the things you can do something about—either one. Jesus is teaching that it is useless to worry. Now, some of you don't believe it's useless to worry. Like a little old lady said, "Don't tell me worry doesn't do any good. Most of the things I worry about never happen."

#### **D. Worry Is Faithless**

Now, not only is it useless, but look in verse 30—it is faithless. Listen to what Jesus said, "*Wherefore*"—verse 30—"*if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?*" (Matthew 6:30) Do you know what worry is? Worry is a wound in the heart of God. It is a wound in the heart of God. It the opposite of faith. Worry is faith turned inside out. Why, how it must grieve God when we worry!

† When our children were little, suppose I came into the house and I see my little children in the corner whining and crying and sniffing, and I say, "Darlings, what's wrong?" and they say, "We're just afraid, Daddy, that we're not going to have a place to sleep tonight. We're afraid, Daddy, we're not going to have anything to eat tonight. We're afraid, Daddy, that somebody is going to come into the house and carry us away and snatch us away. We are afraid, Daddy." How would that make me feel as a father? I'd say, "Children, don't worry. Daddy will get us something to eat, and Daddy will watch over us. And, Daddy's going to give us a place to sleep tonight, and Daddy won't let anybody hurt you." I'm a human father, and I would do my best. But, the truth is that it's possible that I could fail to give them food to eat. The truth is it is possible that I could have failed to protect them. Is that not right? But folks, do you think that God is not able? I mean, when we're in the corner sniffing and crying, it would make me feel terrible as a father to see my children doing that, because I would say, "My children don't think I'm able." You see, worry dishonors God. It is a wound in the heart of God. It is absolutely faithless.†

#### **E. Worry Is Pagan**

And then, last of all, friend, it's pagan. Look, if you will, in verse 31. Jesus says, "*Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or,*

*Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (for after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things”—and now, come back to our verse—“But seek ye first the kingdom of God”—“first the kingdom of God”—“and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Matthew 6:31–33)* Worry is because you have your priorities wrong—you have your priorities wrong. That’s what worry is. It’s just that you have tried to put things first and God second, and God will not work in second place.

### **III. Purity Before Ministry**

Now, let me give you a third priority. We’re talking about “The Power of Proper Priorities,” fulfilling the function for which God made us. Turn to Matthew chapter 7 now—we’re just in the book of Matthew—Matthew chapter 7, and read with me verses 1 through 5. Jesus says, *“Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite”—* now, underscore this word right now—*“first”—*first, first—*“cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye.”* (Matthew 7:1–5) Third priority: purity before ministry.

Now, this is a verse that has been twisted and misappropriated. Many people think that our Lord is telling us not to judge. No, the Bible commands us to judge. The Bible says, *“Judge righteous judgment.”* (John 7:24) He’s not saying not to judge. For example, I stopped reading in verse 5. Look in verse 6: *“Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.”* (Matthew 7:6) You’re going to have to know who the hogs and the dogs are, aren’t you? I mean, you’re going to have to have some discernment. He’s not talking about failing to discern; what He is talking about is being a hypocrite when you judge. Look at verse 5: *“Thou hypocrite…”* (Matthew 7:5) What is a hypocrite? A hypocrite is somebody who is trying to put ministry before purity. It can’t be done. First purity and then ministry. What our Lord is saying is, “You cannot minister and get sawdust out of somebody else’s eye when you’ve got a saw log in your own eye.” That’s what He’s talking about—a crosstie in your own eye. He doesn’t say not to pick the speck of your brother’s eye. He just says don’t do it when you’ve got a log in your own eye, because if you do, you’re going to poke out your brother’s eye because you’re not going to be able to see what is in your brother’s eye.

But, you see, there’s something about the sins of a hypocrite that blinds him. That’s terrible, if you’ve ever seen these people carrying around a load of sin and trying to find

fault in other people and they think they're perfectly fine.

*Faults in others I can see.*

*But, praise the Lord, there are none in me.*

There are people like that. Every now and then people come to me and say, "Pastor, do you know there are some hypocrites in the church?" I say, "Oh? Hypocrites in the church?" Yes, there are. There were in Jesus' day. There are in our day. They're all around us. Sometimes they stand in the pulpit.

What is our Lord saying? Our Lord is saying there is a power in proper priorities. First purity and then ministry. I don't say this self-servingly, but I would be absolutely petrified—petrified—to stand up here and preach with unconfessed, unrepented-of sin in my heart and in my life. I would be frightened to do that. You say, "Aren't you wonderful!" No, that's not wonderful. That's normal. That's natural. That's what a Christian is supposed to be. Purity before ministry. Wherever it is, with whomever you are, we're to be pure.

Now, it doesn't mean we're not to help our brothers. We're to minister. If somebody has sawdust in their eye, let's help get it out. Galatians chapter 6, verse 1: "*Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness*"—but now, listen to this—"*considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*" (Galatians 6:1)

#### **IV. Binding Before Loosing**

Now, let's move on. Let me give you a fourth powerful priority—understanding why God created us, why God saved us, how God expects us live. Turn to Matthew chapter 12. We're just going through the book of Matthew here. Turn to Matthew chapter 12, and let's begin reading in verse 24. Now, what has happened is there was a demon-possessed man, and this man was blind and dumb. And, Jesus had delivered this man from the power—the awesome power—of Satan. He'd set him free. And, the Pharisees were there. These Pharisees, in whose heart the milk of human kindness had curdled, they began to criticize and to carp and to find fault because the people were turning to Jesus and turning from them. And so, they tried—they could not deny the miracle, so they tried to explain it away. And, in verse 24 we read: "*When the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils*"—the lord of the flies, grotesque god of the Phoenicians, the god of filth. And, that was their way to designate and describe Satan. Look in verse 25—"*And Jesus knew their thoughts*"—hey, folks, He knows yours, too; I mean, right now—"*Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: and if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?*"—what



Jesus is saying is, “What you’re saying is not logical.” It, very plainly, it is, well, I’m not going to use the word. My wife told me not to call anybody stupid. It’s stupid. I said it. Jesus says, “This doesn’t make sense.” And then, notice in verse 27—*“And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you”*—now, notice verse 29—*“Or else how can one enter into a strong man’s house, and spoil his goods”*—now, watch it very carefully—*“except he first”*—first, first—*“bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.”* (Matthew 12:24–29) The fourth priority: the binding before the loosing.

Now, we all know individuals who’ve been taken captive by Satan. And, we’re trying to get them back, and we’re trying to set them free without first of all binding the strong man who has kept them captive. You see, how did Jesus deliver this man who was demon-possessed? The answer is in verse 29. Jesus bound the strong man. Who is the strong man in this analogy that Jesus is using? The strong man is Satan himself. Jesus realized that His battle was not with flesh and blood, for the Bible teaches—and Jesus knew it—that *“we wrestle not [with] flesh and blood, but [with] principalities, [and] powers...[and] spiritual wickedness in high places.”* (Ephesians 6:12) And, Jesus said this man was taken captive, this man that was both blind and dumb. Not all blindness or all speech impediment is caused by demonic activity, but some is. This was. And, Jesus said, “This man is taken captive; and I have to go into this strong man’s house, and I have to bring this captive out of the strong man’s house.”

Now, how is Jesus going to do that? Is Jesus going to sneak into the house under cover of darkness as a sneak thief? Is that how He’s going to rob the strong man’s house? No. You cannot sneak up on Satan in the darkness. He is the prince of darkness. You’re not going to sneak up on him in the darkness. You’re not going to come as a cat burglar. You know how you’re going to take somebody from Satan? Strong-armed robbery! You’re going to go in there with might, and you’re going to say to that strong man, “I’m going to put you in chains and leave you there while I take this captive free and take him out.” That’s what Jesus said. Verse 29: “How can you rob a strong man’s house, except ye first bind him?” (Matthew 12:29)

Now folks, the problem with many of us is this: we get our priorities wrong. We think that somehow the answer is education, or environment, or lecture, or psychology, or psychiatry. The devil fears none of these things. He doesn’t fear all of them put together. The answer is he must be bound. You say, “Well, pastor, I don’t have the power to do it.” Well, I’m glad you admit it. I don’t have the power to do it either, but that doesn’t mean that we’re powerless.

You’re in Matthew 12; turn to Matthew 18, and look with me here for just a moment in verses 18 through 20. Our Lord here is talking about prayer: *“Verily I say unto you,*

*whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven*—the Greek construction is “whatever ye bind on earth shall have already been bound in heaven”—“and *whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall [have already been] loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*” (Matthew 18:18–20) Who does the binding? Who does the loosing? God has done it in heaven. Because God has done it in heaven, we can do it on earth. God has given us power here.

You know, many of us have loved ones who have been bound, taken captive, by Satan. Can we set them free? Well, yes, we can indeed. So many times our prayers are in the wrong direction. We’re praying at them when we really need to be praying against the strong man and binding the strong man—binding Satan in the name of Jesus. Does that mean, therefore, that I can pray in faith and guarantee that somebody else is going to be saved? No. God gives them a will. Now, I’ll never be able to superimpose my will upon their will, but I’ll tell you what it does mean: it does mean that while my prayers do not force them to be saved, my prayers do free them to be saved. My prayers bind the power that holds them in darkness. And, as 2 Corinthians 4:4 says, “*The god of this [age]*”—“*the god of this world*”—“*hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.*” (2 Corinthians 4:4) But, so many times we get our priorities wrong. And, we’re trying to set the captives free, and we haven’t bound the strong man.

And folks, whether you realize it or not, the church of the living God is at war today with Satan, and we need to learn something about warfare prayer. We need to learn something about taking authority over the prince of darkness. And, our Lord Jesus is telling us that there is a priority here.

## **V. The Inside Before the Outside**

Now, here is the fifth of these priorities that I want us to look at tonight, and all of these are from the Gospel of Matthew. Turn to Matthew chapter 23, beginning in verse 25. Jesus is talking to the religious of His day, and He says, “*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are*”—the cup, the platter—“*full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse*”—what’s the next word? “*First*”—“*Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.*” (Matthew 23:25–26) Evidently, the way men do dishes hasn’t changed for two thousand years. Jesus said, “These guys, they’re supposed to be doing the dishes, and all they’re doing is wiping off the outside of the dish and putting them back up in the cabinet.” Inside is all of this grime, and filth, and so forth.

Now, what is our Lord saying? Our Lord is saying that in living the Christian life and fulfilling the purpose that He created us for there has to be a priority. And, what is the fifth of these five powerful priorities? First the inside; then the outside. That's the last priority I want to mention: first the inside and then the outside.

Now, how does the world do it? The world has their priorities backward. The world tries to change men by starting on the outside and working toward the inside. The world has the idea that if you can take man out of a bad environment and put him in a good environment, you're going to change the man. Question: Where did man get in trouble to begin with? In the Garden of Eden. Now, you can't get a better environment than that. As Dwight L. Moody used to say, "You cannot purify the water by painting by pump." It has to come from the inside. *Man needs a birth, not a bath.* He needs to be saved. He needs to be born again. He needs to be regenerated. You see, God works from the inside out. Man, with his twisted priorities, works from the outside in. And, by the way, this is the secret of learning victory. It's to work on the inside. When you get the inside right, the outside follows. But, you'll never work from the outside in.

† I think I've used this illustration before, but if you'll notice the trees in your yard, when the fall of the year comes, the leaves come off the trees. At a certain time they'll begin to turn different colors, and then they finally turn brown; and then, they shrivel a little bit. And then, we get one of those nor'easters; and the wind blows, and the leaves just fall. But, if you go out in your backyard, or front yard—wherever that tree is—you'll notice there are particular kinds of trees that all the leaves don't fall off of. The leaves just kind of droop, and they just hang there. And, they will hang there all winter. And, when do those leaves fall? In the spring! In the spring! And, you know, do you know what causes those leaves to fall? It is the new life that is coming on, and it's the new life that just pushes those leaves off.

I've seen people give their hearts to Christ, and a lot of leaves will fall. But, they still have some old habits, some old language, some old way of thinking. Do you know what they need to do? Just put their roots down deep in the soil of God's Word, and absorb the strength and the life of Jesus, and springtime will come to their soul. And, those leaves fall off because they're being pushed off by the new life that's in Christ. First the inside and then the outside.†

## Conclusion

Go back to the question to begin with: Why did God make you? Friend, God had in mind a man, a woman. What did God have in mind? Well, He said He wanted someone to serve Him. Do you really believe that? That's why He made you—to serve Him? Well, friend, He'd have been a lot wiser if He'd just kept on using the angels. They serve Him a lot better than we do. Now, yes, we ought to serve the Lord, but that's not why He

made us. Friend, He made us to know Him and to love Him, and He wanted to love us and fellowship with us. And, all of these other things still come and get in line behind that main thing: to know Him, and to love Him, and to have fellowship with Him. And, do you know where that begins? Listen to me carefully: that begins when you repent of your sin and receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

I did that as a teenage boy. And, when I gave my heart to Jesus and got it settled, a river of peace started to flow in my soul, and it's flowing there right now tonight. And, if I could give my heart to Jesus on your behalf, I would, I guess. I say, I guess I would. I don't know whether I would or not. It would rob you of the joy. I can't anyway. I can't anyway. I've preached as best I know how. You, right now, can receive Christ and be saved. And, the Lord Jesus tonight—listen to me on the back row—He will save you tonight, He will save you instantly, and He will keep you saved eternally if you'll trust Him.†

# The Power of Proper Priorities

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: January 3, 1982**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 5:23–24**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Be Reconciled to Your Brother
- II. Seek First the Kingdom of God
  - A. Worry Is Needless
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Conclusion

## Introduction

Thank you so much. Take your Bibles please and turn to the Gospel of Matthew chapter 5. Everyone has been very solicitous about my voice, and I appreciate that. I got some post-nasal drip last Sunday, and I preached vociferously three times in a row Sunday morning, and that did my voice in for last Sunday night. I so appreciate Tom Clayton, Jr., who preached in my stead and obviously did a better job than I would have done. And we just praise the Lord for that great message and anointing that God gave to our dear brother. But then in the meanwhile I've gotten both feet back in the stirrups and preached Wednesday night guardedly, and then Thursday, and then three times this morning, and then had a deacons meeting this afternoon. So I believe we'll make the message—I'm sure to your delight—short and sweet tonight.

So let's look in Matthew chapter 5. Actually, our sermon title is "The Power of Proper Priorities." I was thinking again that this the first Sunday of the New Year. So I thought we would think about some first things tonight. And I took my concordance and studied the Book of Matthew and found how Matthew has an unusual way of emphasizing the sayings of Jesus that deal with putting first things first. Now next Sunday night, God willing, and if the Rapture hasn't come, and we're all able to come, next Sunday night we want to bring our concluding message in the series on the Book of Revelation.

You know, for it seems like since Hector was a pup, we have been dealing with the Book of the Revelation, and for one reason or another various things have come along, and so we want to deal next Sunday, God willing, with the twenty-second chapter of the Book of the Revelation.

And then I am very excited about some new theories that I want us to study together. I want us to study together the life of David in the Old Testament. It's been a blessing to my heart as I've been studying David. We're going to be looking together at the life of David. And also in the Gospel of John—we're going to be studying together the Gospel of John. I think that will be a good series from the Old Testament. And then again from the New Testament.

And then on Wednesday evening—we're going to be looking on Wednesday evening at contemporary issues: challenges to the cross, challenges to Christianity. We're going to be studying what the Bible teaches about such subjects as abortion, and homosexuality, and evolution, and church and state, and pornography, and gambling, and divorce, and all of these modern-day issues. And we're going to try to hold up the Word of God and find what saith the Word of God on these issues.

And I'm excited about our study together on these issues. We'll be delving into the Word of God on Sunday morning, and Sunday evening, and Wednesday evening. And I want you to make it your prayer and your resolution that you'll be a part of these studies, and that you'll come with a hungry heart, and with a smile on your face, and a friend by your side, and a prayer in your heart, and that we will be together the church that our Lord Jesus Christ wants us to be.

But tonight let's be thinking for just a few moments about "The Power of Proper Priorities." You know, most of our New Year's resolutions go in one year and out the other. We make them, and then after a while we fail. And I think perhaps it's because we make too many or perhaps we make them lightly. I'm not against making New Year's resolutions. I'm frank to confess to you that I make them every year. And as I looked back at the end of this year, I found out that I didn't do so good. I don't know how you did, but I didn't do so good. I made some progress, but I really didn't live up to my expectation. So I'm starting all over again. God's given me a brand spanking New Year.

But one of the things that I'm trying to do in my New Year, and I'd like to encourage you to do in your New Year, is to put first things first—to put first things first—just to get your priorities right. Really, that's about all that living the Christian life is. I mean, when you get down to it and analyze it—I've been thinking about it—it is primarily a matter of getting your priorities in line: proper priorities.

Now I want you to notice in the Gospel of Matthew—and we're going to stay primarily in the Gospel of Matthew—I want you to notice five powerful priorities that I

think would be good for us, all of us, to set as our priorities for the coming year.

## **I. Be Reconciled to Your Brother**

First of all—first of all—I want us to look in Matthew chapter 5, verses 23 and 24—Matthew chapter 5, verses 23 and 24: *“Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way;”*—now here’s our word; underscore it—*“first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer your gift”* (Matthew 5:23–24). First be reconciled to thy brother. Our first priority is to make certain that our fellowship is right with our brother before we endeavor to worship God: first your fellowship with your brother, and then your worship.

The Lord Jesus said if you come to church on some Sunday and you’re ready to put your tithe in the offering plate, and there you think and you consider, and there is a breach in fellowship between you and some brother or sister in the family of God, that you ought not to make that offering. You ought to just leave that offering. As a matter of fact, you ought to leave the worship service. Maybe some of you will get up and go before I’m finished preaching. You ought to just leave the worship service. Go find your brother. First be reconciled to your brother, and then make your offering.

Because you see, there’s a lot of what I want to call wasted worship. I mean you come to church on Sunday and you sing, but it doesn’t please God. You pray, but it gets no higher than the chandelier. You give, but God doesn’t accept it. Why? Because there is a biblical teaching that no man can be right with God who is consciously wrong with his brother. No man can be right with God who is consciously wrong with his brother.

And the Lord Jesus said if you come to church now and you’re getting ready to make an offering, and there the Holy Spirit reminds you that there is something between you and one brother or sister in this church, leave your offering. And I like that. That’s so wise of the Lord Jesus. He said, “Leave it.” Now the church can’t take it, but you can’t take it either. It’s tainted money. ’Taint ours, ’taint yours. You just leave it. Maybe we ought to have a special box, a fund somewhere where we just hold it in escrow. It can’t be spent. This man’s not right with God. He can’t spend it either. But just leave your money. First go and be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and make your offering.

Now notice it doesn’t say that if you’ve got something against somebody else, go see them. Now Matthew chapter 18 deals with that. But we’re in Matthew chapter 5, and this says it is if somebody has something against you. Or is there somebody who thinks they have something against you? Then you should go to them.

Is there somebody, who so far as you know is harboring ill feelings toward you? Go to them and seek a reconciliation. I want you to stop right now. Are there people holding

things against you? Somebody that you've offended? Somebody that you've wronged? Some debt that you haven't paid? Some harsh words that you've spoken? Some duty that you've failed to fulfill? Somebody that you wounded, hurt, slighted, overlooked? Is there? Do you feel that that person is out of fellowship with you? I want you as a brother or sister in this church to honestly consider if there is anybody like that that you know of. As a matter of fact, if it weren't for the radio audience and this dead time, I would just stop right now and I'd just say let's stop right now and let's just take about three or four minutes, and let's make everybody think.

Boy, we hate to do that, don't we? It's easier to take notes than it is to think. And I'd just make us think. I'm praying that even as I'm preaching that God the Holy Spirit will enable you to be thinking about those that the Holy Spirit may be laying on your heart, someone who has ought against you. Before you sing, before you pray, before you teach, before you give, before you worship, the Bible says, first, first, first, first be reconciled to your brother, and then carry on your worship with Almighty God.

Now let me tell you something, friend. There is no offering on earth that can be a substitute for getting right with your brother—no offering on earth. The Lord just says, "Leave it there, and go and get right."

And make certain of your motivation when you go. What some people call burying the hatchet is just digging up more dirt. I mean they don't really go to get right; they just go to tell their brother why they were right all along, and why the brother was wrong all along. No. Listen. Just go to be reconciled to your brother. Listen. If there is anything that grieves my heart as a father, it is to see any of my children who are out of fellowship one with the other. I'm certain if there is anything that grieves the heart of our great God, it would be to see any of His children out of fellowship with one another.

I've said it before, that *the devil had rather start a church fuss than open a porno palace or sell a barrel of whiskey any day*, amen? He really had. Oh, "*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*" (Psalm 133:1). First be reconciled to your brother.

## **II. Seek First the Kingdom of God**

All right now, let me give you another priority here for the New Year. Look, if you will, please, in Matthew chapter 6 now and verse 33—the second of these powerful priorities that Jesus mentions in the Book of Matthew: "*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*" (Matthew 6:33). This is one of the great, great promises of the Bible. It is the kind of promise about which that little old lady put "t" and "p" in her margin: "tried and proven"—"tried and proven." "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added*



unto you.”

Now I spoke this morning of fear and worry. I want to tell you this verse is God’s cure for fear and it is God’s key for prosperity. Do you want to have a future free from fear? Do you want to have a prosperous New Year? This verse is God’s cure for worry and this verse is God’s key to prosperity. Do you know what much of our worry is? Plain and simply, just putting things first and God second—that’s all.

You see, God will not work in second place. He will not. I preached, you remember, last Sunday on putting Jesus first: *“That in all things he might have the preeminence”* (Colossians 1:18). He does not want a place in your life. He does not desire prominence in your life. He demands preeminence.

*“Seek ye first”*—seek ye first, seek ye first, seek ye first—*“the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.”* You say, “Why doesn’t Christianity work for me?” When all else fails, read the directions. Listen, friend. Matthew chapter 6, verse 33: *“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.”*

Are you really doing that? I mean, are you really? Modern Americans put things first and God second. Now the sin of worry is just another way of saying that things are first. Let’s back up. We’re in verse 33; let’s back up to verse 25. Let me tell you why you ought not to worry. Look here—Matthew chapter 6 and verse 25.

### **A. Worry Is Needless**

First of all, worry is absolutely needless. Look in verse 25—Jesus said, *“Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought”*—that literally means “take no anxiety”—*“for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than [food],”*—or *meat*—*“and the body than raiment?”* (Matthew 6:25). Now worry is needless, number one, because Jesus said we don’t have to worry. It is absolutely needless. We have His assurance that He will take care of us.

### **B. Worry Is Senseless**

But not only is it needless; it is senseless. Look in verse 26: *“Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?”* (Matthew 6:26). Now notice what Jesus is saying. Notice the logic. Your Father feeds the birds. Now He was talking to a farming people. Do you think there was a farmer who was listening to Him who would feed his chickens and let his children starve?

### **C. Worry Is Useless**

You see what He’s saying? He is saying that worry, number one, is needless; number two, that worry is senseless. Number three: He says that worry is useless. Look

in verse 27: *“Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?”* (Matthew 6:27). The best thing you can say about worry is that it does no good. Of course, the worst thing is that it does much harm. Worry is absolutely useless. It does no good at all. It doesn’t cure any problems. It doesn’t lift any burdens. It doesn’t wipe away any tears. It never has, it never can, it never will. Worry can’t make you any taller, can’t make you any shorter, can’t make you any fatter, can’t make you any thinner.

I reminded our staff in our staff meeting about the little lady who said, *“Don’t tell me worry doesn’t do any good. Most of the things I worry about never happen.”*

Oh, listen, friend. It is so senseless, and it is so, therefore, useless.

#### **D. Worry Is Faithless**

But go on. It is faithless. Look in verse 30, as we continue to read: *“Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?”* (Matthew 6:30). Worry is faithless. Worry is just the opposite of faith. Worry says, “Thou liest, O God,” when God says that He is going to take care of us.

#### **E. Worry Is Excuseless**

But since worry is so needless, and so senseless, and so useless, and so faithless, then worry is excuseless. Look, if you will, please, in verses 31 and 32: *“Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? Or, What shall we drink? Or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (for after all these things”—now watch it—“do the Gentiles seek:”* (Matthew 6:31–32). What Jesus is saying is worry is pagan. It is pagan. After these things do the Gentiles. And what He meant by Gentiles were the pagans who didn’t even know, who did not even believe. That’s the way an ungodly man lives.

He is so concerned about things, he puts things first and God second. And where you go hereafter depends upon what you go after here. You put things first, you’re going to go to hell. You put God first, you’re going to go to heaven. It’s just that plain.

*“After...these things do the Gentiles”—the pagans—“seek.”*

And so our Lord says, in this coming year, that first the spiritual, and then the material. Would you make up your mind to do that this coming year? Would you say, “My priority is to be in fellowship with my brother before I worship; secondly, my priority today is to be absolutely in spiritual fellowship with God so that I put the spiritual first and then the material”?

### **III. Cast the Beam Out of Your Own Eye**

All right now, the third thing I want you to see. Turn, if you will, please, to Matthew chapter 7, and let’s begin reading verse 1. Again we’re going to see a very powerful

priority. Jesus said, *“Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?”* Now notice our priority in verse 5: *“Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye”* (Matthew 7:1–5).

The word *beam* and the word *mote*, so far as I can tell, this is the only time in the New Testament either of these words are used. But the word *beam* means exactly what we think: “a beam, a log, a crosstie, a great big board, a plank.” And the word *mote* means, “a speck, a piece of dust,” sawdust perhaps. And what our Lord is showing is the ridiculousness of a man trying to help somebody else get a piece of sawdust out of his eye when that man has a crosstie, a log, in his own eye. Jesus here is speaking in extremes, what the Bible calls hyperbole. Of course, no one could literally have a log in his own eye, but he could have one spiritually. And that’s what Jesus is talking about.

Now there’s a lot of misunderstanding here in Matthew chapter 7. The Lord is not saying that we ought not to try to get a mote out of our brother’s eye. As a matter of fact, we ought. Listen, friend. If I’ve got something in my eye, and you help me get it out, I thank you for it. We ought to help one another. Listen. If somebody stumbles or somebody falls spiritually, we ought to help them get right. The Bible says in Galatians 6, *“Ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself”* (Galatians 6:1). So we’re to help one another, and we’re to correct one another. We’re to lovingly guide one another. But what the Lord is talking about is the folly of being a hypocrite and judging somebody else before we first of all take care of our own lives.

The key is verse 5: *“Thou hypocrite.”* There is something about the hypocrite that has sin in his own life, and he can never see the sin in his own life; all he can do is just simply see the sin in his brother’s life—there is something about the sin of the hypocrite that blinds him. “Faults in others I can see, but praise the Lord, there’s none in me.” That’s the way the hypocrite is. He’s just so arrogant; he’s just so proud. He is ridiculous. Don’t tell me Jesus didn’t have a sense of humor. He talks about people gagging at a gnat and swallowing a camel (Matthew 23:24). Now that’s exactly what He’s talking about right here. Can you see that guy gulping a camel down, the tail going right on down? I mean, Jesus had a tremendous sense of humor. And again I believe this one laid them in the aisles when he was talking about a guy here with a log in his eye going about to perform surgery on some poor fellow who’s gotten a speck of dust in his own eye.

How blind we are! And what Jesus is doing is saying, dear friend: Don’t be so

hardhearted. Don't be so faultfinding. Don't be such a critical person. Don't be such a hypocrite. He's not saying not to help your brother. He's saying, when you get the log out of your eye, you will see more clearly how to get the speck out of your brother's eye.

He's not saying, don't do it. He's saying, do it. But what is the log in our eye? What is this crosstie? What do you think it is? Do you think it is adultery or murder or something? No, no—not the crowd Jesus was talking to. If you knew the crowd that Jesus was talking to, He was talking to the Pharisees, and murder wasn't their problem. Adultery wasn't their problem. Sodomy wasn't their problem. Thievery wasn't their problem. Do you know what the log was that was in their eye? Pay attention, because some of you are liable to miss it also. The log that was in their eye was their attitude toward the speck that was in their brother's eye. The log that was in their eye was the attitude they had toward the speck that was in their brother's eye.

"I thank you, Lord, that I'm not as other men" (Luke 18:11). You see? That, my friend, is a worse sin than the sins of the flesh that so many people in that day were guilty of, but not the proud Pharisees. They were going around with a horrible, heinous, hurtful sin. And it was this: the sin of pride.

And God help us this coming year. There is one thing I don't want to pastor: it's a hardhearted church, a faultfinding church. I'm going to hold the standard up, and I'm going to preach the Word of God pure, plain, and powerful. And I'm not going to diminish it. But I want our church to be a church of love and openness, and I want the vilest and the deepest dyed in sin and the lowest and the most broken to come here and to know that they are loved. I don't care who they are and what they have done.

And God forbid that we should sit around here with arrogant pride trying to help other people because they are such great sinners. No, no, no, no—first ourselves; first judge ourselves. First consider our own heart. First get right with God. And then God will help us indeed to go about doing some sawdust removing from the eyes of these who need it so very much.

#### **IV. Bind Satan**

Let me give you another priority here. Look, if you will, in Matthew chapter 12, and let's begin in verse 22. The background of the verse that I'm going to read is that Jesus has healed a man that is blind and dumb. The Pharisees said that He healed this man by the power of Beelzebub, the prince of the devil. Now begin reading in verse 22, in Matthew chapter 12, and I'll read all the way through verse 29 so you can get the thought: *"Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he"*—that is, Jesus— *"healed him, insomuch that the blind and the dumb both spake and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?"* That

is a euphemism for the Messiah. “Is this not the Messiah?” *“But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out [demons], but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself cannot stand: and if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?”* But now notice verse 27, *“And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. Or else how can one enter into a strong man’s house, and spoil his goods,”*—now here’s our priority—*“except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house”* (Matthew 12:22–29).

What is this priority? Listen, friend. First the binding of Satan, and then the loosing of the saint. This man who was blind and dumb was blind and dumb because of the power of the devil. That shows us that the devil does have the power to physically afflict people. Of course, not everyone who is dumb or inarticulate has a demon. Not everyone who is blind is blind because he or she has a demon. But there is the power of the devil to blind—the power of the devil to paralyze vocal cords, and so forth.

And Jesus, when He entered into this conflict, Jesus knew that He was not in battle with flesh and blood. Jesus knew that He was in a battle with the devil himself. And Jesus explained how He was able to deliver this man from the kingdom of Satan. Jesus had gone into Satan’s kingdom. Jesus had gone into Satan’s palace. Jesus had gone right into Satan’s treasure house, and Jesus had robbed Satan. Satan looked at this poor demon-possessed man who was blind and dumb as one of his own dirty playthings, as one of his treasures, as one of his toys. This man belonged to Satan, and Jesus went right into Satan’s home and stole that man away. Jesus took him from Satan. He robbed Satan of his treasure.

But how did He do it? Under the cover of darkness? Did Jesus sneak into Satan’s kingdom? No. It was what we would call today armed robbery. It was a strong-armed robbery. Jesus went in, knocked on the door. Satan came. Jesus laid hands on him and bound him hand and foot, left him writhing on the floor, and walked in and took what He wanted, and walked out. That’s the way Jesus dealt with Satan. He bound Satan and then He spoiled his house.

Now how are we to deliver souls from the power of the devil today? Jesus tells us we must first bind the strong man; then we can rob his house. I’m afraid that many of us when we are praying for unsaved friends and neighbors are directing our prayers many times in the wrong way. We are saying, “O God, help them to see, help them to see.” And they are blind and they cannot see, for *“the god of this world hath blinded the minds*

*of them which believe not” (2 Corinthians 4:4), and what we need to do is to bind the blinder. Amen? What we need to do is to learn how that in our soul winning and all of these things we’re not in a battle with flesh and blood. “We wrestle not against flesh and blood” (Ephesians 6:12). We’re in the same battle that the Lord Jesus was in. We’re in a battle with Satan himself, and we will never rob his house until we first bind him.*

Now how are we going to bind him? Well, look in Matthew 18. You’re in Matthew 12, just turn to Matthew 18, and let’s look in verse 18. Jesus said, *“Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask,”*—that is, in prayer—*“it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:18–20).*

Jesus says that we can take the golden chains of His power and the cords of His love and His omnipotence and we can bind Satan with them. And we can take the key of faith and we can unlock the prison house of despair, and we can let souls go free. We can set them free, but not until we learn this thing of warfare. And when we get finished with the series that I mentioned to you, I’m working on a series on spiritual warfare, because friend, we’re in a battle. And we’d better learn that God has given to us the binding power and the loosing power: His power of attorney. And the same power that Jesus used in Matthew 12 He gave to the church in Matthew 18, and now we can bind, and now we can loose.

Are you picking up a theme that I found here in the Book of Matthew? Are you seeing what the Lord is saying? Are you seeing how powerful these priorities are? First of all, we must be right with our brother before we can worship. Secondly, we must put spiritual things before we put material things. And thirdly, ladies and gentlemen, as God’s people, we must first judge ourselves before we try to judge somebody else. And next, we must bind Satan before we try to loose sinners.

## **V. First the Inside, Then the Outside**

Now let me just give you one more of these priorities and we’ll be finished. Turn, if you will now, to Matthew chapter 23—Matthew chapter 23—and let’s look in verse 25. My voice is getting better. I think I’ll just go right on. Praise the Lord! All right, Matthew chapter 23 and verse 25. You can’t drink yourself sober, but you can preach yourself strong. All right, Matthew chapter 23 and verse 25: *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also” (Matthew*

23:25–26).

Here's one more powerful priority: first the inside, and then the outside—first the inside, and then the outside. Evidently the way men do dishes hasn't changed in over 2,000 years, you're saying. Here's the man who does dishes. He gets all these dishes and just gives them a wipe on the outside and puts them on the shelf. Who wants to eat out of dishes like that? They may look good on the outside, but they are filthy on the inside. And Jesus says, "Any good housekeeper knows that when you do dishes, first you clean the inside, and then you clean the outside."

Now what is He talking about? You see, when you just clean up the outside of your life, that's reformation; but when you clean up the inside of your life, that's regeneration. What Jesus is saying here to these Pharisees is they didn't need another bath; they needed a new birth. You see, when we try to help men what do we do, we always start on the outside. We think if we can start with environment and food and clothes and education that we will change the man. It cannot be done—it cannot be done.

Nazi Germany had food, clothing, education. They had it all. I mean, do you think really that the need of our world is just to spray enough money over its problems and they will all go away? Do you really think that man's problem is environmental? Not really. Friend, I want to tell you that it was in the Garden of Eden that man got in trouble in the first place. You're not going to have a better environment than that. I am not saying that we ought not to help, out of compassion, to change man's environment. If you think I'm saying that, you're wrong. But I'm saying, ladies and gentlemen, that *man needs more than soap and soup; he needs salvation. He needs a birth from above, not merely a boost from below.* And Jesus said this: first the inside, then the outside. Man says, first the outside, perhaps it will change the inside. Oh, what Jesus was saying to these Pharisees and what He has been saying to this generation is that man needs a divine change, an inner change, an inner cleansing.

Now in my backyard I have a number of trees and Joyce and I enjoy our breakfast and our dinner watching the leaves fall in the fall of the year. But there are certain trees in my backyard that hold their leaves. And I'm not talking about the evergreens. I'm talking about there are certain kinds of oak or whatever they are. Their leaves wither and they turn brown, but those trees hold their leaves until the spring. Do you have any like that? Those leaves don't fall. But you know what's going to happen this spring? That new leaf comes on, it's going to push that old leaf off.

And I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, that that's exactly what happens to your old habits and your old life when you find the Lord Jesus. That new life pushes that old life off. It is not a matter of plucking off this leaf and knocking off that leaf, brushing off that leaf. You'll never do it that way but of that new life in Christ when you receive Christ

and you are born again.

Have you been born again? Don't try to be good without being born again. Some of you may be sitting here thinking, "You know, Brother Rogers, there are some things in my life, and honest to goodness, Brother Rogers, when I get them all straightened out, I'm going to walk down that aisle and give my heart to Jesus." Friend, you'll wake up in hell and still won't have them all straightened out. Don't try to grow up before you get born. First the inside, then the outside.

## **Conclusion**

These are God's powerful priorities. And I want to make them my priorities for the coming year.



# Developing a Clean Thought Life

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** November 29, 1992

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 5:27–28

*“But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”*

MATTHEW 5:28

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Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and turn, please, to Matthew chapter 5. We’ve been on a journey throughout the Sermon on the Mount. The general title of this series is “Building on the Rock.” Today, we come to a very pertinent passage of Scripture—Matthew chapter 5, verses 27 and 28. Sunday before last, we spoke about verse 27. And now we move into verse 28. But I want to read both of them together: *“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”* (Matthew 5:27–28)

Now the Lord Jesus Christ is showing us here the heart of the problem. So what I want to speak to you about today is “Developing a Clean Thought Life.” Jesus Christ

points out that the great pollution problem is not in the air, or in our streams, or in our forests, or in our fields, but in our hearts, or minds, or souls. And to be happy, to be useful, we must be pure and we must be clean on the inside.

Now it's very important that you understand that it is what is in you that really counts. It has well been said that the child delights in what he has, a youth delights in what he does, and an adult delights in what he is. May that be true about us today—and especially those who are mature Christians. It is far more important to be something than it is to have something or to do something, and that thing that you are to do and to be is to be pure. You have got to change the inside before you can change the outside. It's what's on the inside that motivates you.

Vance Havner wrote a book called *The Hidden Persuaders*. And do you know what he said? He said more than ninety percent of the things that you buy, those purchases are based on emotion and impulse. Now that's an amazing thing—more than ninety percent. There is a hidden persuader that is on the inside. What you think determines what you do.

That's the reason that the biggest bunch of hypocrites in the world are these social scientists who tell us what a person sees does not affect them. If that is so, my dear friend, why will somebody pay one and a half million dollars for one minute of advertising in the Super Bowl? Would you pay 500,000 dollars for sixty seconds, if what people see does not affect what they do? Of course it does!

And Jesus knows that. And so our Lord here speaks about what happens on the inside. Now, my dear friend, we in America today have reached the bottom of the garbage can so far as pornography and solicitous materials is concerned. Madonna has recently released a \$49.95 book entitled, I think, *Sex*. It's a coffee table book, so I've heard. It has been said that it is something you put on your coffee table. More than 800,000 copies were released in the first printing; six languages; placed on the market.

James Dobson, our dear brother in Christ, who is the principal founder and speaker of Focus on the Family, said the Madonna book “is, without question, the most outrageous single event that has occurred in my lifetime...”—now that's not just anybody saying that: that's what James Dobson said—“the most outrageous single event that has occurred in my lifetime, with reference to teenagers especially.” “It is not just about airbrushed nudity,” Dobson said. “It's not just soft-core pornography... It's filled with perversions of the most explicit type...full frontal nudity cast in homosexual settings...sado-masochistic behavior with whips, knives, and chains...and clearly implied bestiality and pedophilia”—that is, sexual perversion with children. James Dobson said, “I am angry about those who are doing this to the younger generation.” Dobson noted that this book will be “seen by literally millions of kids” and will stir them “to do things that ultimately will destroy the family.” Dobson went on to say, “This is not just some

porno queen.” He notes that millions of youth will “imitate Madonna—she has such influence with them.”

This is the problem of what is in the heart and what is in the mind. And that is the reason the Lord Jesus said, *“Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”*

## **I. What Is Wrong with Pornography?**

Now, what is wrong with pornography?

### **A. Psychological Poison**

Well, number one: It is psychological poison. It poisons the mind. Dr. Victor Klein, who is professor of psychology at the University of Utah, said there are four steps in pornography—and this is how the devil gets a claw in somebody’s brain. First of all, there is an addiction effect. Pornography is addictive like a drug is addictive. The individual—and it’s almost always a male—gets hooked on pornography. But it moves from addiction to escalation. And what he means by that is, it takes, in time, more deviant behavior, more explicit materials, for the person to get his kicks. Just like a drug, he has to go deeper and deeper, and move into more hard drugs, as he moves into more hard-core pornography: first, addiction; then, escalation; and then, thirdly, the person is desensitized. Dr. Klein said, “What was originally shocking; what was seen originally as anti-social; what was seen originally as depressing, becomes now acceptable, and the person is no longer shocked, no longer offended, by this material.” That is the third step. And then, he says, the fourth step is this: Almost invariably, the individual is tempted, and many times does act out what he sees. Now he may try to act that out with his partner, his wife; sometimes, other members of his family; sometimes, his children; to engage in sexual activities, many of which are deviant.

### **B. Social Sickness**

It is psychological poison: first of all, addiction; then, escalation; and then, desensitization; and then, finally, dear friend, the acting out of this thing. But not only is it psychological poison; it is a social sickness. No less than a Harvard professor wrote a book in which he sees Americans as victims of a sex mania, and he says, as malignant as cancer.

Now there are those that will tell you, the eggheads will tell you, that pornography is a legitimate outlet to release tensions. Now if you believe that, you also believe, my dear friend, that you cure drug addicts with drugs; and you believe, dear friend, that you cure alcoholics with liquor; and you also believe that you put out a fire with gasoline. It is absolute nonsense to say such things.

Statistics tell us now that in America one out of every four baby girls will be sexually

abused by an adult male. One baby boy in ten will be sexually abused by an adult male. A trained policeman said this: “Not everyone who reads pornography is a sex deviant. But every sex deviant reads it.”

### **C. Domestic Damage**

Not only is there the psychological damage; not only is there the social damage; but, my dear friend, there is the domestic damage. Homes are being torn apart by this kind of thing. Dr. Robert J. Stoller, a psychiatrist, said this: “Hostility is the essential dynamic of all pornography.” God meant the sex act to express love between the man and his wife. And he uses that to show the great holy love of Christ toward us. And then Dr. Stoller said this: “If a man saturates his mind with pictures and stories of rape, torture, and murder in connection with sex, how is he likely to treat his own wife? What will he do to his children?” Any counselor can tell you the heartache, the devastation, to the home that has come through pornography. There is the domestic damage.

### **D. Spiritual Destruction**

But, my dear friend, the most important thing is the spiritual destruction that comes by pornography and lust. James chapter 1, verses 14 through 16: *“But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”* Then James said, *“Do not err, my beloved brethren.”* (James 1:14–16) This is why Jesus Christ said, *“Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”* It is something that brings spiritual death. When it gets into your heart, it’s going to be expressed one way or another.

## **II. How Can You Keep Your Mind Pure?**

Now people have tried all kinds of ways to be able to conquer lust. People have tried all kinds of ways to deal with this problem, because it is all around us. And, my dear friend, you cannot practice isolation, so you had better learn some kind of insulation, and you had better learn something that is going to protect you in this day when, as I have said, we have reached the absolute bottom of the garbage can. How can you keep your mind pure? Men have searched in caves and deserts, and remote islands and jungles and mountain peaks; they have sat, they have knelt, they have lain prostrate, they have swung from ropes, they have pierced themselves through with lances, they have endured all kinds of self-inflicted punishment, trying to get pure, trying to be pure, to no avail.

A little boy was asked to complete this proverb: “Cleanliness is next to...” He completed it this way: “Cleanliness is next to impossible.”

Well, maybe you feel that way. But, thank God, there is hope. The Lord Jesus Christ

would never have given such a warning had there not been a way to escape. Our Lord said, *“But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”*

Now having said that, I want us to leave the Sermon on the Mount and I want us to go to Psalm 119. And I want to show you from Psalm 119 how to do what Jesus says that you must do. And I want to give you three steps to keeping a pure heart. Now these are things that I have learned from the Word of God and tested by experience. Psalm 119, and I’m going to begin with verse 9. I want every dad to listen to this, because this is what you need to teach your son. I want every mother to listen to this. I want every teenager to listen to it. I want every grandparent to listen to it. We are dealing, my dear friend, with a very, very, very serious matter in America today. The battle today is for the mind, the heart, the soul—that is, the citadel. Now here is what David said in Psalm 119: *“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. Blessed art thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes. With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth. I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches. I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways. I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.”* (Psalm 119:9–16) Now, my dear friend, beyond any shadow of any doubt or peradventure, the subject here is how to have a clean thought life. Beyond any doubt, look in verse 9: *“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?”*

Now I want to give you three steps, and I pray God the Holy Spirit will etch these things upon your consciousness and upon your mind. If you don’t need them, somebody you know needs them. And if you’re not having a problem with sexual lust, you can apply what I’m going to say to the problem of anger, or pride, or gluttony, or any other kind of problem. The principle is the same. So, let’s see what our Lord has to say.

#### **A. Admit Your Problem and Get Clean**

Number one: Admit your problem and get clean. Look in verse 9: *“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?”* Now when he says his way has to be cleansed, that means that he knows that the way is dirty. He must cleanse his way. Now, look at the word *way*. Do you see it? *“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?”* Do you see the word *way* there? The Hebrew word here has the idea of a rut—like a rut in a dirty road. It’s a groove. It is something that is a groove in one’s mind. A person with a filthy mind has a groove in his mind; he has a one-track mind. He has a muddy rut in his mind. And his thoughts always run in that way, just like the wagon wheels get down in the rut in a road. That’s what he’s talking about. He has a way.

Now you have to admit that there is something there that is wrong. It may be pornography. Or you may not be using pornography. It may be some thought process. It may be lusting after some secretary in your office. It may be your neighbor's wife. Whatever it is—it may be some secret fantasy—but you must admit that you have this problem. If you don't admit that you have the problem, if you do have the problem, you are never, never going to get help. You must admit your problem, and then get clean.

Now God will never cleanse an excuse, and God will never cleanse an alibi, but God will always cleanse a sin. And you can be clean. You can be clean today. I don't care what your addiction has been. I don't care what your problem has been. I don't care what you've been looking at. I don't care what you've been thinking. I don't care what you've been feeling. I don't care what you have been doing. You today can be as clean as the driven snow by God's Word.

Now, listen: *"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to [the Word of God]."* The instrument of cleansing is the Word of God. Now, my dear friend, if you don't first of all get clean, you are never going to win the war. First of all, you must admit your problem and get clean. Jesus Christ said in John chapter 15 and verse 3, "You are clean. You are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." (John 15:3) And the word *clean* there is the word *katharos*. It is the word that we get *catharsis* from. Do you know what a catharsis is? A catharsis is a cleansing on the inside. Now Jesus will make you clean on the inside through His Word. "You are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you."

Now I want you just to picture today the cleansing tides of Calvary and the fresh breezes of the Holy Spirit just blowing through you and washing over you and making you absolutely clean. First John chapter 1 and verse 9 says this: *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all"*—not some, but all—*"unrighteousness."* (1 John 1:9) Every man, woman, boy, and girl here today can be absolutely, totally, perfectly, clean.

Imagine the Lord Jesus Christ coming into your temple and doing spring cleaning. Imagine the Lord Jesus Christ just coming in and cleansing your heart, your mind, your life; just cleaning it completely, and leaving it absolutely spotlessly, squeaky clean. Do you see? Before you can stay clean, you've got to get clean. There is no reason that anybody who's listening to me today should not be absolutely, totally, pure and clean, for 1 John 1:9 says, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

Have you ever cleaned your garage? Once or twice, anyway? Or the storage room, or whatever that room is that tends to accumulate all those things? And one Saturday you go out there and you put it all up, and you sweep it out, and you get it just right, and it looks just right. And once it gets clean, then it's so much easier to keep it clean. But if

it's not clean, then you just dump anything into it.

## **B. Affirm Your Purpose to Stay Clean**

Now that's what our Lord is saying here. First of all, you must get clean in order to stay clean. First of all, admit your problem. Say, "I do have a problem, Lord. I have a secret addiction. I have an inward moral impurity. It is there. I admit it is there. I know that I know that I know that your blood is sufficient. Your Word, your promises, the authority of God's Word will cleanse me and make me clean." That is step number one. If you don't take step number one, the rest of what I have to say will do you absolutely, totally, no good. Step number one: Admit your problem and get clean. Step number two: Affirm your purpose to stay clean. Admit your problem and get clean. Step number two: Affirm your purpose to stay clean. Look in verse 10: "*With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.*" (Psalm 119:10)

Now the scourge of the twentieth century is half-hearted Christians. My dear friend, if you don't get clean, then you're not going to stay clean. But you can get clean and not stay clean unless not only do you admit your problem, but you affirm your purpose. You say with all there is of you and in you; every inch, every ounce, every nerve, every fiber, every corpuscle; with your whole heart, you seek God. Look in verse 10: "*With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.*" Being halfhearted is an insult to God, and it does no good. There is a battle for your mind; and if you're halfhearted, you're going to lose it.

Listen to these verses. James chapter 1 and verse 8: "*A double minded man is unstable in all of his ways.*" (James 1:8) James 4, verse 8: "*Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.*" (James 4:8) Listen to this. I am talking about a whole heart now. Deuteronomy chapter 4 and verse 29: "*But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.*" (Deuteronomy 4:29)

Have you ever made up your mind, young man, that you're going to get clean and stay clean? I mean, have you ever said, "I will, by the grace of God"? In Daniel chapter 1 and verse 8, the Bible says, "*Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself.*" (Daniel 1:8) Have you ever purposed in your heart? Have you ever said, "With my whole heart I am determined; by the grace of God I am determined I will not behave this way"? The Bible says in Job chapter 31 and verse 1—Job speaking, and he said—"I have made a covenant with my eyes. Why then should I look upon a maid?" (Job 31:1) What Job did was this. He said, "I have determined; I made a covenant with my eyes, I'm not going to do it."

I want to tell you, I travel a lot. I go into hotel rooms and motel rooms. I don't have to keep on making up my mind whether or not I'm going to watch pornography on

television. I don't have to keep making up my mind. I have made a covenant with my eyes. I have determined I will not do it. With my whole heart I have determined I will not do it. My dear friend, you have to come to that place. If you don't come to that place, you are going to go down. You cannot be halfhearted about this thing. You and you alone must make a decision, and nobody else can make that decision for you. I am telling you, my dear friend, you must admit your problem and get clean. And, secondly—listen—you must, dear friend, affirm your purpose to stay clean. It must be a matter of your whole heart.

I read some years ago about the little ermine. The ladies had these ermine coats. The fur of the ermine is snow white. And years ago they would go into the wild to hunt the ermine and they would use dogs to hunt the ermine. And first of all, they would find the lair, the den, where the ermine would stay. And there would be a little small aperture, a hole, that the ermine would crawl into. They would find that place, and they would daub it with mud and filth and put it around the mouth of that den. And then when the dogs would come and trace that little animal, when he would come and he would see that filth there around his home, rather than running underground, he would turn and face the dog and fight to the death, because he would not defile himself; he would not defile his white coat with that filth. Isn't that an amazing thing, that he would not defile himself? He would rather die than defile himself.

I wonder if you are that way. I wonder how important it is to you to be pure? Young man, do you really want to be pure? Young lady, do you want to be pure? Mister, do you want to be pure? Have you said what David said: "*with my whole heart*"? If you don't say that, just forget it, my dear friend. You must admit your problem and get clean. And then, my dear friend, you must affirm your purpose to stay clean. If you don't do it, you're going down. And if there were ever a day, a generation of people that will go down, this is the day, and this is the generation.

### **C. Apply Your Protection to Keep Clean**

Number three—here's the third step: Not only must you admit your problem and get clean; number two, not only must you affirm your purpose to stay clean; but you must, number three, apply your protection to keep clean. It's not enough to get clean. It is not enough to determine to stay clean. My dear friend, you need help, and you must apply your protection to keep clean. Now your protection is the Bible, the Word of God. Verse 9: "*Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.*" (Psalm 119:9)

Now, let me tell you how to use the Bible as an antidote against pornography. Let me tell you how to use the Bible as an antidote against lust. Let me tell you how to use the Word of God to purify your heart and to keep your heart clean and pure. Jesus said,



*“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”* (John 17:17)

Now, how? All right, here are the steps.

### **1. Memorize the Word of God**

Number one: You must memorize the Word of God. Look in verse 11: *“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”* (Psalm 119:11) Do you see it? That is black print on white paper, my dear friend. *“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”* The Bible is your one true protection. If you do not load up on the Word of God, even though you may purpose to stay clean, you will not stay clean.

*These hath God married, and no man shall part:  
Dust on the Bible, and sin in the heart.*

My dear friend, you need to get into the Word of God.

Question: Do you have a daily quiet time with God? Do you have a time when you get alone with God? Do you have a time when you’re taking mega-doses of the Word of God? If not, no wonder that you are failing. No wonder that you are going down. You say, “Oh, the Bible is *this*; the Bible is wonderful; the Bible is good; the Bible is great.” I want to ask you a question. What is worth more: a gold nugget or a dime? You say, “Well, a gold nugget.” All right, let’s put them on the bottom of the ocean floor. Now, which one is worth more? Practically neither one. I mean, the Word of God is worth no more to you than a ten-cent novel, if you’re not reading it; I mean, if you’re not putting it in your heart and in your mind. You should memorize the Word of God. Get it down in your heart.

Now, why does that change you? Well, listen to Philippians chapter 4 and verses 8 and 9. Don’t turn to it. Just listen to it: *“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”* And all of those things are found in the Word of God. That’s a description of the Lord Jesus Christ. And then Paul said, *“Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8–9) God says, “Listen. Fill your mind with that which is right.”

I have told you many, many times from this pulpit that the gracious and good and wise God has made us where we can’t think two thoughts at one time. And if you’re thinking what you ought to think, you cannot be thinking what you ought not to think. And what you ought to think is the Word of God. And you must hide God’s Word in your heart: things that are pure, just lovely, virtuous things. *“If there be any praise, think on these things.”* You are to load up on the Word of God; and not just read it, but memorize it. Commit it to memory.

Now there is an ocean parasite that feeds on plants and mollusks and these things. And first of all, that parasite attacks the shell, the muscle that holds the shell tight, and it weakens that muscle. And then, when the muscle is relaxed, it goes in and feeds on the animal itself. An impure thought is like that parasite.

And, my dear friend, you've got to have an antidote; you've got to have something that you are thinking. Load up on the Word of God. I try every night; as I go to sleep, my last thoughts are the Word of God. I take a verse of Scripture and I think about it and I meditate it on it. And when I wake up in the morning, my first thought generally is the Word of God and a word of praise to our Lord. You must, my dear friend, memorize the Word of God.

## **2. Personalize the Word of God**

Secondly, not only must you memorize the Word of God; you must personalize the Word of God. Look in verse 12: *"Blessed art thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes."* (Psalm 119:12) What good is it to memorize it, if you don't understand it? My dear friend, not only must you memorize it; you must personalize it. Facts from the Bible are not enough—even wonderful facts. You cannot separate the Word of God from the God of that Word. And God must take that Word and teach it to you. And He will teach it to you.

I heard of a new Christian who had a friend named Charlie. And Charlie was his discipler and teaching him what the Bible said. And this man would go and sit at Charlie's feet, and Charlie would say, "It means this," and Charlie would say, "It means that." And Charlie was a good Bible teacher. And one day the man was reading the Bible, and he didn't understand it, and he said, "Oh, I wish Charlie were here." And he said, "It seemed like the Holy Spirit said, 'Why don't you ask me? I'm the one who taught Charlie.'"

My dear friend, listen. God wants to teach you the Word of God. If you would pray this prayer, "O God, teach my thy Word; Lord, I want to know your Word"—it's not enough to memorize it; my dear friend, personalize it. Let me give you five little steps as you read any passage. Just ask yourself: Is there a lesson to learn? Is there a sin to avoid? Is there a blessing to enjoy? Is there a promise to claim? Is there a new thought to carry with me? If you'll just use those five questions, almost any passage of Scripture will just burst aflame. "Teach me, O God, thy Word."

## **3. Verbalize the Word of God**

You must memorize the Word of God. You must personalize the Word of God. Number three: You must verbalize the Word of God. Look in verse 13: *"With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth."* (Psalm 119:13) Now, my dear friend, when you memorize it, and when you personalize it, then begin to share it. Begin to verbalize it. Begin to speak it.

Do you see confession and possession are linked? Take the Word of God. When everybody else is cursing and swearing and telling dirty stories, begin to articulate the Word of God. Use it in your prayer. Use it in your praise. Use it in your testimony. Speak to yourself, and God's Word will move from your heart to your lips, and from your lips back to your heart again. And the more of the Word of God you give away, the more the Word of God will stick to you. This is what the Bible calls in the book of Revelation the word of our testimony. And the Bible says concerning the devil, "They overcame him with the word of their testimony." (Revelation 12:11) That is the reason that Brother Jim teaches us to sing Scripture, to have these Scripture songs that we sing. That is the reason we encourage you to give your testimony: to memorize the Word of God, to personalize the Word of God, so you can verbalize the Word of God.

We need to speak, share, and sing the Word of God. The Psalmist said, "*His praise shall continually be in my mouth.*" (Psalm 34:1) And you say, what is all of this about? My dear friend, it's about staying clean and pure in a vile and a filthy world. That's what it's about.

#### **4. Vitalize the Word of God**

Memorize the Word. Personalize the Word. Verbalize the Word. Number four: Vitalize the Word. Look, if you will, in verses 14 and following: "*I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches.*" Is that true to you? Do you really rejoice in God's Word? Does God's Word mean more to you than any other possession that you could possess? David said so: "*I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches. I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.*" Do you stand in awe of the Word of God? Do you have respect unto God's ways? Look in verse 16: "*I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.*" (Psalm 119:14–16) Now, look at these words. Verse 14: *rejoice*. Look in verse 15: *respect*. Look in verse 16: *delight*. What I'm trying to say is just vitalize the Word of God. Just understand how wonderful it is.

Do you know what an impure mind is? Do you know what it is? It is the mind trying to find contentment some other place. I mean, you have bought into the devil's lies that, "This is where the joy is; this is where the fulfillment is; this is where the riches are; and if you don't get to this place and do these things, then you are going to miss out." My dear friend, you are not going to miss out when you have the Lord Jesus Christ.

Don't feel sorry for me because I'm a Christian. Hey, kids, don't feel sorry for me because I don't do these things. And by the way, you say, "Well, you're just an old fogey; you're just so old: it doesn't make any difference to you." I want to tell you, when I was a teenager living for Christ in high school, I was the president of my high school class; I was the captain of my football team. And I don't say that to brag, but I want to tell you, my dear friend, I was living for Jesus then and leading my schoolmates in

prayer; and I stayed pure and went to the marriage altar pure—and I'm glad I did. And I'll tell you why. All of these years I have found joy and fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ. To have a respect unto God's Word, to rejoice unto God's Word, to know the riches of God's Word, my dear friend, vitalize it. Don't you sell out too cheap. And don't you sacrifice the important upon the altar of the immediate. So, find fulfillment in the Lord Jesus.

### **5. Internalize the Word the God**

Now, here's the last thing. Now, listen. Not only do you vitalize it; but, oh, my dear friend, you must internalize it. Look in verse 15 now: *"I will meditate in thy precepts."* (Psalm 119:15)

Do you see that? Do you know what meditation is? It has two ideas. One is the idea of rumination, or chewing the cud. They say a cow has four stomachs, and it will go out there in the field and load up on alfalfa and hay and clover and Bahia and whatever, and put these things in various stomachs. And then the cow goes out and will lie down under a tree and get to thinking about that clover, and say, "Clover, please," and some clover comes up, and he chews that clover. And then he says, "Alfalfa, please," and that comes up, and he chews that. You've seen the cow just ruminating and chewing the cud, because the cow, she has assimilated that: it is down there to be drawn upon.

Or again, the word meditate has the idea of humming. Have you ever had a tune get into your head and you just couldn't get it out, and you go around all day long just humming a tune? The Word of God is to be that way.

How important is meditation? Look, if you will, in Psalm 119, verse 23: *"Princes also did sit and speak against me: but thy servant did meditate in thy statutes."* (Psalm 119:23) Look, if you will, in verse 48: *"My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate in thy statutes."* (Psalm 119:48) Look, if you will, in verse 97: *"O how I love they law! it is my meditation all the day."* (Psalm 119:97) Look in verse 148: *"Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word."* (Psalm 119:148)

Meditate! Meditate! Meditate! That, my dear friend, is when you internalize the Word of God. And for you to meditate, it takes time. It takes quietness. It takes concentration. And that is why you need that quiet time. But not only do you do that in your quiet time; then it stays with you all the day long.

Have you ever driven a stick-shift automobile? When you first get that stick-shift automobile, you say, "Now, what is this? That's first, second, third, fourth. How does it work?" You know, you're just going through that thing of remembering to put the clutch in and all that. But after a while, if you drive an automobile like that, you never think about that anymore; it's just second nature. You can't even tell yourself that you are shifting gears; you're just in there putting in the clutch, doing this and that. Just a

### second nature thing, isn't it?

You get to be a second-nature Christian when you meditate on the Word of God. You don't even stop and say, "Now, why am I doing this? What must I do, and what must I not do?" You just have the Word of God. It's such a part of you that you don't even have to say, "I will," or, "I won't": you just do because the Word of God is in you. You have internalized the Word of God. The Word of God is such a part of you that, my dear friend, your mind is under the blood, your mind is empowered by the Spirit, and your mind is filled with the Word of God. And then you are a victorious person. And then, my dear friend, you can practice what the Lord Jesus teaches you to practice—and that is a godly Christian home: one man for one woman till death do them part.

### Conclusion

And all this junk about "safe sex" is a crock. Listen to me, my dear friend. That's like talking about safe sin. There is no such thing. It is sacred sex—which is the best sex. And God says, "*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*" (Exodus 20:14) He's not trying to keep sex from you; He's trying to keep sex for you. God loves you. It is one of His greatest gifts. And don't mess it up. And don't you blow it. And if you have, my dear friend, admit your problem and get clean. And then, dear friend, affirm your purpose to stay clean. And then, apply your power to keep clean, which is the Word of God. Get that Word of God in your heart. Let it flow through you. And don't tell me it won't work if you haven't tried it. "*Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.*" (Psalm 119:9)

# Winning the Battle for the Home

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** November 15, 1992

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 5:27–28

*“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:  
But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her  
hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”*

MATTHEW 5:27–28

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## Introduction

Take God’s Word and turn to Matthew chapter 5, would you, please. We’re continuing our series, “Building on the Rock,” as we are studying the Sermon on the Mount. Last week, you will remember that we talked about that it is what is on the inside that counts. Our Lord looks past the act, and our Lord looks right on the heart, and He deals with the attitude. And today that is so clear. Matthew chapter 5—we’re going to read verses 27 and 28. The title of our message today is, “Winning the Battle for the Home.”

A war has been waged on America’s homes, and we are at a crisis point, and never

have I dealt with a more pertinent scripture than the scripture we have today. Jesus said, *“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart”*—*“in his heart.”* (Matthew 5:27–28)

We are in a crisis in America today—a crisis that deals with the matter of moral purity and the sanctity of the home. And I don’t mind telling you that my heart is broken. It seems as though a sewer pipe has broken and is spewing filth all over God’s blessed America. And I was thinking yesterday about that passage of Scripture in Ezra chapter 9 and verse 6, where Ezra said, *“O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens.”* (Ezra 9:6) Ezra said, “O God, I am ashamed to even to look into your face, because of the sin of my nation.” He said, “O my God, I blush.” Thank God that he could blush. Many people in America have become a generation of unblushables.

When I’m talking about sexual morals, I’m not just talking to you about a thing of niceties. I’m not just talking to you about a matter of manners. I’m not just talking to you about something that deals with taste. I’m talking to you about something that is at war against the basic unit, the fabric, of our society.

God built the home before he instituted government and before he built the church. And God’s plan is one man for one woman until death do them part, in a monogamous marriage. And the Bible says, in Genesis chapter 2 and verse 24, *“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”* (Genesis 2:24) My dear friend, that is God’s eternal plan. And that’s why the Lord Jesus Christ clearly said, without equivocation, stutter, or stammer, *“Thou shalt not commit adultery.”* (Exodus 20:14)

But the devil—the devil—has aimed the artillery of hell against your family, against your home, against my family, against our homes, because the devil knows that if he can hurt us at home, he can hurt us all over. Satan’s plan has always been, number one, to deny God. That’s not a mere superstition. And, once he has denied God, he wants to debase man and make man a mere animal. And if there is no God, and if man is the product of blind evolution, it follows—one, two, three—you deny God, you debase man, then, my dear friend, you deny morals; there is no fixed standard of right and wrong. And, after you have done that, you destroy the home. And, after you have done that, you dominate society. And Satan is well on his way.

Very frankly, that is one of the reasons that we are building our Family Life Center. Next Sunday is Love Offering Sunday, and I pray God that this message will impel your heart to say, “Yes, pastor, I do want to stand with my church. I want to stand with my pastor. I want to obey my God and do all that I can do to build the families of Bellevue

Baptist Church.”

Nothing tears at the fabric of society any more than sexual immorality, moral impurity. Gibbon, who wrote *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and gave those reasons for the fall of the Roman Empire, put at the very top of his list of reasons the breakdown of the home through sexual and moral impurity. It is a known sociological fact that those who treat sex lightly will treat other human beings lightly.

With that in mind, having looked at this passage here in Matthew chapter 5, I want you to go now to the Old Testament. I want you to turn to the book of Proverbs. And in the book of Proverbs, I want to give you five factors—five factors—that will help you to build and maintain moral purity and keep your home as it ought to be. And I want every teenager here to open his or her Bible to Proverbs chapter 5. And I pray God that the Holy Spirit will emblazon these truths upon your heart, will etch them into your consciousness, and cause them to reverberate through your soul. Here are five factors for the maintenance of sexual purity, and therefore, a building of a strong family. Five things that I want you to remember. I want every father to write these things down. I want every mother to remember these things. I want every teenager to listen carefully.

## **I. The Instruction Factor: Learn Godly Wisdom**

Number one: you need to remember the instruction factor—the instruction factor—and learn godly wisdom. Look in Proverbs chapter 5, verses 1 and 2: *“My son, attend unto my wisdom, and bow thine ear to my understanding: that thou mayest regard discretion, and that thy lips may keep knowledge.”* (Proverbs 5:1–2) Now all of this is in the context of sexual purity. We often hear the statement, “What you don’t know can’t hurt you.” Very frankly, that’s stupid. What you don’t know may kill you. And we have families that are failing, primarily, for a lack of wisdom, discretion, understanding and knowledge.

And where, my dear friend, are we going to learn? Are we going to learn at the university from the professor of sociology who teaches humanistic hogwash in the halls of higher learning? Are we going to learn for the rantings of the baby butchers called Planned Parenthood? Is that where we are going to learn? Where are we going to learn? Are we going to learn from the money-grabbing moguls of dirt for profit in Hollywood? Where are we going to learn? Are we going to learn from those eminent theologians Geraldo, Leno, Donahue, and Hefner? Are these the ones who are going to teach us? Where are we going to learn?

God is saying here, in Proverbs chapter 1, that we are to bow our ear to God’s understanding. God has a way. God has a plan. Listen to Proverbs chapter 6 and verse 32. Turn to that and look at it: *“But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding...”*—do you know what that says? It says, my dear friend, that immorality is stupid. If that hurts your feelings, you come up to me after the service and apologize,



and I'll forgive you—*“whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding.”*—you just simply do not know—*“he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul. A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away.”* (Proverbs 6:32)

Now the very first thing, my dear friend, is the instruction factor. You need to be instructed; you need to learn. And we need to teach in our churches today with no uncertain sound. We have social engineers today who put the Bible out of school. They put sex education with condoms and birth control and abortion without parental consent into school. We've taken the Ten Commandments down from the walls and put policemen in the halls. Where are we going to learn?

My dear friend, God has given us a book; God has given us an instruction manual. And the very first factor, my dear friend, is the instruction fact. We need to learn godly wisdom: *“My son, attend unto my wisdom, and bow thine ear to my understanding: that thou mayest regard discretion, and that thy lips may keep knowledge.”* (Proverbs 5:1–2) And so the very first factor is the instruction factor: you need to learn godly wisdom.

## **II. The Deception Factor: Beware of Devilish Snares**

The second factor that you need to be aware of is the deception factor—just the opposite of the instruction factor. Remember the deception factor, and beware of Satan's snares. Now, continue to read in verse 3—Proverbs 5 and verse 3: *“For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil: but her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell. Lest thou shouldest ponder the path of life, her ways are moveable, that thou canst not know them.”* (Proverbs 5:3–6) And here he's talking about satanic deception. He's talking here about the ways of Satan to ruin your life. And he talks about an immoral woman. Satan is too clever to go fishing without any bait on his hook. And so, like any fisherman, Satan deceives, first of all, with allurements; and then entrapments; and then enslavement.

### **A. Frivolity**

Now, notice what Satan does. Notice his fatal trap. Look, first of all, in verse 3: *“For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb.”* (Proverbs 5:3) Now, what's he talking about there? Her lips are sweeter than honey. Ol' Honey Lips: that's her name. That's what we call her. The sweetness just flows out. I mean, it seems so wonderful. Immorality, to so many people, seems so good. I was talking to a man, and he said to me as he was living this kind of a life, he said, “How could anything so wonderful as this be wrong?” The Bible says, “The bread of deceit is sweet, but afterward a man's mouth shall be filled with gravel.” (Proverbs 20:17)

## B. Flattery

First of all, there's this frivolity, this fun, this rush, this thrill. Here she is: she's honey lips. And then, not only is there that frivolity; there's that flattery. Look, if you will, in the last part of verse 3: *"Her mouth is smoother than oil."* (Proverbs 5:3) She knows how to give him the "come hither." And, of course, if Solomon had been talking to a daughter, he would talk about the man and his line—the flatterer. Many people are very susceptible to flattery. A little flattery now and then makes big fools of little men. This is the reason that you need a quiet time. This is the reason that in the morning you need to spend time with God, mister, before you go to work.

Look, if you will, in Proverbs 6, verse 23—look at it: *"For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life: to keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman."* (Proverbs 6:23) There is nothing, sir, that will protect you more from immorality, from the flirtation of that woman that works next to you, than to load up in the morning early with the Word of God, to go out of your house with the Word of God in your heart. Listen to it again: *"For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life: to keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman."*

Now, every now and then, we hear about some man, sometimes even a minister, a preacher, or somebody, who fell, and they say, "Oh, isn't that terrible?" Maybe a deacon, maybe a church worker—they say, "Isn't that terrible? Look how far he fell." Well, friend, you may not know how low he was living. He didn't fall that far. He had failed to keep himself in the Word of God, and to be loading up and storing up the Word of God.

## C. Vitality

First of all, there's that frivolity: Ol' Honey Lips. Then, there's that flattery: her mouth is smoother than oil. But there is that vitality. Look in verses 4 and 5: *"But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell."* (Proverbs 5:4–5) What a deadly power this sin has! Nothing is more destructive. *Sin fascinates, and then it assassinates. It thrills, and then it kills.* Her steps take hold on hell. It brings death: death to your joy, purity, happiness; death to the home; spiritual death, physical death, eternal death.

## III. The Protection Factor: Avoid Dangerous Situations

Oh, my dear friend, there is the instruction factor: Learn godly wisdom. There is the deception factor: Beware of devilish snares. Here's the third factor. It is the protection factor: Avoid dangerous situations. Proverbs chapter 5, verses 7 and 8—look at it: *"Here*

*me now therefore, O ye children, and depart not from the words of my mouth. Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house.*” (Proverbs 5:7–8)

I hope that every young man in this congregation has underlined that right now in his Bible. You say, “Well, I don’t think that I have to worry about that.” My dear friend, Oswald Chambers has said a long time ago, “An unguarded strength is a double weakness.” Did you hear that? I want every deacon to listen to me. I want every godly teacher listening to me by television to remember this. “An unguarded strength is a double weakness.” And the Bible says, “*Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*” (1 Corinthians 10:12)

Now this sexual immorality, this is not a sin that we are told to fight; it’s a sin that we are told to flee. Look in verse 8: “*Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house.*” Don’t even walk past her house. Let me give you some other verses to put into your margin. Second Timothy chapter 2 and verse 22: “*Flee also youthful lusts.*” (2 Timothy 2:22) “*Flee,*” the Bible says. Be a coward again. First Corinthians 6, verse 18: “*Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.*” (1 Corinthians 6:18) “*Flee fornication.*” “*Flee youthful lusts.*” Don’t even come near her house. The Bible says, “*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape.*” (1 Corinthians 10:13) And, my dear friend, often the way to escape is two legs—the King’s highway—and a hard run. You just get out of there. You saturate that place with your absence. You don’t hang around those kinds of places. You don’t hang around that kind of literature. You don’t go to those kinds of movies. You don’t do it. You just simply don’t do it.

Joseph, in the Bible, was a holy man. There was a woman who wanted to seduce Joseph. It was Mrs. Potiphar—Potiphar’s wife. Joseph was like a servant in the house. Mrs. Potiphar tried to entice Joseph to come to bed with her. And Joseph, when he realized what was happening, he began to leave the room. She reached out and took hold of his garment. And he left his coat there and fled. And he’s still holy; he’s still pure.

Now some people might laugh at him, and call him Holy Joe. But he is holy. I thank God for that. I know some stupid people—and, yes, I’m going to use the word *stupid*—some of them who call themselves Christian counselors and pastors and leaders and so forth, who would have said, “Now, Mrs. Potiphar, you should not act this way. Let’s you and I kneel down by the bed and pray about this.” Joseph didn’t do that. Joseph did not begin to fight this temptation. He fled. “*Flee youthful lusts.*”

I know what the temptation of the flesh is. I’m a man. But I thank God that I went to the marriage altar a virgin. When I was in college, I had this motto on my desk: “He who would not fall down ought not to walk in slippery places.” Flee. “*Flee fornication.*” That’s

what the Bible says. The Bible says, don't even come near her house. Don't even come near that company. Just get away.

Let me give you men—businessmen, ministers, deacons, and others—some rules. Never visit the opposite sex alone at their home. Don't do it. Never counsel with the opposite sex alone in your office. If you do that counseling, your secretary's next door, the door is slightly ajar. Never go to lunch alone with the opposite sex. There's no reason to do it. You don't have to do it. Don't do it. Never discuss detailed sexual problems with the opposite sex. Don't playfully or good-naturedly flirt with the opposite sex. Don't say little cute things like, "Why don't you leave that guy your married to and come run away with me?" You may think it's funny, but, my dear friend, it plants a seed in the mind that Satan wants to water and cultivate. You don't have to call that waitress "sweetheart." Call your wife "sweetheart." You don't have to call that waitress "darling" or "dear." Save those words for your wife.

Be careful what you put in your mind. As a matter of fact, the next message is going to be "How to Deal with the Thought Life." We're going to be dealing with immorality and pornography and all of this, and how to keep your thought life pure. For Jesus Christ said, "*Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*" (Matthew 5:28) And we're going to talk about how to handle lust. And that will be the next message. I don't even have time to get it all into this message today.

#### **IV. The Destruction Factor: Consider the Deadly Consequences**

But, my dear friend, you remember the instruction factor. You remember the deception factor. Remember the protection factor. Just simply give a wide berth to this: "*Flee fornication.*" And then, in order to help you do that, you need to remember the destruction factor—the destruction factor—and consider the deadly consequences. What are the consequences of immorality? Why does God say that it is stupid? You say, "It's the in thing to do." God says it is stupid. You lack understanding. Let me give you some reasons.

##### **A. Dissipation**

Well, first of all, there's dissipation. Look, if you will, in verses 9 and 10. He says, "Don't come near the door of her house,"—"*lest thou give thine honour unto others, and thy years unto the cruel: lest strangers be filled with thy wealth; and thy labours be in the house of a stranger.*" (Proverbs 5:9–10)

Now sin is costly. Sin does not pay. It costs. I think of a man in this city that I knew and loved well. He was a dear friend, a professional man. He had one of the most beautiful homes in this city, one of the finest families in this city. He professed to be a

Christian, but he worked side by side with a beautiful woman, and before long those threads of flirtation began to be woven into a cord, and then a chain of bondage. And this man got into deep sin and immorality. It broke my heart to stand by: to do all that I could do, but I could not stop this man. Today that man has lost his business. Today that man has lost his family. Today that man has lost his home. Today that man has lost his reputation. He has lost his children. Those children are calling somebody else “Daddy.” It breaks my heart.

I know of ministers who bought a tombstone for their ministry, and I know of businessmen who have absolutely ruined their career. What a colossal waste!

### **B. Disease**

That’s what God is saying first of all: there is dissipation. Verse 9: “You give honor unto others and your years unto the cruel.” But not only is there dissipation; there is disease. Look, if you will now, in verse 11: *“And thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed.”* (Proverbs 5:11)

You’re saying, “Is AIDS the judgment of God?” My dear friend, it is the consequence of sin. It’s the consequence of sin. You say, “Does everybody who has AIDS a sinner?” Of course not! Is every child that’s killed by a drunken driver guilty of drunkenness? Of course not! Of course not! But, my dear friend, I have an announcement, and I would to God I could get on ABC, CBS, and NBC, and CNN, and tell the world I have the answer to the AIDS epidemic. I have the answer. I, Adrian Rogers, I have the answer. And you guys in the laboratory, and you guys at the White House, and all of you social engineers, I have the answer. Just live by this book. That’s it. I mean, they are running around saying, “What is the answer?”—“What is the answer?” I’ll tell you the answer: one man for one woman till death do them part. That’s the answer. You say, “Well, that’s too simple.” Yes, but it is God’s Word, and God said, “And you will mourn at the last, when your flesh and your body are consumed.” We have these high-powered drugs, and yet we are in a sexually transmitted disease epidemic that’s ten times greater than it was a few years ago.

### **C. Disappointment**

First of all, there’s dissipation. Secondly, there is disease. Thirdly, there is disappointment. Look, if you will, in verses 12 through 13: *“And [you’ll] say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me!”* (Proverbs 5:12–13) One of these days, there will be some of you sitting in this place today who will say, “Why didn’t I listen to the pastor? Why did I not listen to the Word of God?” My dear friend, you are going to be so disappointed. You’re going to live the life. You’re going to say, “This is the way to joy; this is the way to happiness; this is the way to fulfillment.” But it is not.

The Living Bible translates this verse this way: “Oh, if only I had listened! ... Why wouldn't I take advice?”

People say this is what liberates. It doesn't liberate. Sweden has an open society. They have been liberated sexually, but no nation has a higher suicide rate than Sweden does. Satan offers high wages, but he pays in counterfeit money. There is that disappointment. You get what you want, and you're not going to want what you get.

#### **D. Disgrace**

And then, number four, there's disgrace. Look, if you will, in verse 14: *“I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly.”* (Proverbs 5:14) What does that mean in plain English? The Living Bible says, “For now I must face public disgrace.” You can only hide it so long. One of these days, sir, God is going to expose you. One of these days, young lady, your sin is going to be made known. If not here, at the Final Judgment, for Luke chapter 12 and verse 2 says, *“For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known.”* (Luke 12:2) What a disgrace that's going to be! Your wife, your children, your parents, your pastor, your friends, will know. You will not be able to hide this sin. You may be hiding it now, but sooner or later it will be made known. That's what verse 14 is talking about.

I remember reading about a newspaper that had this motto: “If you don't want it printed, don't let it happen.” My dear friend, if you do not want this known, then repent of it, and be done with it—or never get into it—because there is that disgrace.

#### **E. Dominion**

And then, number five: not only is there that disgrace; there is that dominion. Look, if you will, in verse 22, and he goes on to say, *“His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins.”* (Proverbs 5:22) I don't know of any other sin that enslaves like the sin of immorality. There is a dominion; there is a person who is held, is entrapped, by this sin.

I have in my counseling dealt with those who have been living a life of immorality. I would sit down and pray, and I would say, “Son, do you see this is wrong? I'm thinking of one fine young man that I dealt with. Son, do you see this is wrong?” “Yes sir.” “Do you realize that God loves you?” “Yes sir.” “Do you know that God wants the best for you?” “Yes.” “Don't you want the best for your wife and children?” “Yes, I do.” “Don't you think that God has the power to deliver you?” “Yes sir, I do.” “Don't you want to repent of this sin, and go and make it right with your wife, and ask her to forgive you, and let me counsel with her, and see if we can get...” “Yes sir, I do, I do.” We get on our knees. He cries. He weeps. He prays. He says, “O God, I want you to forgive me. I want you to cleanse me. I want you to help me.” He leaves the office, and I lift my hands to God and say, “Oh, thank you, God! Praise the Lord! Thank you for another victory!” And then, two

or three months later, I hear he's back with that same woman, back living in that sin, and finally that home is broken. My heart is crushed. I say, "O God, O God, we prayed! O God, he said he wanted help!"

But I think of the chains, the bondage of this. And I'm not saying there is no help. And I'm not saying you cannot set yourself free. But I'm telling you, my dear friend, "Every other sin that a man commits is without the body. He that commits adultery and fornication sins against his own body." (1 Corinthians 6:18) And there is a bondage there.

The Tyrant of Syracuse one time told the blacksmith, and said to the blacksmith, "I want to see your art. Would you bring your bellows? Would you bring your anvil? Would you bring your forge? Would you bring your molten metal? I want to see you make a chain." And so the blacksmith there before the Tyrant made a chain. When he finished, he said, "There, sire. There is the chain. There is the work of my art. That chain is so strong that a team of horses attached to either end would not be able to break it." Then the Tyrant of Syracuse maniacally laughed, and in his inherent cruelty said, "Guards, bind the blacksmith in the chain, and throw him in the dungeon!" And so it is that men are chained with the very chain that they have forged on the anvil of a hard heart and the bellows of their lust as they have disobeyed a holy God.

And the Bible says, my dear friend, there is that dominion of this sin: "*His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins.*" The very chain that he has forged is the very chain that will bind him.

## F. Death

But not only is there dominion; there is death. Look, if you will, in verse 23: "*He shall die without instruction.*" (Proverbs 5:23) There is moral death. There is spiritual death. There is eternal death. And the warm flames of lust will turn to the fiery flames of hell. Do you think that you can live this way and strut into heaven? I am telling you, my dear friend, you are going to go straight to hell. Listen to 1 Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 9: "*Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate,*"—that means "homosexuals"—"*nor abusers of themselves with mankind...shall inherit the kingdom of God.*" (1 Corinthians 6:9–10) God says that. I didn't say that. If you want to argue about it, don't come to me after the service. You take 1 Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 9, and you read it to God, and you say, "God, you're wrong." But, my dear friend, God is not wrong. If that's your lifestyle, if that's the way that you are living, you do not know the grace of God; you have no right to call yourself a child of God. And you have no hope of heaven unless you are willing to repent and turn from that sin.

You say what about "once saved, always saved"? My dear friend, if you were saved

and you lived that way, God would take you to the woodshed and beat the living daylight out of you. You wouldn't be sitting, smiling, and saying, "What a wonderful life I am living!" My dear friend, listen. Either you are headed for the woodshed, or you are headed for hell, but you are not headed for heaven. If you could live that way with no conviction, no compunction, no remorse, you do not know the God of this Bible. And God says, "Hey, don't kid yourself. Don't be deceived. People who live this way are not going to heaven." You say, "Can't God forgive?" Of course, God will forgive. But, my dear friend, you cannot hold onto this sin with one hand and hold onto God with the other hand. It cannot be done. Remember the destruction factor. What is it? Dissipation, disease, disappointment, disgrace, dominion, and death. That's what God says right here.

## **V. The Intention Factor: Enjoy God's Best**

Now, here's the fifth and final factor that I want you to remember. The fifth and final factor is the intention factor—the intention factor—and enjoy God's best. Understand what God has for you. What is God's intention for you?

### **A. A Lasting Marriage**

Well, number one: It is a lasting marriage. Look in chapter 5 and verse 18: "*Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth.*" (Proverbs 5:18) What is God's best? God's best is one man for one woman till death do them part. I love my wife. I thank God for my darling wife. I would not trade our Christian home for anything on earth. Sometimes I teasingly say to Joyce, "If you ever leave me, I'm going with you." My dear friend, listen. She's mine. She's mine to keep, and I'm hers to keep. What a lasting marriage, the Bible says here, "*Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth*"—the same wife that you had as a young man.

### **B. A Loving Marriage**

Not only is it a lasting marriage; God's best intention is a loving marriage. Look in verse 19: "*Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love.*" (Proverbs 5:19) Oh, my dear friend, listen—listen. Don't get the idea that, if you live according to God's law, you are going to miss out. The problem is if you don't live according to God's law; you are going to miss out. These kids are talking about going all the way. That's the one thing they don't do; they don't go all the way. They don't know the fulfillment, the joy, of a monogamous marriage—the ravishing love that comes by one man committed to one woman until death do them part.

Don't you know that God's laws are for your welfare? *God is not some tyrant sitting up there in heaven making a bunch of laws to make you squirm, like a worm in hot*



*ashes, trying to keep those laws. God loves you!* God's laws are for your welfare. *And every time God says, "Thou shalt not," God just simply says, "Don't hurt yourself." And every time God says, "Thou shalt," God is saying, "Help yourself to happiness."* And God is not trying to keep sex from you; He is trying to keep sex for you! Here is God's wonderful gift! And that's the reason God says, *"Thou shalt not commit adultery."* (Exodus 20:14) That's the reason God says, *"Flee fornication,"* (1 Corinthians 6:18) because God has something so wonderful for you. And God wants you, my dear friend, to have a lasting marriage, and God wants you to have a loving marriage.

Young people, listen to me: Keep yourself pure. Save yourself for the one you are going to marry. You say, "Well, everybody else is doing it." Let them do it; you be different. God has something wonderful for you. You eat your cake now; you'll have a crummy tomorrow. You live by God's laws; you be wise—you be wise.

### **C. A Liberating Marriage**

What is God's best? A lasting marriage, a loving marriage, a liberating marriage. Verse 22 will not be true about you: *"His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins."* (Proverbs 5:22) You see, you are not bound by this; you are free! Free to be all that God wants you to be! Free to be all that you ought to be!

You say, "Well, Pastor Rogers, I've already failed. Is there hope for me?" Absolutely! Oh, my dear friend, "where sin abounds, grace does much more abound." (Romans 5:20) If you have committed sin, confess it, and God will cleanse you. The Bible says, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us"—"and to cleanse us"—"and to cleanse us from all"—not some but all—"unrighteousness."* (1 John 1:9)

## **Conclusion**

Thank God you can be pure. But, my dear friend, if you are living a life of immorality or contemplating that life, I beg you—I beg you—I warn you: Save yourself from the heartache, the humiliation, the destruction that comes. And in the name of all that is good and holy and wise, get out the instruction manual, learn God's way, learn why the wisest and best man that ever lived, the Lord Jesus, who was more than man, who was God Himself, said, *"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."* (Matthew 5:27–28) You see, the Lord Jesus just keeps on coming back to the heart. And that's what we need—is a new heart. That comes by receiving Him.

# Roadblocks on the Way to Hell

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** February 12, 1984

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 5:29–30

*“And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.”*

MATTHEW 5:29

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Reality of Hell
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Conclusion

## Introduction

We have in the Southern Baptist Convention a group of people who call themselves “moderates.” And, I believe in moderation. I’m a moderate. I’ve tried to be a moderate—tried to exercise moderately; I try to eat moderately. I try to do those things with moderation that we’re supposed to do in moderation. And so, to that degree, I’m a moderate. And, I’m also a liberal: I try to give liberally; I try to preach a liberal base of the old-fashioned gospel and give it away as liberally as I can. I think there’s a sense in which we all ought to be liberal—for the Bible says, *“The liberal soul shall be made fat”*

(Proverbs 11:25)—if you mean by *liberal* “a spirit of selflessness in giving.” I’d like to be liberal on those things that a man ought to be liberal about. I’d like to be moderate about those things that a man ought to be moderate about. But, I’m also a conservative about those things that a man ought to be conservative about, and I believe one of the things that we ought to be distinctly conservative about is the Word of God, the death of Christ, and the great doctrines of the Bible. There’s no room for moderation there, and moderate heat never boiled water.

¶ If someone were to ask me, “How do you love your wife?” and I said, “Well, moderately,” I’m afraid I’d get in trouble.¶

There are some things, dear friend, that we’re not to be moderate about, and one of them is the Word of God.

I was talking to one of these so-called moderates, and we were talking about the Old Testament. He just didn’t believe those stories in the Old Testament, and he said, “Very frankly, I just don’t believe that God ordered the slaughter of the Amalekites in the Samuel passages. I just don’t believe that.” He said, “That’s not the God that I know. The God that I know is a God of love, and the God that I know is represented in the fifth chapter of Matthew.” Now, you will remember that the fifth chapter of Matthew is that very wonderful passage that speaks of the Beatitudes and all of these wonderful things. But, I reminded this preacher of something else that’s in the fifth chapter of Matthew, the Sermon on the Mount, and it is here in Matthew chapter 5, verse 29. These are the words of the Lord Jesus: “*And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.*” (Matthew 5:29–30) And, this man was asked, “Which is worse—for an Amalekite to lose his physical life because of his sin or for people to be cast eternally in a place called hell?” Well, he adroitly changed the subject. But, let me tell you, dear friend, that the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament is a God of judgment.

I don’t enjoy preaching about judgment. As a matter of fact, I had to fight with myself and make myself preach this sermon tonight. And, I’ll tell you the honest truth before God: I sat in my study and tried to change this sermon tonight. As a matter of fact, I’ve got two or three other messages with me tonight ready to preach because I did not want to preach on the subject of hell. I don’t enjoy preaching on hell. I don’t like to think about hell. But, I know that God has called me to preach the whole truth and nothing but the truth, and I must stand before my Lord one day and give an account of my stewardship of the Word of God. I do not like to think of the idea of hell.

So many today think lightly of hell. Hell has become the butt of so many jokes. It has

become a byword. It breaks my heart to go to one of our football stadiums and hear our young people tell somebody else to go to hell, as they chant, “Go to hell, Ole Miss! Go to hell!” And, I think, “Oh, if you only knew what you were saying! If you only knew the horrors of hell! If you only knew the terrors of hell!” How it breaks my heart to see people so lightly and so glibly talk of this place called hell! Of course, the devil is behind all of that, because if people do not believe in hell, they’re not going to seek a Savior. But, people who believe in hell are going to seek a Savior from hell. And so, the devil doesn’t want you to understand the truth about the Bible doctrine of hell, for the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 4:4: *“The god of this [age] hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.”* (2 Corinthians 4:4)

And so, those of us who believe in hell, we’re called “fighting fundies” (fundamentalists). And, they laugh at us, and they sneer at us. And, they say that we’re harsh; they say that we’re cruel because we preach on hell. Is a doctor cruel because he believes about cancer and warns people? Is a traffic expert cruel because he warns of excessive speed? Dr. Lee said, “I’d rather be called cruel for being kind than to be called kind for being cruel.” And, I want to tell you, the cruelest thing that a liberal preacher can do is to lull his people to sleep and not warn them as to what the Bible has to say about the doctrine of hell. It may sound kind, but it is indeed cruel. And, it makes no difference to me if all of the theologians, and all of the scholars, and all of the preachers, and all of the scientists, and all of the statesmen, and all of the politicians, and all of everybody else, all of the teachers, gave up their idea of hell and said, “There is no hell.” It would not change the Word of God one iota, for the Bible says in 1 Peter 1:25: *“The word of the Lord endureth for ever.”* (1 Peter 1:25)

They laughed at men. They laughed at Noah when Noah warned of a flood, and I imagine they had a symposium to discuss old crazy Noah building that ship out there on dry ground. And, I can just hear one man say, “Well, if Noah did hear any message from God about a flood, I can assure you it wasn’t literal water.” Now friend, let me tell you something: God said what He means, and God meant what He said. They laughed at Noah, but the Bible says in Genesis 7:22 that, *“All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died.”* (Genesis 7:22)

They laughed at Lot. Lot’s sons-in-law thought that he was crazy, and they sneered at him. The Bible says they mocked at him when Lot warned that God was going to destroy Sodom with fire and brimstone. (Genesis 19:14) But, the Bible says in Genesis 19:24: *“Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven”* (Genesis 19:24)—brimstone and fire; literal fire, literal brimstone, just as the Bible had warned that God would do.

They laughed at Daniel and mocked at Daniel when Daniel said that the Chaldeans and the Babylonian Empire were going to be destroyed and that Belshazzar would die.

But, the Bible tells us in Daniel 5:30: *“In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.”* (Daniel 5:30) What I’m trying to say is, people, that though we laugh and though we mock, we do not change the reality of hell.

## **I. The Reality of Hell**

Now, let me talk to you about the reality of hell. Why do I believe in the reality of hell? I want to tell you, my common sense doesn’t cause me to believe in it. Logic doesn’t cause me to believe in it. Sentiment doesn’t cause me to believe in it. But, let me tell you why I believe in hell—not that it is illogical, but I don’t come to it on a logical basis. We must go to the Word of God.

### **A. The Word of God Declares It**

One of the reasons that I believe in hell is the Word of God declares it. Now friend, the Bible says in Mark 9:43–44—Jesus, re-emphasizing the same words that I read to you from Matthew 5, Jesus said, *“It is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.”* (Mark 9:43–44)

I’ve been careful to read my first two references from the Bible about hell from the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are over 162 texts in the New Testament that warn about hell, and over seventy of these come from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Over seventy times, Jesus, the Lord of love, warned about hell. The doctrine of hell does not come from some ignorant, uneducated, backwoods rube or from some belligerent monster who has no love; but Jesus, with tears coursing down His cheeks—Jesus, who was inexpressible love—declared that there was a hell. And, there is a hell. One reason that I believe in hell, therefore: the Word of God declares it.

### **B. The Cross of Christ Demonstrates It**

Another reason that I believe in hell—the cross of Christ demonstrates it. Now, when you see Jesus dying in agony and blood upon that cross, when you see the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ, when you see the spit that was spit into His face, when you understand that the beard was snatched from His cheeks, when you understand that the rod laid those bruises upon His back and the whip and the scourge took the flesh from His bones, when you see that crown of thorns, when you see those Syrian nails driven through His quivering palms, when you listen and feel the heartbeat, the despair, the agony of utter midnight, tell me that Jesus suffered all of that when there’s no hell to save a man from. And, I’ll tell you, any God that would let His Son suffer that way when men do not need to be saved from hell is a God that I have no respect for. Oh, friend, I want to tell you that not only does the Word of God declare it; the cross of Jesus Christ demonstrates it.

### C. The Justice of God Demands It

And, I want to say, dear friend, that the holiness and the justice of God demands it. Do you have the idea that a man can live as some men live, as Hitler lived, as Idi Amin lived, as Hugh Hefner has lived, as Madalyn Murray O’Hair has lived; do you think that a man can ruin the virtue of women; do you believe that a man can sell dope; do you believe that a man can rob widows and orphans; do you believe that a man can live like the devil incarnate and then commit suicide and go out into all eternity, and there be no difference between that man and another man who did not live correspondingly the same way? Do you believe there’s no justice out there? Do you believe that a man just steps out of this life and into eternity and it’s oblivion, it’s all over—that there’s not a judgment?

“Oh,” people say, “well, people have their hell in this world.” Well, friend, if you’ll look around, many who are living for the devil are living heady, high-minded, and wild, and they’re having a ball. It will take another world to settle the score. You’re going to find out that many of God’s choicest of saints have suffered. And, I’m telling you, dear friend, that the holiness of God and the justice of God demands—demands—that there is a hell.

## II. The Suffering in Hell

Now, what is hell like? What does the Bible say concerning the horrors of hell? Well, the Jehovah’s Witnesses will go from house to house and door to door, and they will tell you that there is no place called hell, as we believe it. They believe that hell is cessation; they believe that hell is annihilation—that when a man dies without Christ, without God, without hope, that he’s like a dog that dies, he’s like a cow that dies: he’s just simply annihilated. And, so many believe the same thing. And, I don’t want to get in a name-calling thing here to tell you all of the cults and “the *isms*,” as Dr. Lee says, “that ought to be *wasms*,” that do not believe in this place called hell.

### A. Hell Is a Place of Unending Living Death

But, I want to tell you, dear friend, that hell is a place of everlasting existence. Look in Revelation 21:8. And, by the way, you ought to keep these scriptures and jot them down so you will have them when you’re going to need them, because you’re going to need them. Look, the Bible says, “*But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*” (Revelation 21:8) Now, what we call “death” today would be welcome in that place called “the second death.” It goes on unending and never ends. Look, if you will, in Revelation 14:11: “*And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and*

*they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name”—“they have no rest day nor night.”* (Revelation 14:11)

And, I want to show you proof positive that death does not bring annihilation and that hell is not annihilation. Look, if you will, in Luke 12. Here in Luke 12 our Lord is describing the degrees of punishment that there will be in hell. Look with me in verse 47: *“And that servant, which knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.”* (Luke 12:47–48)

Now, this scripture tells us that there are degrees of punishment for those who disobey God. When a man openly knows the will of God and refuses the will of God—when a man sits in an air-conditioned, upholstered, well-lighted auditorium like this and hears the gospel preached, and he says no to Christ—that man is going to receive far more severe punishment in hell than the man who’s never heard the gospel. “That servant, who knew his master’s will, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with many stripes.” (Luke 12:47) But, I want to ask you a question: If we all die alike, if we’re all annihilated, if we all rot, if we all decay, if there’s no life after this life in a place called hell, then this scripture is absolutely, totally nonsensical, isn’t it? Hell is an unending living death called “the second death.”

## **B. Hell Is a Place of Unsatisfied Desires**

I want to say, secondly, that hell is a place of unsatisfied desires. In Luke 16, Jesus tells the story of a rich man who died and went to hell. Some people call that a parable, but I don’t believe it’s a parable. Jesus said, *“There was a certain rich man,”* (Luke 16:1) and Jesus in that story mentions Lazarus by name. And, from all accounts, it is a historical event. Jesus, knowing all things, knew about a rich man who died and went to hell. And, Jesus said that when this rich man found himself in the flames of hell, he offered this kind of a prayer: in Luke 16:24, he said, *“Send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue.”* (Luke 16:24)

¶ Years ago, I was called to the hospital to see Mrs. Cowart. Mrs. Cowart was one of the sweet little ladies in the first church that I ever pastored. I was just a boy. And, I started pastoring when I was nineteen years of age, and I had no experience visiting in the hospital. I’d never been around sick people. My parents had not been sick, brothers and sisters had never been sick, and I’d never had any sickness to speak of. I went in the hospital to see this dear lady who had a ruptured appendix. And, it had caused a severe infection, and her body was burning with fever. But, one thing that they said that Mrs. Cowart could not have was water to drink. I didn’t understand that; maybe some of

you doctors understand it a little bit better. But, she couldn't have any water to drink. I remember when I went in and laid my hand on her hand to pray for her, her hand was so hot that it seemed almost as if it would burn my hand. Of course, I know it wasn't that hot, but she just had a horrible fever raging through her body. And, she said, "Pastor, would you get me a drink of water, please?" I said, "Oh, Mrs. Cowart, I'd like to, but the doctor says you can't have any water." And, she said, "Well, pastor, just a sip of water." That broke my heart because she was one of the most godly little ladies I'd ever known. I said, "Mrs. Cowart, if anybody gives you water, it will have to be the doctor or the nurse. I can't give it to you." She said, "But pastor, I'm burning. It's so hot, and I'm so thirsty." She said, "Pastor, would you just put a few drops of water on my tongue?" And oh, I thought surely that would be all right, but I said, "I'd better ask the nurse, Mrs. Cowart. I don't want to do anything that will hurt you." She said, "Pastor, just take a towel and wet my lips. Please, pastor!" And, my heart broke, and I thought of people who will be in hell crying, suffering, pleading for a drop of water to cool their tongue.†

You say, "Well, Jesus was using a metaphor. Jesus was using a figure of speech." If He was, dear friend, what was He trying to describe? What kind of suffering was the Lord Jesus trying to describe if it is a metaphor, if it is a figure of speech? I'm telling you, dear friend, that hell is a place of unsatisfied desires. And, the dope addict will take his desires there, and the fornicator will take his desires there; and the pervert will take his desires there. He will have those desires. Those desires will be intensified and unsatisfied.

### **C. Hell Is a Place of Ungodly Associations**

I'll tell you something else about hell: hell is going to be a place of ungodly associates. Have you ever heard anybody laugh and joke and say, "Well, heaven for climate, but hell for company"? That's what Mark Twain said. He thought that was funny. He'll have his company in hell. Hell is a place, yes—and there is a vast company in hell.

Do you want to know who's going to be in hell? Look, if you will, again, in Revelation 21:8, and see what the Word of God has to say about the company in hell, the ungodly associates in hell. Revelation 21:8: "*But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable*"—and I take the word *abominable* here to mean "sexual perverts"—"*and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers*"—and the word *sorcerers* here means "drug pushers and addicts"—"*and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*" (Revelation 21:8)

People say, "Well, I just don't want to be a member of the church, because there are hypocrites in the church." Yes, there are some hypocrites in the church. One of the twelve disciples was a hypocrite. But, I'll tell you, I'd rather be in God's glorious church and spend a few years with some of the hypocrites than to die and go to hell and spend



eternity with all of them. Friend, I want to tell you something now; I want to tell you something: every hypocrite is going to end up in the lake of fire.

I went through the Bible and tried to find out who the Bible says will be there. The devil will be there, and he won't be the lord of hell. He'll suffer in hell. Hell was "*prepared for the devil and his angels.*" (Matthew 25:41) The antichrist will be there. The false prophet will be there. The fearful will be there. The unbelieving will be there. Revelers will be there. Adulterers will be there. The abominable will be there. Murderers shall be there. Whoremongers will be there. Sorcerers will be there. Idolaters will be there. Extortioners will be there. The effeminate will be there. Liars will be there. Thieves will be there. Hypocrites will be there. Drunkards will be there. The covetous will be there. The blasphemers will be there.

You say, "Well, that's a horrible, fearful list of people." That is true, indeed. But, if you'll look in Revelation 21:8, you'll see that "*the fearful, and unbelieving*" (Revelation 21:8) head the list. Now, you might think that being a whoremonger, a sorcerer, is terrible, but I want to tell you, if you refuse Jesus Christ as your personal Savior—you're afraid tonight to openly and publicly to confess Him as your Lord—you're going to lead the list of those that are in hell. And, hell is a place of ungodly associates. I want you to think of your teenage girl going to hell and staying in hell with all of these people, mister, if she doesn't get saved. You'd better learn to pray for your daughter. You'd better learn to pray for your neighbor. They are going to be in hell forever with these kinds of people.

#### **D. Hell Is a Place of Absolute Hopelessness**

I want to say something else about hell: not only is hell a place of hellish and ungodly associations; hell is a place of absolute hopelessness. When a man goes to hell, he stays there forever. In the sixteenth chapter of Luke, Jesus taught that there was a great gulf that is fixed between those who are in heaven and those that are in hell; and people cannot pass from hell to heaven, neither can people pass from heaven to hell. (Luke 16:26) It is a place of everlasting existence, and there is no hope ever to get out of hell. In Matthew 25:46, Jesus spoke of those who are going to hell, and Jesus said, "*[They] shall go away into everlasting [torment].*" (Matthew 25:46) Now, how long is everlasting? Everlasting torment!

Now, we like to say that "hope springs eternal in the human breast," but one great poet said above the doors of hell should be engraved these words: "Abandon all hope, ye who enter here." Hell is a place, dear friend, that, once you're there, you'll never get out of hell. If you don't want to go to hell, you don't have to go to hell. But, if you die and go to hell, you will never ever get out of hell. And, the Bible says, "*The smoke of their torment ascendeth...for ever and ever.*" (Revelation 14:11)

## E. Hell Is a Place of Burning

Hell is a place of burning. Now Jesus, in Mark 9:48, spoke of *“where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.”* (Mark 9:48) “Pastor, do you believe there’s fire in hell?” Let me read to you some descriptions of hell taken from the Bible: “the thirst that is not quenched,” “unquenchable fire,” “a lake of fire,” “fire and brimstone,” “everlasting burnings,” “flames of fire,” “everlasting fire,” “in flaming fire,” “a furnace of fire,” “the devouring fire,” “eternal fire.” These are not my words; these are biblical words. You say, “Well, I don’t believe it’s literal fire; I believe it’s symbolic fire.” I hope for your sake it is not symbolic if you die and go to hell because I want to tell you that the symbol is always weaker than the reality. Which is more beautiful—the painting of a sunset or the sunset? The sunset, of course. The painting is but a symbol of the reality. And, if it is but symbolic, if it is a figure of speech, if it is a metaphor, then, my dear friend, God chose the thing that causes the most intense suffering and pain that we know of.

Have you ever burned your finger—just touched a hot stove and burned your finger, felt that pain? I’m speaking to some who are in this building tonight who’ve gone through fire. I’m speaking to some who’ve had great portions of their body burned. I’ve been in the hospital to see those people who couldn’t be touched, couldn’t be turned, to lie there and suffer, and no narcotic is enough to kill and deaden the pain. I’m telling you that whatever it is, God ransacked the lectionaries and the dictionaries of this world to choose a word that He calls burning to illustrate what it’s going to be like for those who refuse the Lord Jesus, for those who spurn the gospel of grace, for those who trample under their dirty feet the precious blood of the Lamb of God. The Bible calls it burning.

You can laugh at this. You can say, “I don’t believe it.” That is your privilege. But, my dear friend, I’m giving to you tonight the Word of God. I don’t like to think about it. Again, the Bible calls hell a place of “outer darkness.” Jesus said in Matthew 25:30: *“And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”* (Matthew 25:30) How far from heaven the lost will be in a place that the Bible called “outer darkness”! How far from your mother you will be, son—your mother in heaven and you in hell! How far from your wife you will be, mister, when she goes to heaven and you go to hell! It is a place of outer darkness, everlasting separation.

## F. Hell Is a Place of Memory

Again, as we think of the horrors of hell, I want to tell you that hell is going to be a place of memory. You’re going to carry your memory with you. In the sixteenth chapter of Luke, that rich man who fared sumptuously, he had it all, but he died and went to hell. And, he cried and asked for a drop of water to cool his tongue. And, in Luke 16:25, Abraham said unto him, *“Son, remember...”* (Luke 16:25) And, that tells me, dear friend, that this man in hell had his memory of this life. And, if you go to hell, you’ll remember:

you'll remember every sin you ever committed; you'll remember every gospel sermon you ever heard, every gospel invitation, every song; you'll remember this service. I pray God that God will give you a demonstration, an illustration, of this service. And, this very service tonight will burn in your consciousness through all eternity, and you will remember the night that Adrian Rogers preached that sermon on hell, the night that Adrian Rogers tore his heart out, the night that I begged you not to go to hell. You will remember! Remember! Oh, hell is a place of memory! You would give a thousand worlds like this one to have the opportunity that you have tonight to come down this aisle and give your heart to Jesus Christ.

### **III. The Refuge from Hell**

Now, let me just close the message tonight by talking to you about not only the reality of hell and the sufferings of hell, but I want to talk to you about the refuge from hell. I want to talk to you about how to escape hell. It's not too late. We're still on mercy's side of the door. God doesn't want you to go to hell. The love of God will follow you right to the brink of hell and stand there with outstretched arms, and with tears the Lord Jesus will beg you not to go to hell. The Bible says in 2 Peter 3:9: "*The Lord is not...willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*" (2 Peter 3:9) And, God doesn't want you to die and go to hell.

I believe that God has put five major Rs on the road to hell. And, if you go to hell, you'll have to climb over these roadblocks that God has placed there. I mean, did you know that people take more difficulty to go to hell than they do to go to heaven, that people have to fight and work to go to hell? They actually struggle to go to hell. They have to climb over the roadblocks that God has built on the road to hell.

#### **A. Roadblock #1: God's Holy Word**

The very first one is this book, God's Holy Word. If you go to hell, you'll have to climb over this book. You'll have to trample beneath your feet this book because God has His Word here tonight to warn you not to go to hell.

#### **B. Roadblock #2: The Holy Spirit**

But, not only that; the Holy Spirit is God's roadblock on the road to hell—God's Holy Spirit, tonight. I know because I've prayed, and I prayed that God would use me, God's Holy Spirit tonight is speaking to you, seeking you. And, that still, small voice that you hear within you is God's loving Spirit sent into your heart to say, "Come to Jesus." And, you'll have to insult the Holy Spirit. You'll have to do despite to the Holy Spirit. You'll have to trample under your feet the Holy Spirit in order to get to hell.

### **C. Roadblock #3: The Prayers of God's People**

I'll tell you something else that God has put as a roadblock on the road to hell, and that is the prayers of God's people. I have prayed for you. I try not to preach a sermon that I don't soak in prayer. Our deacons pray for you. Doubtless, you have a mother who prays for you, a father who prays for you, a brother who prays for you, a sister who prays for you, a neighbor who prays for you, somebody who's praying for you and saying, "O God, don't let them die and go to hell!"

### **D. Roadblock #4: The Church**

But, if you go to hell, you'll have to step over God's Word to get there. If you go to hell, you'll have to step over the wooings and the pleadings of the Holy Spirit to get there. If you go to hell, you'll have to step over the prayers of those that love you and those who plead for you to get there. I'll tell you, if you go to hell, you'll have to step over the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. This church is God's roadblock to hell. God put this church in this city. God wants this church to be here to warn you "*to flee from the wrath to come.*" (Matthew 3:7; Luke 3:7)

### **E. Roadblock #5: The Cross of Christ**

But, I'll tell you, most of all, dear friend, if you go to hell, you'll have to climb over the bloody cross of Jesus Christ to get there. God put His darling Son upon the cross, and God let Jesus suffer and bleed and die in agony and blood. And, I tell you, if you go to hell, it will be because you trampled beneath your feet the cross of Christ; you climbed over God's mighty demonstration of His love for you.

## **Conclusion**

¶ Years ago, I read a story. Gipsy Smith, the great evangelist, told the story. He said he was raised a gypsy boy, and one day the gypsies were traveling, going from one place to another, and they tried to get their wagons across a little narrow bridge crossing a stream. And somehow, in crossing the stream, one of the horses reared. And, the horse was frightened, and the carriage and the wagons tipped over. And, this gypsy boy's mother fell into the rushing torrent, the water of that stream. The gypsy boy was not a good swimmer, but he pulled his coat from off his back and jumped into the water and tried to get his mother. But, she was frightened, and she panicked; and she fought him. And, he tried to save her, and she pulled him under. And, he wasn't a good swimmer. He said, "Mother, be still! I want to help you!" But, she was in such a frenzy and such a panic that she kept fighting and kept fighting. Finally, exhausted, the boy released the hold on his mother, and she sank beneath the swirling waters and was drowned.

Later on, at the funeral, that gypsy boy was there, and he looked down at the face of his now dead mother, and the hot tears coursed down his cheeks. And, he said,

“Mother! Mother, I tried to save you, but you wouldn’t let me! Mother, I tried to save you, but you wouldn’t let me! Mother, I tried to save you, but you wouldn’t let me!”

I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, as you drop into hell, will say, “Oh, sinner, I tried to save you! I tried to save you! I died to save you, but you wouldn’t let me. You wouldn’t let me. You wouldn’t let me.”†

*“The Lord is not...willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9)†*

# A Foundation for the Family

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** December 6, 1992

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 5:31–32; 7:24; 19:1–9

*“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock.”*

MATTHEW 7:24

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The God-Designed Plan for Marriage
    - A. The Priority of Marriage: Leave
    - B. The Preeminence of Marriage: Cleave
    - C. The Purpose of Marriage: Be
  - II. The God-Desired Preeminence of Marriage
  - III. The God-Declared Pardon for a Failed Marriage
- Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you please find a place in God’s Word in Matthew chapter 5 as we continue our journey through the Sermon on the Mount under the general heading “Building on the Rock”—Matthew chapter 5.

Some years ago I read of a man who bought from the city the city garbage dump. It had been filled up. It was a landfill and it was for sale. He negotiated with the city fathers and bought that landfill because he had a plan for it. He began to haul in dirt and cover all of that garbage. And then he took his bulldozers and worked it over and tamped it down. And then he laid out a subdivision. It was a beautiful subdivision. He had streets and sidewalks; contractors came in and built houses; and young families bought those houses and moved in. And it was as beautiful and as pretty a neighborhood as you would ever see for several years. And then the streets began to buckle. The sidewalks began to crack, and foundations began to give way beneath those houses. And the roofs began to sag, and the walls began to crack. And one by one, the people moved out. And it was absolutely a worthless subdivision. The old-timers knew what was wrong. They just laughed and they said, “Well, you know, that was a foolish endeavor, to begin with. It was all built on garbage.” And we have so many homes today that are built the same way.

I want to talk to you today on this subject: “A Foundation for the Family.” Matthew chapter 5 and verse 31: *“It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: but I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her”—*that is, the divorcee—*“committeth adultery.”* (Matthew 5:31) And then, turn, if you will, to chapter 7, and look, if you will, in verse 24: *“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock”—*not upon garbage, but upon a rock. (Matthew 7:24)

Now I want to talk to you know about “A Foundation for the Family.” We’re living in a time of national tragedy. And that tragedy is homes that are built on garbage, and throwaway marriages. People get married looking for an ideal. And that ideal turns to an ordeal. And then they look around for a new deal. And they are trying to start all over again, and they say, “Well, I’m just going to get a fresh start; I’m going to divorce this mate and marry another.” That is becoming an American way of life. But, oh, the hurts, the heartaches, the hellishness that comes by not obeying the Word of God!

My dear friend, marriage is for keeps. That was a good place for an *amen*. I asked Joyce, “Joyce, will you love me when I’m old and unattractive? She said, “Of course I do.”

That’s the way it is to be: one man for one woman till death do them part. You don’t come into marriage with the idea that, “If it doesn’t work out, we’ll bail out.” Marriage is made in heaven; but, my dear friend, it is worked out here on earth.

*Newsweek* magazine recently said, “The landscape is littered with victims of the divorce epidemic: ex-wives raising their children alone, former husbands trying to start new lives and still be good fathers to kids they see only on specified days, and the children themselves often torn apart between two warring parents.” Then, in a recent ten-year study of sixty divorced middle-class families in Northern California, psychologist Judy Wallerstein found that only ten percent of the ex-spouses said they had both succeeded in improving their own lives. Only ten percent said it was better. “Divorce,” Wallerstein said, “has been a wrenching experience for every family I have ever seen.” And I say today, my dear friend, we are in an epidemic of it. And no wonder we have so many broken lives!

Now, you see, broken homes produce broken lives that produce broken homes that produce broken lives that produce broken homes, and the cycle goes on and on and on. And we need to learn from the Word of God how to break that cycle and get some foundations for the family. God hates divorce. God has said in Malachi chapter 2, verse 16, that he hates divorce; He hates putting away. (Malachi 2:16)

Now there are three things that I want you to see today as we talk about foundations for the family.

## I. The God-Designed Plan for Marriage

First of all, I want you to see the God-designed plan for marriage. Now, look, if you will again, in verses 31 and 32: *“It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: but I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.”* (Matthew 5:31–32)

Now that’s what Jesus said here in Matthew chapter 5. And then there is a companion passage over here in Matthew chapter 19 and I want you to read that. Matthew chapter 19, and I begin in verse 1: *“And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judaea beyond Jordan; and great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there. The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him,”*—now the word *tempting* means they were “testing” Him—*“and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?”* There was a rabbi in this day, Hillel, who was teaching that you could put away your wife if she didn’t please you with her cooking. You could put her away if her voice was too loud. You could put her away if she said something disrespectful to your parents. They had all kinds of laws. Hillel was teaching this. They asked Jesus, “Do you agree with Rabbi Hillel?” That’s what they were doing. “Can a man put away his wife for every cause?” *“And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,”*—by the way, my dear friend, God is against the idea of unisex. When God made man and woman, He made *he-men* and *she-women*; a *him* and a *her*, not a *shim*. And God made them that way: male and female—*“and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain”*—they two—*“shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh.”* And then, listen to this: *“What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”* (Matthew 19:1–6)

Now here is the God-designed plan for marriage. And the Lord Jesus, in conjunction with the Sermon on the Mount, and here in Matthew 19, gives us that plan. Now you could take the best carpenter in the world—I mean the very best carpenter in the world—and tell him to build a house, and if he doesn’t know what a house was, he couldn’t build it, no matter what kind of a carpenter he is. You can take the most wonderful children in the world and say, “Build a Christian home,” or, “Build a home as God designed,” and if you don’t know what God designed, how are you going to build it?

So, let’s find out what God’s design is. What is the God-designed plan for marriage? Now in this verse in Matthew chapter 19 there are three key verbs. Do you know what a verb is? It’s an action word. One of those verbs is the word *leave*. The other verb is the word *cleave*. And the other verb is the word *be*. *Leave*, *cleave*, and *be*: all of my marriage counseling is just wrapped up in these three words. And all marriage



problems come from a misunderstanding of these three words. This is God's plan for marriage.

### **A. The Priority of Marriage: Leave**

What Jesus Christ is doing is quoting the book of Genesis right here. Now when Jesus said, "Let a man leave his father," that speaks of the priority of marriage. Marriage is the highest of all human relationships. And the relationship between husband and wife is a closer bond than the relationship, believe it or not, of parent and child. You may not believe that, or you may not say that is natural; but it is supernatural, and it is God's Word that the relationship between husband and wife is the closest, dearest relationship here on this earth. And so when you're raising your boys and girls and getting them ready for marriage, you have to be preparing them to leave your home.

Do you know what your job is as a parent? It's to give your children wings so they can leave the nest. The Bible says that the eagle stirs her nest. (Deuteronomy 32:11) That is, what does she do? She teaches her little eaglets to fly. Now that's what you do with your children if you're wise. You know, boys and girls today don't need to be too comfortable at home. A mother eagle would come in there with little fish and juicy worms and keep feeding those eagles; but after a while there comes a time when she has to stir the nest and get that thing out.

Do you know what many of us do? I know I've been guilty of it—saying, "I don't want my children to have it as hard as I had it. I want them to have the things I didn't have." But I have to ask myself this question: Am I not only giving them the things my parents could not give me, but am I giving them the things my parents did give me?

I was born in the Depression, and right in the heart of the Depression, and I have a real good idea I wasn't planned. Thank God I wasn't aborted. But I don't think I was planned. I've never discussed this with my mother. I've never wanted to put her on the spot. I just don't think I was planned. But that didn't make any difference. I know I was loved. And I'm going to tell you something. We had very little, but we had so much.

And do you know what I remember primarily about our childhood? The good times we had because we had so little! I can remember times when my dad, because there was no work, would say, "Well, let's just load up and go fishing." We would spend the day on Singer Island there, one of the most beautiful islands there off of the coast of Palm Beach—all day long there in the crystalline clear water. And we would catch minnows when Dad would fish. And then we would build a big bonfire on the shore and put a big can of Van Camp's Pork & Beans in that fire until it got hot and bring some grease and fry those fish. And, hey, folks, I just long to do that today. I mean, listen. That's something that money can't buy.

I can remember going out there and playing ball with a broken bat. Did you ever

have a bat that you had to wrap with tape because the bat got broke? Listen. If the guy that had the old ball went home, the game was over. I mean, that's all we had. But listen. Those were good times.

Things don't make us happy. Don't just be so interested in making your children comfortable. Try to build into them some character and get them ready to leave the nest. Do you know what your job is? Your job is to work yourself out of a job. Did you know that a parent is successful when the children no longer need them? You see, you work yourself out of a job, but you don't work yourself out of a relationship. And that sometimes is hard to do, because there are several kinds of love.

You see, a child has *need* love. A child will love his mother. Do you know why the child loves his mother? Not because she is pretty in her face, or not because she is gentle, or anything else. The child loves the mother because the child has needs, and the mother meets the needs. That is *need* love.

Do you know why people have children? They have *need-to-be-needed* love. That's the reason why there are people today—and, oh, what a tragedy it is that little babies are being aborted—because there are so many parents who want to adopt a baby. They need to be needed. They want somebody to love. They just have a need to be needed, to give that love. And that is a God-given need. And so the little baby has *need* love, and the parents have *need-to-be-needed* love, and that bonds them together right away. And that's the reason there is such a wonderful bond there.

But, you see, what happens is this: after a while, a child grows out of that *need* love. There comes a time—a normal, natural time—when the child does not need the mother like the child used to need the mother. And it is our job to help that child to stand alone. To the degree that you can do that, you are a successful parent—when they no longer need you.

Now that is very hard, because some parents, when they see this happening, when that child is getting to be fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, they see that child beginning now to stand alone and make their own decisions and do their own thing. The parent says, "Now, wait a minute: they're getting away." And the child no longer has the *need* love, but the parent still has the *need-to-be-needed* love, and so what the parent does is create artificial needs. And at that point rebellion can start, because when you make those apron strings too tight, and you put those cords too tight, and you build the wall to that nest too high, and this child is wanting to be independent and stand alone, and you keep reinforcing your need to be needed; when he no longer has the need love, then you, if you're not careful, you'll say, "You are rebellious." It may not be rebellion at that point; it may be your problem at that point. But you may be creating a rebellious child if you are not careful. What you do is just simply help that child, and teach them how to make decisions; teach them how to earn their money; teach them how to save money;

teach them how to go out and face this world and stand alone. Don't try to hold them too tight. Like a bar of soap, if you try to hold them too tight, it will pop out of your hand.

But, my dear friend, if you teach them to stand alone, and let them leave father and mother, they will come back and be the best friends you ever had. You work yourself out of a job, but you don't work yourself out of a relationship. And this is what marriage is all about: where a man will leave his father and his mother and will cleave unto his wife. And so the verb here is the word *leave*. And that speaks of the priority of marriage. Marriage is the highest of all human relationships. That is the priority of marriage.

### **B. The Preeminence of Marriage: Cleave**

But then, look at the next verb, if you will—and that is the word *cleave*. He leaves his father and mother and he cleaves unto his wife. Now the word *cleave* here means to “glue” or to “weld.” There is a bonding that takes place, a welding that takes place between a man and a woman. And this speaks not only of the priority of marriage—to *leave*—but the preeminence of marriage—to *cleave*. And if you keep those two things together, the priority and the preeminence of marriage, don't even consider divorce. Don't even consider it. Take your scissors and cut the word out of the dictionary. Get it out of your vocabulary. Don't even consider it. It is not an option. You are bound to your husband. You are bound to your wife. You cleave to your husband. You cleave to your wife. You show me two kids who consider divorce as an option, and I'll show you two kids who have a much greater potential for the disintegration of their home.

You see, listen. Do you think that those people who have divorced get divorced because they have a problem? And those people who don't get divorced don't get divorced because they don't have any problems? Who are you kidding? All couples have essentially the same kinds of problems. The difference is in commitment. My dear friend, *there are no problems too big to solve; there are just people too small to solve them*. All people have problems. But there comes a time of commitment where you say, “I will cleave to my wife.”

### **C. The Purpose of Marriage: Be**

Now, *leave*, *cleave*, and the third verb is *be*. And be what? You are to be one flesh. Now that means more than sex and the sexual union. A person is a whole person, and you are to be one flesh physically, psychologically, and spiritually. You are one flesh physically—that is, for procreation and multiplication—because God said, “*Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.*” (Genesis 1:28; Genesis 9:1) And by the way, you know, it's getting out of vogue today to have children. Oh, my dear friend, “Children are the heritage of the Lord... Blessed is the man that hath his quiver full of them.” (Psalm 127:3, 5) You say, “But we have things we want. We want another car. We want vacations. We want this and that.” May God pity you! “Oh,” you say, “children make a

make rich man poor.” No, my dear friend, they make a poor man rich. A rich man can’t take his money to heaven. I’m taking all my kids to heaven.

Listen, my dear friend. Children are the heritage of the Lord. And you’re to be one flesh for procreation: that you might reproduce and replenish. Enjoy God’s blessing. And then you are to be one flesh psychologically. This is not only for procreation, but for communication, to enjoy one another. The deepest emotional and psychological needs of man are met in woman, and of woman in man. “It is not good that the man should be alone,” (Genesis 2:18) the Lord said. And not only should your wife be your sweetheart; she ought to be your friend. Not only should you be lovers; you ought to be friends.

And then, one flesh not only physically, and one flesh psychologically, but one flesh spiritually—and that is for communion. There is no deeper, sweeter communion than a man and woman loving God together.

Before I left home today my darling wife and I sat at breakfast and held hands and prayed for our children, and prayed for fellow ministers in this city and fellow ministers around the world, and prayed for other things that were on our heart. And thank God for that union and that communion where two are one spiritually and they worship God and enjoy the things of God together.

## **II. The God-Desired Preeminence of Marriage**

Now, my dear friend, that is the divine plan for marriage. That is what the Lord Jesus said: the God-designed plan. Now, here’s the second thing I want you to see: Not only the God-designed plan for marriage, but I want you to see the God-desired preeminence of marriage. Now, go back to Matthew chapter 5, if you will, and look again—Matthew chapter 5, verses 31 and 32: *“It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:”—Deuteronomy chapter 24—“but I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.”* (Matthew 5:31–32)

Here our Lord Jesus is talking about the God-desired preeminence of marriage. And Jesus permitted—not commanded, but permitted—divorce for only one reason—and that was fornication. Go back again, if you will now, to the Matthew 19 passage, and we’re going to pick up where we left off. Matthew chapter 19 and verse 5. Jesus said, *“For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?”* “If you say that you are not to put her away, why did Moses allow this?” *“He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts”—“allowed you”—“suffered you to put*

*away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.*” That is, that is not God’s design; that is not God’s plan; that was only concession for the hardness of men’s hearts. “*And I say unto you,*”—now here’s verse 9—“*Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication...*”—*porneia*—“*fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.*” (Matthew 19:5–9)

Now Moses permitted, but did not command, divorce. Divorce is not God’s original intent. And *porneia* is sexual immorality. A physical act of sexual immorality is the only reason, the only allowance, that the Lord Jesus gave for divorce. But He did not command divorce. He did not even commend divorce. As a matter of fact, our Lord teaches that restoration and forgiveness, even in the case of marital infidelity, is far, far better.

Now I guess the classic example of that is in the book of Hosea. If you read the book of Hosea, Hosea had a wife whose name was Gomer, who not only committed immorality, but she finally ended up as a prostitute. And yet Hosea went back to her, reclaimed her, forgave her, remarried her, and restored the home. And that is God’s ideal. Now of course, you cannot make the other partner do that. Sometimes Hosea could have asked, and Gomer could have refused and gone her sinful way, and Hosea then would have been helpless to do anything about it. But thank God for the Hoseas of this world who are willing and able to go and forgive and restore a marriage.

There are so many foolish excuses today for divorce. And people today in America, it’s amazing; they say, for example, “Well, I don’t love anymore, and since the love has gone out of our marriage, then we’ll get a divorce.” That, my dear friend, is never a reason for divorce. And I’ll tell you why. It is not love that sustains your marriage; it is your marriage that sustains your love.

Now, get this in your heart. When you think of love, you’re probably thinking of emotion. But when God speaks of love, God is not speaking primarily of emotion; God is speaking of commitment. You are commanded to love. Let me give you a verse—Ephesians chapter 5, verse 25. Here is a command to every man in this building who is married: “*Husbands, love your wives.*” (Ephesians 5:25)

Now that’s not a suggestion; that is a command. You are commanded to love her. And love is something you are commanded to do. It is something you can learn to do. In Titus chapter 2 and verse 4, the Bible says the older women are to teach the younger women to love their husband. (Titus 2:4) You see, love is not something that is so ephemeral, so emotional, that maybe you see it, maybe you don’t; you fall in love, you fall out of love; you are a helpless victim. No, no, no, no! The Bible doesn’t teach that.

You know that foolish song you used to sing some ten, twelve, years ago, “Please release me, let me go; I don’t love you anymore,” and all that? That’s garbage. Beautiful tune. As a matter of fact, that man got saved and rewrote that whole thing. No, my dear

friend, you are commanded to love.

Now there's nothing wrong with romance. There's nothing wrong with emotion. I hope you keep the honey in your honeymoon. But I remember when I fell in love with a little girl named Joyce Gentry. I remember sitting there in my desk, looking across and seeing that girl, and I said, "I like her." I just liked her. I don't know why. I liked the way she smiled. It was just something about her. I think I liked the fact she always had her homework done—and I never did. I don't know what it was. But I looked at her. And it's something about that, that I just began to saddle up to her and write her notes and talk to her and see her in the playground and at the school parties.

I remember one time looking up there. I was sitting in church and looking at Joyce sitting in the choir. I thought, "I love her with all of my heart." It seemed to me I saw a halo around her head. I just thought—that is, I really to this day—I did see a halo. I don't know whether it was in my mind, or whether it was a halo; but I saw it. It was just a glow about her. And the romance, that was there. And I can remember all of those wonderful things: the moonlight, the roses, the sweetness. That's wonderful. But, my dear friend, it hasn't all been that way. Raising four children, having the funeral of the fifth child who died as an infant, and getting those kids through school, and working through school, and going through seven years of school married, where I was the breadwinner and letting Joyce stay home, and still getting an education, and all of that—it was hard. And there have been difficult times, and there have been disagreements. I married a beautiful girl. I'm married to a complicated woman now. My dear friend, I have to make adjustments. And she has to make adjustments. And it has never gotten easier; it gets harder. I am telling you, it's an amazing thing. You would think after all of this time we would listen. We're having new things to adjust to every day. And do you know what keeps us together? It is love, not romance. And do you know what keeps the love there? Commitment. "*Husbands, love your wives.*" "Teach the women to love their husbands."

Now, my dear friend, don't give me this stuff about the love going out of your marriage and therefore you're going to get divorced. And then somebody said, "Oh well, you know, it's better for the children. We're just so concerned about the children, and so because of the children it would be far better for the children if we got a divorce than to raise those children in the atmosphere of an unhappy home."

Well, my dear friend, the study of broken homes does not back that up. Divorce is not a positive factor for the children. As a matter of fact, it might be helpful, if you want to know whether it would be better for the children or not, to ask the children. And when you say, "Well, it's better for the children that we get a divorce than to have the children live around constant arguments," well, you're just guilty of binary thinking. You only have two alternatives: one alternative is arguments the other alternative is divorce. I

want to tell you there is a third alternative—and that is for you to get right with God; for you to get right with God and cut this stuff out and make your marriage work. Your talking about “It’s better for the children,” that is generally an act of selfishness. You portray it as a noble sacrifice for the children when you ought to be doing something about the relationship that is rending the hearts and lives of these children.

And then here is the classic one: “Personally, well, you know, I owe it to myself to be happy.” Where did you get that idea? “I owe it to myself to be happy. It’s the American right. I am to be happy.” My dear friend, God has another plan for you—and that is that you be holy. Now happiness is fine. But happiness, when you make happiness your prime goal in life, that is the ultimate selfishness. And, my dear friend, it will end up in the ultimate unhappiness.

You do not live in isolation. When you got married, you made a holy vow. You made a vow to your partner. And it is not only your happiness, but it is his welfare, her welfare, that you are to be concerned about. You made a vow to Almighty God. And, my dear friend, your vow to God is more important than your happiness. You even took a vow upon yourself. And your character is more important than that. And don’t come around here saying, “Well, I am supposed to be happy.” No, my dear friend, God has a plan for your life—and it is to obey His Word.

Somebody says, “But I prayed to God, and God told me it is all right. God wants me to get a divorce. God is leading me this way.” My dear friend, God never, never, never, never goes contrary to His Word—never! God is not going to make an exception for you. And if you say, “Well, God told me that He’s making an exception for me,” you’re guilty of self-deception and autosuggestion. It is not the Word of God.

So, just simply throw away your parachute. Divorce is not an option. “Well,” you say, “my marriage is in deep difficulty.” Well, it may be. And may I say this, my dear friend: Marriages are not healed overnight. And even if you make a decision to put your marriage back together, it’s not going to be just wonderful. As a matter of fact, it may be tortuous. Marriages are not healed overnight. But I’m going to tell you something: the direction of your marriage can be changed overnight. That is the important thing: just simply that you turned and began to go in the right direction. It may take you a long time to get there, but at least you’re headed in that way. And by a decision, by a consecration of a surrendered will, the direction of your home can be changed overnight. And you can begin to go in that right direction.

And why did you get married, to begin with? Well, you loved her. She loved you. You saw things in each other. And if you were to sit down and think of all the positive things, you would think of so many positive things, but you think about the ten percent of the things that are bad. Well, why throw away ninety percent of a good marriage because of ten percent of the things that are bad? Why not work on those ten percent of the things?

Change what you can change. Accept what you cannot change. Commit it to God. And don't come around with these excuses.

### III. The God-Declared Pardon for a Failed Marriage

Now, here's the third thing I want to say. I've talked about the God-designed plan for marriage. I've talked about the God-desired permanence of marriage. Let me talk to you about the God-declared pardon for a failed marriage. Now we're in Matthew chapter 5. Before long, we're going to get into Matthew 6, where our Lord taught us to pray. And in Matthew chapter 6, verse 12, He taught us to pray this: *"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."* (Matthew 6:12)

Now, what about people who have already failed? "Pastor Rogers, are you here today trying to put a guilt trip on me because I've got a divorce and I've been remarried?" No, no, no, no, no! No! Oh, God, no! God is a God of forgiveness. God is a God of grace. And if you have failed, and your marriage is irreparably broken, you've remarried, you've got a second home and so forth, you can't unscramble eggs; you can't go backwards. And one thing that really bothers me today is there are those who want to make divorce the unpardonable sin. They want to make divorce a dead-end street. They want to treat divorced people like second-class citizens in the kingdom of heaven. And they sit around and pass judgment.

It's an amazing thing that if a Christian could be a murderer or something, and he gets saved, and they put him on "From the Prison to the Pulpit," how wonderful: he's a preacher of the gospel! Or somebody who has been maybe a whoremonger before he got saved, and he got saved from all of this, and we say, "How wonderful! How wonderful! Look what God has done for him!" But let somebody get a divorce; let somebody get an irreparable divorce where it cannot be put together, whether they be the guilty party or the innocent party, and then there come those people who want with great judgment to say somehow that they are second-class citizens in the kingdom of heaven. My dear friend, if you have repented of your sin and given your heart to Jesus Christ, there is no such thing as a second-class citizen in the kingdom of heaven. Put it down big, put it down plain, and put it down straight—Romans chapter 8 and verse 1: *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."* (Romans 8:1) Hallelujah for that! *"The blood of Jesus Christ [God's] Son cleanseth us from all sin."* (1 John 1:7) Isaiah 1:18: *"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."* (Isaiah 1:18)

Let me tell you about a church. A church is not a showcase for saints; it is a hospital for sinners. That's why we're here: to help people who need help. And if you think that I'm here, my dear friend, to push you down because you made a mistake, which one of



us here has never made a mistake? I remember reading in the Bible about that woman who was taken in the very act of adultery, and there were there those who wanted to stone her. You read about it in John chapter 8 and verse 7: *“So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.”* (John 8:7) And then in John chapter 8, beginning in verse 10: *“When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman,”*—that is, all the men went away—*“he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.”* (John 8:10–11) Jesus did not take a weak view of sin. Jesus did not say, “I am condoning sin,” when He forgave her; but Jesus said, “I do not condemn you; go, and sin no more.” And there is that proper balance.

I remember reading there in John 4 where Jesus spoke to that woman at the well, that Samaritan woman, that outcast. She had had five husbands. But rather than condemning her, the Lord Jesus Christ knew the thirst of her soul, and Jesus knew that she had gone from affair to affair, from husband to husband, trying to find out what He alone would give her, and He gave to her the water of life and satisfied her thirsty soul. He didn't condemn her; He saved her—brought her to Himself.

And what would Jesus do today? I'll tell you what He would do today. He would do what He has always done. For Hebrews chapter 13 and verse 8 says, *“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”* (Hebrews 13:8)

Sure, divorce is wrong. And as long, my dear friend, as there is breath in these lungs, I'm going to be preaching what our Lord says about it. But there are two sides also, my dear friend. While we must never lower the standard, we must never ever become pharisaical; we must never become hardhearted to those who need the grace of God.

And what is the position of this church? I'll tell you what it is. There is a dangerous precipice, a dangerous cliff, called divorce. And our job, our duty, as a church is to build a wall as high as we can, as strong as we can, and say to our kids, “Don't fall over that precipice. It's dangerous. It's destructive. Don't do it! Don't do it! Don't do it!” But, my dear friend, for those who do, for whatever reason, not only are we going to keep the wall up here, but we're going to keep an ambulance down there. And we'll keep plenty of gas in it to minister to those people and show them the love and the grace of God that every one of us have received. And that's the kind of a church we need to be and every church needs to be.

## Conclusion

Now, my dear friend, listen to me. If you're married, and Jesus Christ is not the head of your home, make Jesus Christ the head of your home, because if you don't, you have

very little chance of having a Bible home. As a matter of fact, you have no chance at all—without making Jesus Christ the head. You might be able to survive, and stay married until you die, but you'll not have the kind of a home that I'm talking about. Make Jesus Christ the head of your home.

If you're divorced, and it was your fault, ask God to forgive you, and be reconciled to your partner. Your partner's already remarried, or you're already remarried? Still, go, and in repentance go to that person and make every wrong as right as you can. And give forgiveness. And receive the forgiveness of God. If you have been divorced against your will, and you're the victim of somebody's treachery, ask God to take the bitterness out of your heart, and forgive that person, even if they won't repent. Forgive them in spirit. You cannot fully forgive them until they repent. But have the spirit of forgiveness, as Jesus prayed from the cross, "*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.*" (Luke 23:34) And take the remainder of your life and give it to God. God is not finished with you.

And if you're listening to me and you're thinking about getting a divorce, don't do it. Don't do it. Somebody out there listening by television, I beg you in the name of Jesus, take the Word of God, ask God to help you, and put that house back together.

And let me just say to those of you who are married, if you have a holy, happy Christian home, I want to tell you it is probably in today's world the best testimony for Jesus you can have—just your house, just your home. Let your home be a light where Christ shines. And don't build upon garbage, but build your house upon the rock. The Bible tells us in Ecclesiastes chapter 4 and verse 12, "*A threefold cord is not quickly broken.*" (Ecclesiastes 4:12) That is a man, a woman, and Jesus Christ. My dear friend, when you put that threefold cord together, then it's very hard for the devil to break it.

# The Miracle Mile

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: December 13, 1992**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 5:38–42**

*“And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.”*

MATTHEW 5:41

## Outline

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## Introduction

We’re preaching through the Sermon on the Mount, and we’re in Matthew chapter 5. Would you be finding it, please—Matthew chapter 5? And, in just a moment, we’re going to read, beginning in verse 38, and read right on through to verse 42—Matthew 5:38–42.

I picked up the newspaper the other day and read an article about a book written by the feminist Gloria Steinem. She’s made a name for herself as, I guess, a radical feminist. And, the title of the book was this: *Revolution From Within: A Book of Self-Esteem*. And, somebody has gone through that book and noted the following facts. I did not read the book. But, here’s what she mentions about self in that book. She mentions “inner self” five times, “self-esteem” 172 times, “future self” thirty-eight times, “true self” twenty times, “false self” seven times, “present self” six times. She also mentions “self-love,” “self-alienation,” “self-contentedness,” “unique self,” “self-wisdom,” “self-healing,” “self-rescue,” “self-denigration,” “the astronomy of the self,” “universal self,” “past self,” “forgotten self,” “older self,” “back-of-the-mind self,” “front-of-the-mind self,” “teenage self,” “internal-worthless self,” “external-sexually-valuable self,” “inflated self,” “self-empowerment,” “self-beneath,” “self-complexion,” “best self,” “optimum self.” Sounds a little “self-centered,” doesn’t it?

Well, we live in a world that is a very, very self-centered world. And, somebody has

well said that, “People who are all wrapped up in themselves make a very small package.” How are we going to get outside ourselves? How are we going to learn the joy of a selfless and Christ-filled life? The passage that I’m going to read to you will tell you all about it. The title of the message this morning: “The Miracle Mile.”

Now look, if you will, in Matthew chapter 5, beginning in verse 38: “*Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you*”—that is, Jesus said—“*That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain*”—that is, “Go with him two miles”—“*Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.*” (Matthew 5:38–42) Now, I want you to notice especially verse 41: “*And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain*” (Matthew 5:41)—or, “go with him two.”

The title of the message: “The Miracle Mile.” Now, I want to talk to you about “the miracle mile,” which is the second mile. Jesus said, “If anybody forces you to go with him one mile, go with him two.” (Matthew 5:41)

## **I. The Principle of the Miracle Mile**

The first thing I want you to see is what I’m going to call “the principle of the miracle mile.” Now, what is all of this about? Well, you have to understand the background. You see, the Romans occupied the land of Palestine for about one hundred years, but they had learned something from the Persians, who had, at one time, ruled the world. The Persians had learned a secret—that not only would they conquer a people, but they could use those people in a very advantageous way that, as they subjugated them, they could make them do certain menial tasks. And, one of the things was this: that if a Persian soldier was on his journey and he saw somebody in a conquered land, he could say to that person, “Listen, by law, you must carry my knapsack, and you must carry my weapons for a mile.” And, they had to do that. The Romans learned from the Persians some six hundred years before that that was a very wonderful plan.

And so, the Romans would often take a Jewish citizen, a civilian; a Roman soldier would say to a Jewish civilian, “Here, carry this backpack for me. Carry my burden. Carry my weapons. You must do it by law. You must carry this burden for a mile.” That was the law. And, you talk about something that was humiliating to a Jew! Something that he hated with all of the intensity of his soul would be to be forced to carry another man’s burden for a mile.

Now, it is said that every Jewish boy had marked off a milepost from his house. He knew exactly how far a mile was because he was going to carry that burden a mile but not one step further. He knew exactly how far. And so, this is the situation in Jesus’

time, and it caused so much resentment; it caused so much rebellion. And, the Roman soldiers, according to historians, enjoyed humiliating the Jew by making him carry that burden a mile. They were the occupational army, you know, during that time.

Now, Jesus is preaching. They never went to sleep when Jesus was preaching. Jesus is preaching along, and He says, “And if anybody commands you to go with him a mile, go with him two.” (Matthew 5:41) Boy, at that time, they blinked, and heads jerked. “You mean, you want us to do double duty? You want us to go not only one mile; you want us to go two miles?” Jesus said, “That’s exactly right.” What is the principle of the miracle mile? Are you listening? The principle that Jesus Christ is talking about is simply this: you must do more than is required by law.

Now, the Pharisees and the scribes to whom Jesus was speaking in this Sermon on the Mount, among others, they were very careful to keep the law of God, so they thought. And look, if you will, for example, in verse 20. I think you’ll pick it up in chapter 5, verse 20: *“For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”* (Matthew 5:20) Now, the scribes and the Pharisees were very careful to keep the law—at least, they thought they were. They were keeping the letter of the law. They were keeping the law in a punctiliar way. And, Jesus said—listen—“Unless you are willing to go beyond what the scribes and the Pharisees do, you will in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:20) What the Pharisees had, and what many people in America have today, is what I want to call a “minimum morality,” a “loveless legalism.” And, what is the principle of the miracle mile? It is simply this: to do more than what is required.

¶ I was reading the other day about a farmer who had been in to buy a car, and later on the car salesman came to buy from the farmer a cow. And, here’s the way the farmer sold the cow to the automobile dealer; the farmer priced it this way: “Basic cow: four hundred dollars. Two-toned: an extra forty-five dollars. Extra stomach: seventy-five dollars. Produce storage compartment: sixty dollars. Dispensing device—four spigots, ten dollars each: forty dollars. Genuine cowhide upholstery: 125 dollars. Dual horns: fifteen dollars. Automatic fly swatter: thirty-five dollars.” And, some other things added up to 895 dollars for a four-hundred-dollar cow. Now, the Pharisees were very much like that farmer. I mean, they were willing to do just as much as required, and no more.¶

Somebody has said that “life really is lived on three levels: there’s the hellish level that returns evil for good; and then, there’s the human level that returns good for good and evil for evil; and then, there is the holy level, the heavenly level, that returns good for evil.” That’s what our Lord is saying here in verse 44: *“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.”* (Matthew 5:44) “Those who require you

to carry their burden a mile, carry it two.” (Matthew 5:41) Do more than is expected. Do more than is required. Go beyond that minimum morality. That is the principle of the miracle mile.

## II. The Practice of the Miracle Mile

Secondly, I want you to notice not only the principle of the miracle mile, but the practice of it. Now, if you read this carelessly, you’ll get the idea that Jesus is teaching passivism. For example, look, if you will, in verses 38 and 39: *“Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him [two].”* (Matthew 5:38–41)

Now, is Jesus just teaching that Christians are to be doormats? Is that what He’s teaching? Is Jesus teaching that we can never defend ourselves, that we can never protect our homes, our lives, our loved ones? Not at all! As a matter of fact, Jesus said also, if you will remember in this Sermon on the Mount, that He did not come to diminish, or to destroy, the law of the prophets—He didn’t come to destroy that; He came to fulfill it. (Matthew 5:17) And, Jesus said, “Not a jot, not a tittle, shall fail from the law.” (Matthew 5:18) Jesus believed all of the Old Testament law, and a part of the Old Testament law is that we are to defend our loved ones and to defend, even sometimes to the point of death, our liberties and our rights.

As a matter of fact, Jesus here is quoting Exodus chapter 21, verses 24 and 25. He’s quoting it exactly: *“[An] eye for [an] eye, [a] tooth for [a] tooth, hand for [a] hand, foot for [a] foot, Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.”* (Exodus 21:24–25) If you read the Bible and find pacifism and you think Jesus is talking about us being a pacifist, you’re wrong. As a matter of fact, the Bible is against lawlessness. The Bible is against anarchy. We live in a generation of people who have pudding for brains who are defending the lion’s right to eat the lamb. Jesus never did that. Jesus taught that there should be civil justice.

“But now, wait a minute, pastor. On the one hand, you say that the Bible is against lawlessness and the Bible doesn’t teach pacifism; and yet, here, on the other hand, our Lord says, *‘Resist not evil.’* (Matthew 5:39) Somebody slaps you on one cheek—‘Just turn the other.’ Is that contradictory?” Not rightly understood; it is not.

The great Apostle Paul, I think, gives the greatest commentary on this passage. If you would, turn to Romans chapter 12 right now, and I want you to look at it because if you don’t, you’re going to get confused on this point. Turn to Romans chapter 12, and see what the great Apostle Paul teaches on this subject. Romans 12—and I’m going to

read beginning in verse 17, and I'm going to read right on through Romans 12 'til I get to chapter 13 and go to verse 4. I'll put it all together, and you'll have it exactly as the Bible teaches it. Now, here's what the Apostle Paul said, and he's commenting on what Jesus said—Romans chapter 12 and verse 17: *“Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible”*—now, underscore that sometimes it's not possible—*“If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men”*—sometimes it is not possible. Now, notice verse 19—*“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves”*—that is, “don't take revenge”—*“but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord”*—you can be certain that God is no pacifist—*“Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”* (Romans 12:17–21)

Now, that ends the chapter. And, if that's as far as we read, we'd say, “Well, the Bible teaches pacifism, and the Bible teaches that we're just to lie down in front of evil and let evil take over.” But, continue to read. Go now into Romans chapter 13 and verse 1: *“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers”*—“the higher authorities”—*“For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he”*—the army officer, the soldier, the magistrate—*“For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain”*—God's magistrates have “swords”; that is, authority and power to wound and to hurt—*“for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.”* (Romans 13:1–4) Now, what is this saying? Very simply this: that you and I are not to take personal revenge. But, the Bible does not teach pacifism.

As a matter of fact, the Bible teaches that evil must be restrained. Now, turn to another passage; then I'm going to comment on it—1 Peter chapter 2, verses 13 and 14. Here's what God says to those of us who are citizens—1 Peter 2:13: *“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man”*—that is, to man's laws—*“for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors”*—now, listen to this—*“as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.”* (1 Peter 2:13–14) Now, men are wicked. We live in a wicked society, and the wickedness of human nature has to be restrained by law. And, just to lie down in front of sin and error and evil and wickedness is neither just nor kind because it doesn't protect the innocent, nor does it restrain wickedness.

So, what is our Lord talking about here? Well, let me just say this parenthetically: Have you ever heard it said that you cannot legislate morality? Well, you're right. There

is no law on earth that can make you moral—none. You can't legislate morality. There's not a law written that can make you love me or make me love you. You can't do that with law. Now, here are two fellows over here. Now, let's say we make a law to say that they have to love me. There's no law that can do that. So, therefore, I have to have a law that says they can't kill me. You say, "You cannot legislate morality," so, therefore, you legislate against immorality. That's what it's all about. Laws are not here to make us good. Laws are here because we are so bad and we have to be restrained. And so, what is our Lord saying here when He says that "if somebody will slap you on one cheek, turn the other?" (Matthew 5:39) What is our Lord saying when He's saying, "*Resist not evil*"? (Matthew 5:39) He is teaching that you are not to take personal vengeance. You're not to stand up for your so-called "rights." God has ways of taking vengeance, and God has ways of protecting. And, there are times when we ourselves have to protect our loved ones. But, what He's talking about here is the idea that so many people have—and I'll illustrate it here in a moment—of standing up for their own so-called "rights."

For example, look, if you will, in verse 39, and maybe it will get a little clearer here when we talk about this miracle mile. Go back to Matthew chapter 5 and verse 39. Look at it here. Now, Jesus says in verse 39: "*Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.*" (Matthew 5:39) Now, there are two things, if you wanted to make a Jew angry, two things you could do: one is to spit in his face; the other is to slap him. Have you ever been slapped in the face? I mean, somebody with an open hand, right in the face. Or, to spit in your face? The ultimate act of contemptuousness. What is our Lord saying here when He's saying this? "Go the second mile when your dignity is degraded." You see, that's what they did to the Lord Jesus Christ. By the way, just put in your margin "Matthew chapter 26 and verse 67," and read it when you get home: "*Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands.*" (Matthew 26:67) They spit in the face of Jesus, and they slapped Jesus with an open hand. And, Jesus did not slap back; Jesus just simply turned the other cheek. What is our Lord saying? "When your dignity is degraded, when somebody insults you with an open hand, or a vile word, or whatever it is, just turn the other cheek. Go the second mile."

And then, He gives another illustration. Look, if you will, in verse 40 of this same chapter: "*And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him take thy cloak also.*" (Matthew 5:40) Our Lord is not saying here that you're not supposed to protect your property if somebody is trying to steal it. That's not what He's saying. Here is a law case. You've done something wrong, and somebody has sued you. And, they've gotten a judgment against you. And, you don't have anything to pay so they take your shirt. Our Lord says, "Yes, and give him your coat also. You did wrong. And, don't



just simply pay what's due. Don't just go one mile. Don't just obey the law. Give him your coat also. Go the second mile. Don't just do the minimum. Do more than is required."

And then, when somebody has a need and comes to you and asks you for help, look, if you will, in verse 42: "*Give to him that asketh of thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.*" (Matthew 5:42) Don't just pay what you owe. Anybody can do that. Look in verse 46: "*For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if you salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?*" (Matthew 5:46–47) If you just love those that love you, if you just give to those who can give to you, if you just help those who help you, if you just do what is required of you and no more, any good red-blooded atheist can do that. But, when somebody has a need and they come to you, you don't owe them anything; but Jesus says, "Give to them, and don't turn them away." The Bible says in 1 Timothy chapter 6, verses 17 and 18: "*Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy*"—now, if you have money, listen—"*That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate.*" (1 Timothy 6:17–18) And, 1 John 3, verses 17 and 18: "*But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.*" (1 John 3:17–18)

Now, here is our Lord saying that if you're walking down the street and somebody says to you, "Give me your billfold"; somebody says, "Give me your shoes"; somebody says, "Give me your house"; somebody says, "Give me your automobile," are you to do that? No, that's not what our Lord is saying at all. That is a false and an extreme interpretation of what our Lord is saying here. There is the kind of giving that does not help but it hurts. All scripture has to be compared to scripture. For example, the Apostle Paul said in 2 Thessalonians, "*If any [man] would not work, neither should he eat.*" (2 Thessalonians 3:10) You don't give to a worthless person. You don't give to a professional beggar. You don't give to a fraudulent person. You don't encourage the alcoholic in his booze by giving him more money to buy booze with. That's not what our Lord is talking about. But, what our Lord is talking about is simply this: that we do not simply pay what we owe, but we look beyond what we owe to see what they need and what we can do with that which God has put in our hand. And, by turning the other cheek, or by going beyond that which is required of us in a court of law, or by helping those that we do not owe anything to, we are doing something that Jesus calls "going the second mile." There's the law mile and the legal mile, and there's the love mile and the extra mile that I want to call "the miracle mile."

### **III. The Power of the Miracle Mile**

Now, let me go to the third and final point here this morning. I've talked to you about the principle of the miracle mile. I've talked to you about the practice of it and some illustrations that Jesus gave—and He gave more—about loving our enemies. This whole chapter is full of that—going beyond the minimum morality, going beyond what is required by law and supplied by love. Now, let me, thirdly, just kind of wrap it up and see if I can apply it to where we live today. We've talked about the principle of it. We've talked about the practice of it. Let me talk to you about the power—the power of the miracle mile.

Why? What will the miracle mile do? Why did I call it, when I prepared this message, “the miracle mile”? Well, there are many things it will do, but I want to mention three of them today that, when you begin to live this way, will transform your life and give you joy and power that you will never have any other way.

#### **A. It Will Change Your Attitude**

Number one: It will change your attitude. The second mile is the smile mile. Remember that: the second mile is the smile mile. The first mile is the slave mile. You go the first mile and that's all—you're going to hate it every step of the way. In the first mile, you're required to go that far, and you are the victim. In the second mile, you are the victor. In the first mile, you are being controlled. In the second mile, you are controlling. The first mile is the law mile. The second mile is the love mile. The first mile only makes you bitter. The second mile gives you joy. In the first mile, you are conquered. In the second mile, you have conquered yourself, and the man who makes you carry his burden. The first mile is drudgery. The second mile is victory. It changes your attitude because you say, “I'm not doing this because I have to; I am doing this because I want to—because my Lord has taught me to.” It will change your attitude.

#### **B. It Will Make You a Success**

Here's a second thing the second mile will do: it will make you a success. All successful people, even in the in the natural realm, they are almost always second-milers. The reason that some people are not successful in their spiritual life is that they're just first-milers. They say, “Well, I'm going to do five minutes a day of devotions. Five minutes is up. I'm finished. I'm going to read my Bible so I can mark it up. I'm going to read through the Bible in a year. A dose a day keeps the devil away.” They're just simply doing what they think is required, but that's all they do.

Last night I was speaking with Kemmons Wilson, who was the one of the founders of the Holiday Inn organization back when it was a good family organization. And, he was one of the founders. I have heard Kemmons Wilson talk about what it takes to make success. And, I always laugh when he talks to these high schoolers and others and he

says, “If you want to be a success, you just have to work a half a day; that’s all.” He says, “It doesn’t make any difference if it’s the first twelve hours or the second twelve hours—just half a day; that’s all.” What’s he talking about? If you want to be a success—whether you’re building hotels or building lives for Jesus; it makes no difference—my dear friend, you’ve got to be a second-miler. All of these folks who just simply watch the clock on their job, all they do is what is required of them, what they’re paid to do. My dear friend, if you only do what you are paid to do, you’ll never be paid for what you’ve not done. There’s a difference.

¶ I was reading about Henry Ford. You know, he was kind of eccentric. And, Henry Ford, who built the great Ford organization, he was a genius, but different, eccentric. And, Henry Ford bought the Lincoln factory in Detroit, and it was losing money. And, he was trying to get the thing humming and started. So, he asked somebody to cut down for him a log. They cut a log off a tree, trimmed the limbs off of it. And, he had it brought into the office building, and he laid that log in front of the elevators that go up to the top, right down there on the floor. And, the next morning when everybody came in, there was a log there. So, all of the secretaries and stenographers and executives, they all stepped over that log and went up. And, there it was. Maybe they commented on it, but that was all.

Day after day, the maintenance people cleaned around that log. People stepped over that log. It stayed there, Bob, for three weeks. Nobody asked about it; nobody moved it. Everybody said, “I don’t know what it’s doing there, but it’s not my department. I don’t get paid for handling logs in front of elevators.” And, it stayed there for three weeks. And, Henry Ford called them all in and said, “I put that log there, and not a one of you asked about it. Nobody asked why it was there. Nobody wanted to know about it. Nobody did anything to remove it. And, every one of you are fired.” He fired everybody on that entire floor—fired every one of them; put his son Edsel in there to do something to make that business make money. You see, everybody says, “That’s not my business”; “I’m not there”; “I don’t have anything to do with moving logs”; “I type letters”; “I do this”; “I do that.”¶

You know, we have some folks here at this church, and I thank God for them. They don’t just simply report to work on Monday morning and say, “This is what I’m paid to do, and I’m going to do that,” and when the whistle blows at 4:30 or 5:00, or whenever it is, they go home and forget the rest of it. My dear friend, listen, the second mile will change your attitude. The first mile, you’re being controlled. You’re a victim; you’re forced to do it. The second mile, you say, “I am doing this. Now I am in control.” And, you can whistle while you walk and whistle while you work, going the second mile. The second mile is the mile that brings success in any endeavor—in the physical realm, in the spiritual realm, wherever it is.

### C. It Is the Key to Better Relationships

Thirdly, not only will the second mile change your attitude; not only will this miracle mile make you a successful person; but, my dear friend, it is the key to better relationships. And, therefore, it is the key to witness.

¶ Let's just imagine here we are back two thousand years ago in the land of Palestine. Here's a man out there; he's working in the field. He's plowing along, working in the field. Here comes a Roman soldier. He's got this Roman soldier's backpack on. He's got his spear. He's got his canteen. He has all this. He sees that Jewish man out there in the field. He says, "Hey, I'm talking to you! You! Yeah, you! Come here! Pick this up! I'm tired. Carry that for me!" That Jew throws the reins of that plow down. He scowls. He grits his teeth. He mutters something. The soldier says, "What did you say?" "I didn't say anything." He says, "Pick that up." He picks it up. He says, "Okay, I'm going to carry this, mister. You're a soldier. Your people are in control, and there's nothing we can do about it. And, I've got to do it, and I'm going to do it. But, I want to tell you something, soldier: one of these days, we may be on top, and you may be under. And, I just hope I meet you some day after this is all over." And, he picks that burden up, and he carries it. There's the mark—a mile. And, he throws it down and says, "There! Now I've done it." He walks back to his work. But, he's too angry to work. He hits his fist on the barn door, goes in the house, and his wife says, "What's wrong with you?" "Oh," he says, "don't talk to me about it. I don't want to talk. I don't want any supper. Just forget it." Oh, he's seething. He's an inferno, he's so angry. He's been forced to go a mile.

But now, here's another man. He's heard Jesus give the Sermon on the Mount. A Roman soldier comes along and says, "Hey, you! Come over here!" "You talking to me? Be right there." "Carry that burden." "Yes sir, be glad to. Come on. Let's go." The soldier says, "This man, is he sick? What's wrong with this fellow?" They begin to walk along, and the Jewish man says to the Roman soldier, "Where are you from? Tell me about your family. How long have you been in the army?" And, they're walking along, and they're getting in a conversation. And then, they come finally to the one-mile mark. The Roman soldier says, "Well, thank you for carrying my burden. You've been different than most people. I appreciate it." And, the Jewish boy says, "Wait a minute. You're tired. This is a heavy load. Right down the road about two miles there's a well of water where we can both get a drink. I'm thirsty. I'm sure you must be thirsty. Let me just carry this for you another mile. Tell me some more about your family. Tell me about what it was like back in Rome."

Why, the second mile is so different from the first mile, they become friends. They begin to talk; they begin to converse. They're sitting there drinking water, and the Roman soldier says to the Jewish man, "You know, I've got to confess something to you: I've had the wrong opinion of you Jews. I really have. I've hated Jews. I have

thought you were a squalid race. I thought you had no character. I thought... I've never seen... Listen, just forgive me for the way I've felt about the Jewish people." The Jew says, "Well, listen, you've got a heart just like I do. When you talked about your wife and children, I saw that the heart that beats in your chest is just like the heart that beats in mine." "Why did you go two miles? Why? I mean you didn't have to. Why?" "Well," the Jewish man says, "have you ever heard of a man named Jesus? Many of us think He's the Messiah. I heard Him preach an incredible message. We were there at the Mount of the Beatitudes, and Jesus preached. And, Jesus said, 'When you fellows tell us to go one mile, we're supposed to go two, just out of love.'" He says, "Jesus said that? Who is Jesus? I've never heard anything like that. Tell me about this Jesus. I want to learn more about that. I have never in my life heard anything like that."<sup>f</sup>

Don't you think that would open a door to witness? Don't you think that would make a difference? Don't you think it would make a difference where you worked tomorrow if you began to live that way? Don't you think it would make a difference in your school? Hey, I know it would make a difference in our homes. I know it would make a difference in our jobs. I know it would make a difference if we would just simply say, "I'm not going to go just one mile and do all that is required. I'll do what Jesus says, and I'll go the second mile. When they slap me on one cheek, I'll turn the other. They sue me in law and take my shirt; I'll give 'em my coat. I'll not just give what I owe, but I'll give what they need. Somebody makes me go a mile, I'll go a second mile, and I'll do it with a smile on my face." And, my dear friend, *if people began to live like that on Monday, they'd start believing what I preach on Sunday.* You know it is true. We'd go out and begin to live that miracle mile, the mile that makes a difference.

## Conclusion

And, I just want to say this before I'm finished: Jesus—Jesus, the Son of God—was the One, my dear friend, that went the second mile. All of His life—all of His life—was the life of a second mile. Even in the Garden of Eden God was going the second mile. Adam and Eve had sinned against God, and you would think that God would stay up there in heaven and let Adam and Eve try and find Him. But, there is God, walking in the garden, saying, "Adam, where are you?" (Genesis 3:9) That wasn't the voice of a detective; that was the voice of a brokenhearted God, seeking God. And, Jesus left heaven, came to this earth, and the Bible says, "*God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*" (Romans 5:8) He went the second mile. We deserved the penalty of the law and justice, but He came to give us grace and mercy. That's what Christmas is all about. Oh, what a great Savior we have! What a wonderful, dear Savior! What a wonderful Lord we have! I can't understand why people don't want to give their hearts to Jesus. Can you understand that? I can't understand it. I

really can't. *If I had a thousand lives to live, I'd give every one to Jesus Christ.*

¶ A preacher was preaching, and he preached about Jesus and gave the invitation. And, people were coming forward, and a little girl who didn't understand it all asked her mother, "What are those people doing?" And, her mother said, "They're going forward to give their hearts to Jesus." That little girl said, "Why don't we all go?" ¶

That's a good question. Why don't we all go? Such a wonderful Savior is Jesus, who went the second mile for us! And, He wants to save you today. ¶

# The Second Mile

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: September 13, 1998**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 5:38–48**

*“And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.”*

MATTHEW 5:41

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## Introduction

Would you find God’s Word, turn to Matthew chapter 5? And, when you’ve found it, look up here. We’re putting a new emphasis in the church—maybe you’ve noticed it, maybe you’ve not—but that emphasis—and for the succeeding months—will be on fellowship: “Building the Fellowship.” And, in order to build the fellowship, there is a principle that we are enfolding into that theme, and I’m going to teach you that principle this morning. Now, it’s not an original principle with me. The principle began with the Lord Jesus Christ. He taught it in the Bible, in the Sermon on the Mount. But, if you learn that principle, it will give you *“joy unspeakable and full of glory.”* (1 Peter 1:8) It will put a smile on your face. It will put a spring in your step. It will put victory in your life. That principle is the principle called “the second mile.” The second mile is the smile mile.

Now, I want you to read in God’s Word, beginning in verse 38—chapter 5 and verse 38: *“Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek,*

*turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain”—that is, “go with him two miles”—“Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans so? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect”—and the word there, perfect, means “mature”: “Be ye therefore mature, perfect”—“even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” (Matthew 5:38–48)*

Now, the key to living with a smile is a Christ-centered life. The key to living a Christ-centered life is, first of all, emptying yourself out of your own self-life. Even God cannot fill that which is already full, so the Christ-filled life is a self-emptied life. So many of us are so full of self. And, as the wise man said, “A man wrapped up in himself makes a very small package.” I want you to think with me now on this principle, a principle of living—selfless living, joyful living, Christ-filled living: the principle of the second mile. And, remember this: it’s the second mile that brings the smile. There are three things I want to tell you about the second mile this morning, and I pray God the Holy Spirit will not only write them in your notes, but write them on your heart.

## **I. The Second Mile Is the Mastery Mile**

Number one: The second mile is the mastery mile. Have you got that? It is the mastery mile. Now, what do we mean? In verse 41, when Jesus said, “If anyone will compel you to go with him a mile, go with him two miles,” (Matthew 5:41) what is He talking about? Well, in Jesus’ day, the Romans had a practice. They had learned this practice from the Persians about six centuries before that. When they would conquer a land, they would also subjugate that land and rule over it. And, one of the things that they did to keep people in their place and to help them to understand just who they were and who was in charge was the principle of the Roman mile. And, in this day, a Roman soldier who had a backpack, a burden, or whatever, if he was walking along and he was tired and weary and he saw a young, able-bodied Jewish man there, or a boy, he could say to him, “You, carry this pack,” and, by law, that Jewish boy had to pick up that Roman soldier’s pack, his burden, and carry it for him one mile. They knew this. Some have said that every Jewish boy had a mile staked off from his property, from his farm, from his field, from his house—one mile—because if he were compelled to carry a burden a mile, he



would do it, but he would not go one inch, one step, further. With spite and hate and resentment, he would carry that load and then dump it down. He had done what the law had commanded. He had done what was required. It brought incredible resentment from the Jews. Not only were they living as conquered people, not only were the Romans were in charge, but now they were humiliated.

Can you imagine when Jesus is preaching? Can you imagine? He says, “Now, if somebody compels you to go with him a mile, go with him two miles.” (Matthew 5:41) Friend, you never went to sleep when Jesus was preaching. I can just hear them: “He must be jesting. Is He serious? I mean, does He expect us to carry for those Gentile dogs, to do double duty, to go the second mile?” That’s exactly what Jesus was saying. What He’s saying is we need to do more than the legalists, those who do what is required and not one bit more. Go back to verse 20. Jesus said, *“For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”* (Matthew 5:20) The scribes and the Pharisees did exactly what they were required to do, not one jot, not one tittle, more. Jesus said even when they paid their tithe, they *“[paid their] tithe of mint...anise and cummin.”* (Matthew 23:23) That is, they were counting the little mint leaves: “One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine—these are mine. Ten—that’s yours, Lord. I’ve done my duty. That is it.” What is the principle of the second mile? What is the smile mile? What will put a smile on your face? It is to do more than is required.

Now, what Jesus is saying is that any pagan can go one mile; he has to, anyway. Look, if you will, in verses 46 and 47 of this same chapter: *“For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?”*—you see, that’s the first mile: just to love those that love us—*“And if ye salute your brethren only”*—that is, if you’re friendly to people that you know and love—*“what do ye more than others?”*—you’ve only gone a mile—*“do not even the publicans so?”* (Matthew 5:46–47) Now, what Jesus is saying is that we who are children of God are different: We’re not legalists. We’re not lost. But, we are filled with another principle, which is the principle of the smile mile, the second mile.

You see, life is lived, really, on three levels. First of all, there is the hellish level. And, a lot of people in the world live on the hellish level—that is, to return evil for good. And, there are people like that, who return evil for good. That’s the hellish level. Now, the human level—the very best you could hope for without the new birth is to return good for good and evil for evil; that’s the human level. But, the heavenly level is to return good for evil. Now, when you return good for good, evil for evil, that’s the first mile. But, when you return good for evil, that is the second mile.

Now, a boy, a Jewish boy, who is carrying that Roman pack the first mile, he is a

slave while he's doing that because he's required to do it. But, when he carries that pack the second mile, he is no longer a slave; he's the one in control. Think about it. He's the one who says, "I am now in charge. I'm not doing what you tell me I must do. I am now doing what I want to do. I am no longer the slave. I am in mastery right now. I am now under self-control." Now, the devil wants to keep you under his control, but when you finally say, "I am not the devil's slave. I am in charge of my own life now. I'm not doing what is required; I'm doing more than is required," then move your ears back and get ready for a smile.

## **II. The Second Mile Is the Charity Mile**

Now folks, let me tell you something: the second mile is the mastery mile. Now, here's the second thing I want you to learn: not only is the second mile the mastery mile, but the second mile is the charity mile. You see, you do the first mile out of legalism; you do the second mile out of love. And, it is love that brings joy. Now, the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the scribes, they were very careful to do the first mile—I'm talking about in biblical legalism, not only carrying a Roman's backpack, but in biblical legalism, they did that because they were self-righteous prigs. In those Pharisees, the milk of human kindness had curdled. They had religion, but they didn't have reality; they didn't have life.

Now, Jesus not only preached in glittering generalities, but Jesus preached in awesome specificity. For example, not only did Jesus say, "Go the second mile," but He gave illustrations of how they could go the second mile that went far beyond carrying a soldier's backpack.

### **A. Go the Second Mile When Your Dignity Is Degraded**

For example, you go the second mile when your dignity is degraded. Look, if you will, at verse 38. Look at it: "*Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.*" (Matthew 5:38–39) That is, "Go the second mile." The first mile is revenge. The second mile is to give place to evil. Now, let me say this right away: Jesus is not talking pacifism. Jesus was not a pacifist. Jesus did not say that we ought never to defend ourselves. That's not what He's talking about here. If you think that's what He's talking about here, you're going to be in awful trouble in this wicked world in which we live.

The other day Joyce and I went out to go for a boat ride, and when we got in the boat, I was doing some work getting things ready, and I slammed a lid, and I looked down, and there was a wasp that was on my arm, and he bit me there. And, I looked over, and there was another wasp, and he bit me there. And, I looked up, and there

were wasps all around my head. Joyce is just getting on the boat. I said, “Run, Joyce! Run!” And, she began to run, and I began to run. And, those things were chasing us all over the backyard. You know what I did? I did not turn the other cheek. I went in, and I got me one of those wasp bombs. Man, revenge was sweet! I let them have it right between the running lights. I’ll tell you why. Jesus, here, is not talking about the lamb defending the lion’s right to eat it, or Adrian defending a wasp’s right to sting it, or you defending somebody’s right to act lawlessly. What Jesus here is talking about is when you’re insulted, when somebody has come and has degraded your dignity.

Notice what He says. Stand up here a minute, Scotty. I won’t hit you hard. Come here. Notice what He says: “If somebody strikes you on your right cheek...” (Matthew 5:39) Now, notice what He said: “your right cheek.” Point to your right cheek. You know which one that is? All right. Now, the normal person is right-handed. Well, if I were going to strike him, where would I normally strike him? I’d strike him on his left cheek. That’s just normal. To strike him on his right cheek is to give him what? You may see that. I’m not going to hit you. To strike him on his right cheek is to give him the back of my hand. It’s an insult. It’s like in olden days, when somebody would want a duel, they would take their gloves and slap a person. It’s saying, “You good-for-nothing! You lowdown person!” And, what our Lord is teaching here is that when somebody insults us, somebody degrades us, we’re to go the second mile.

That’s exactly what Paul taught in Romans chapter 12, verses 17 and following. He says, *“Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”* (Romans 12:17–21) And so, all of us are going to get insulted. All of us are going to be degraded. All of us are going to be looked down upon some time. If you want to know what you’re full of, just see what spills out when you get jostled.

¶ I’d not been a pastor of this church very long when a man wrote me a letter. Evidently, he decided he didn’t like the new pastor, and he wrote me a letter. It was a degrading letter. And, very frankly, it was an unfair letter. Now, if he wanted some good things to criticize me about, I could have given him a list. But, he didn’t get any of the right things. He just got something that was really unfair. And, he wrote me a letter, and it was an accusatory letter, a very unfair letter, and a very hurtful letter.

I decided I would take that man as a project. I wrote him back—not a hypocritical letter, but I wrote him back a very kind letter. And, when I saw him the next time, I went straight for him and said, “How are you doing? Good to see you,” and I really meant it

from my heart. The next time I saw him, I went toward him—and again and again and again and again. Finally, the man began to warm up to me and talk with me, and finally I was able to do some things for him. Finally, he got down where he could not get around, except in a wheelchair, and when he would come in the auditorium, I'd see him, I'd leave the platform, I'd go put my arms around him and hug him, and tell him I loved him.

Before he went to heaven, he told somebody, and that somebody told me—he said, “You know, that man Rogers is the greatest man in the world.” Well, I'm not, but I don't mind him thinking that. Brother Bob, he left a sizable gift to the church that we might do some work in his will. But, you know, I thought of that man, how I could have just returned evil for evil and said, “He had it coming to him.”<sup>4f</sup>

Now, I wish I could tell you many success stories. Maybe that's the only one I have. But, I want to tell you, friend, that God honors the second mile. You want me to tell you how to get rid of an enemy? Make a friend out of him.

### **B. Go the Second Mile When Your Adversary Is Victorious**

Jesus is saying, “Go the second mile.” Number one: Go the second mile when your dignity is degraded. Number two: Go the second mile when your adversary is victorious. Look, if you will, in verse 40 of this same chapter now: “*And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.*” (Matthew 5:40) Now, the cloak here is like the overcoat. If he gets in a lawsuit, he's victorious over you, then just don't give him simply what the settlement is; give him more than the settlement. Now, our Lord is not talking about somebody robbing you. He's not talking about if a robber comes into your house and you say, “Let me guide you over here to the safe.” He's not talking about that. He's talking here about a legal settlement. In this legal matter, there has been a brother who is adjudicated guilty; and so, he has to give his coat. Jesus said that if you've been wrong and you know that you're wrong, don't simply try to rectify that wrong by whatever the law says you must do; do more than the law says you must do—go the second mile. That's what Zacchaeus did, wasn't it, when Zacchaeus said, “*If I have [wronged] any [man] by false accusation, I restore [unto] him fourfold.*” (Luke 19:8)

### **C. Go the Second Mile When You Have a Brother in Need**

Go the second mile. If you're wrong, when you apologize, get right with God and get right with your brother. And then, go the second mile when your brother is victorious over you. Number three: Go the second mile when you have a brother, a sister, in need. Look in verse 42: “*Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.*” (Matthew 5:42) We have to understand that we, when we are like the pagans or when we're like the scribes and the Pharisees, we do all that is required and we do not one scintilla, not one iota more, when our Lord says, “Do more. Do more.” Have a giving spirit because nothing that you own is really yours anyway. It's all

placed on the altar. It all belongs to God.

Now, the implication here is that somebody has a genuine need. You have to learn how to give wisely. Psalm 112, verse 5 says, *“A good man sheweth favour, and lendeth: he will guide his affairs with discretion.”* (Psalms 112:5) If a drunkard asks you for money for more alcohol, you don’t give it to him. If an addict asks you for money for more dope, you don’t give it to him. If a professional beggar is asking, you don’t help that professional beggar by giving him something that’s going to increase him in begging. Just because somebody asks, that doesn’t mean that you necessarily are to give. You’re to give with discretion. But, what our Lord is saying is you give to those who have need. Don’t just simply pay your bills; go the second mile.

#### **D. Go the Second Mile When You Are Used and Abused**

Go the second mile, He’s saying, when you’re used and abused. Look in verse 43. I can imagine they’re listening to every word that Jesus is saying here: *“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.”* (Matthew 5:43–44) You know what you do when you get even? The sad thing is, that’s exactly what you do. You’re up here. Somebody else is down here. They wrong you. You get even. I mean, you just come right down to where they are. Why do you let them lower you to their standards? No, our Lord says this: that you go the second mile.

Has somebody done you wrong? If they haven’t, just wait—they will! And, when you get revenge, you don’t feel better. You might feel smug. The old flesh might be lavishing a little bit. But, in your spirit you hurt. But, when you go the second mile, the second mile is the smile mile.

† Don’t be like the lady that Charles Lowery told about. There was a man reading the newspaper. He loved expensive automobiles. He couldn’t afford one, but he loved just to read the want ads. And, he saw that a woman had advertised in the newspaper a Jaguar automobile with low mileage, in mint condition, for two hundred dollars. “Oh,” he said, “this can’t be true.” But, he called the number, and the lady answered. And, he said, “Are you the one who put the ad in the paper for a late-model Jaguar for two hundred dollars? What’s wrong with it?” She said, “Nothing’s wrong with it.” She said, “I’m going to sell it to the first person that gets here.” He said, “I’ll be right over.” He said, “I want to see it.”

He thought it was worth a chance. He drove over. There it sat in the driveway—absolutely beautiful! He looked it over. He couldn’t see anything wrong with it. He said, “Lady, are you really going to sell this automobile for two hundred dollars?” She said, “I was, but I’ve changed my mind. Now it’s \$99.50. I’m going to cut the price in half.” He

said, “What’s wrong with it?” She said, “Not a thing in the world’s wrong with it.” She said, “It’s my husband’s automobile. He ran off with his secretary to Hawaii. He told me to sell it and send him the money, and that’s what I’m going to do.” I suppose she felt good for just a little while. But friend, it is forgiveness, it is restitution, it is love—that is the second mile.†

† I read years and years ago—maybe thirty, forty years ago. I can’t remember—a story that’s always been in my heart about a soldier boy drafted in the army who at home, Brother Bob, would get on his knees and pray by his bed before he went to sleep. And, he thought, “Do I have the courage to do this in the barracks?” Now, you can imagine what it would be like for a soldier in the modern barracks to get down on his knees and pray beside his bed. He wrestled with his conscience. He said, “I’m going to do it.” He would have to do it in front of all these other guys and the obscene language and the dirty pictures and all that. This boy got down on his knees by his bed, by his bunk, and prayed and thanked God. Some got quiet, and some admired him. There was a big, old, rough soldier that saw him and picked up his army boots and threw them at this boy while he was praying and struck him. The boy finished his prayers and went to sleep. The next morning, when that man who threw the boots woke up, he found those boots, beautifully polished, sitting by his own bed. That boy had polished his boots.†

I don’t know a better example than that of going the second mile. You see, I’m sure that when he polished those boots and gave them back and he returned good for evil, there was something that came over him—the joy of the Lord Jesus Christ that you can get no other way. It’s love.

### **III. The Second Mile Is the Victory Mile**

You see, the first mile is the slave mile. The second mile is the mastery mile. The first mile is the legal mile. The second mile is the love mile. And so, the second mile—the smile mile—it’s the mastery mile. It’s the charity mile. I want to say one third thing about it: it is the victory mile.

We sang “Victory in Jesus.” Well, let me tell you how to live out that victory. You see, the first mile, when this boy is carrying this pack, he’s a slave. But, when he carries it the second mile, he is a victor. I’ve been around people long enough, and been leading people long enough, and been working with volunteers long enough, and staff long enough, and business people long enough, I have observed people who are successful people. Let me tell you one thing all successful people have in mind. Let me tell you something they have in common. Let me tell you something that all successful people do—all of them: they’re second-milers.

## A. On the Job

Successful people are second-milers on the job. Do you want to be a success? Be a second-miler. If you do only what you're paid to do on your job, if you are a clock-watcher rather than a second-miler, you're not going to go very far on your job.

Many of us who live in the city of Memphis have a friend named Kemmons Wilson. He's one of the founders, the chief founder, of the Holiday Inns. And, Kemmons has a way of talking to people about success. And, I love what he says: he says, "If you want to be a success in life, you just work half a day." Well, everybody likes that. He says, "It doesn't matter whether it's the first twelve hours or the second twelve hours; you just work half a day." These people who just want to do as little as they can do, they're not going to be successful on their job.

¶ Let me tell you about another entrepreneur that I read about: Henry Ford. I'm talking about the original Henry Ford. Henry Ford took over the Lincoln factory in Detroit, and it wasn't working. It was losing money. Nobody seemed to really care. Henry Ford got his maintenance crew, had them go out in the woods and cut down a tree, and they trimmed the limbs off of it and just left the stump, the log. And, he had them put that log on the elevator and bring it up to the office floor. And then, he had them lay that log right in front of the elevators. He didn't tell anybody about why he had done it. Nobody knew when it was done. It was done in the nighttime.

The next morning, when people got there and they opened the elevator, there was a log lying right across the floor. In order to get out, they had to step over it; they had to walk around it. "Why was it there? Who put a log in this place? Why doesn't somebody move it? Where's maintenance?" But, for three weeks that log stayed there. Nobody did anything. Management didn't say, "Why is the log here?" Somebody didn't ask, "Who put the log there?" Nobody moved the log. Nobody inquired about the log.

After a while, Henry Ford came up, and he fired everybody on that floor—everybody. He fired them all. He told them, "I put the log here. I wanted to see if somebody, just somebody, wondered, 'What is a log doing in front of the elevator?'"—at least inquired about it, tried to find out about it. But, every one of you is just so interested in doing your job—nothing more and nothing less. I don't want you." Maybe the government wouldn't let him fire them all today for a log, but he did then. He put his son Edsel in charge of that plant, and it began to make money.¶

I'm telling you, folks, everybody in life who is victorious is a second-miler. Jim Whitmire, sitting over here, he's a second-miler. You know, you never have to ask Jim to do his job and that's all; you just have to put a bridle on him and say, "Don't do so much." Jim, I mean, good night! Jim is a second-miler. He's not drawing his breath and drawing his salary. And, you can tell in what he does he's a second-miler. These other

men on the staff, they're second-milers.

### **B. At School**

Be a second-miler in school. You kids, if you're studying just to pass the test, if you're studying just to get a C, just to get the diploma, just to get out of school, you're never going to amount to much. You're going to school to learn. Have a hunger for knowledge. Read the lesson—more than the lesson. Find out all that you can find out. Don't just study enough to get by. When you find yourself knowing the material and mastering the material, you'll go to class with a smile on your face—I guarantee it.

### **C. In Marriage**

In marriage. My bride is sitting down there. When we got married, her father said, "Adrian, I hear people say that marriage is a fifty-fifty proposition." He said, "Adrian, it is not a fifty-fifty proposition." He said, "Adrian, a lot of times it's a ninety-ten. Sometimes you have to go ninety percent, and the other person's only going to go ten percent." And, Joyce and I have found that's true—that in marriage, if you simply do what is required, what is right, what is fair, your marriage is not going to amount to much. There has to be a lot of going the second mile to make a marriage a right marriage. And, those of you who have happy marriages, you know this.

### **D. In Your Devotional Life**

In your devotional life you have to go the second mile. There are so many people who say, "I have a quiet time. I'm going to read a chapter a day. I'm going to have so many minutes in prayer," and it's a legal thing rather than a love thing: "A dose a day keeps the devil away." And, rather than loving and praying and seeking God with your whole heart, you're just a one-miler.

### **E. In Your Witnessing Life**

In your witnessing life. Do you know what will help you to be a good witness for the Lord Jesus more than anything else? It is to go the second mile.

¶ I want you to imagine this. Here's a boy. He's working out there. He's chopping in the fields. A Roman soldier comes by and says, "Hey, you! Carry this load!" Boy, he's so angry he slams that hoe down and says, "All right, give it here; let's go." He walks a mile, gritting his teeth, mumbling, thinking about that Roman soldier. He gets to that milepost. He slams it on the ground. He says, "All right, I've done it. You're on top right now. You're on top. You're in control. One of these days I hope we're in control. And, Mr. Soldier, when we're in control, when we're on top, you're going to learn what it's like. We're going to get you. I just hope that day comes." He's angry. The soldier's angry. He goes home, bangs his fist against the barn door, goes in the house, slams the door, sits down, can't eat his dinner. He's angry, seething.



I want you to notice a second-miler. That soldier says, “Hey, come here! Carry this load!” “Yes sir, I’ll be right there.” He picks up the load and says, “Let’s go!” He says, “Where are you from? What part of Rome? I’ve never been to Rome. What’s Rome like?” And, he begins to talk to this Roman soldier. “Do you have a family? Are you married? Do you have children?” They’re walking along. After a while, he gets to the end. The soldier says, “Well, I’ve enjoyed the conversation.” He says, “No, wait a minute. About another mile down there, there’s a well down there. I know where we can get a cold drink of water. Let me carry this for you the second mile.” And, they go walking down there the second mile; and finally, he sets the backpack down. And, that soldier looks at him, and he says, “I want to tell you something: you’re different from any Jewish boy I ever knew. I hated the Jews, and they hated us. There’s something different about you.” “Well,” the Jewish boy says, “I hope there’s something different about me. See, I heard Jesus preach one day, and He told me something about going a second mile. That’s what I’ve been doing.” “Jesus, who’s He?” “Oh, He’s the Messiah of Israel. He’s the One who came to redeem us, to give us new life.”

I want to ask you a question: Do you think that that second Jewish boy would have a better chance of witnessing than that first Jewish boy? Do you think that he would have a better chance of sharing Jesus? Of course he would, because, precious friend, not only are we witnesses; we’re also part of the evidence.†

It’s the second mile—it is the second mile that is the mastery mile. It is the second mile that is the charity mile. It is the second mile that is the victory mile and brings victory. And, we will never really, as Christians, have the victory that we ought to have until we learn the smile mile that Jesus is talking about—going the second mile.

## Conclusion

Let me just wrap it up and tell you this: that Jesus went the second mile for every one of us. Jesus did not practice what He preached; He preached what He practiced. You see, the first mile was God created us and gave us a chance, and we failed it. God would have been perfectly just to cast us into hell. But, Romans 5:8 says that, “*God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*” (Romans 5:8) That’s the second mile. Jesus went the second mile.

† In a church service a pastor was giving an invitation like I’m going to do in just a moment. A little child was in the service, had not been in the service before, and the little child saw people coming down all of the aisles. And, the little guy asked his mother, “Where are they going?” And, the mother said, “They’re going forward to give their hearts to Jesus.” And, the little boy said, “Why don’t we all go?”†

That’s a good question. That is a good question—because He’s done so much for

us. *If I had a thousand lives, I'd want to give every one of them to Jesus.* And friend, why don't we all give our lives to the One who loved us and gave Himself for us?†

# Hypocrisy

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: September 20, 1998

Main Scripture Text: Matthew 6

*“And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.”*

MATTHEW 6:5

## Outline

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Conclusion

## Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn to Matthew chapter 6, and look at verse 5. And, I want you to find just a part of the verse where Jesus said, *“Thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are.”* (Matthew 6:5) We're going to talk tonight about hypocrisy, and what God thinks about hypocrisy, and what we need to think and learn about hypocrisy.

There are so many people that are religious but lost. They do not have reality. There's an old gospel song, Brother Jim—I'll certainly not sing it, but I have been so blessed listening to gospel singers sing it. It's called “It's Real, It's Real, I Know It's Real,” and the song goes:

*Oh, how well do I remember how I doubted day by day,  
For I did not know for certain that my sins were washed away;  
When the Spirit tried to tell me, I would not the truth receive.*

*I endeavored to be happy, and to make myself believe.*

And then, it goes on, as this man tells his experience and he says:

*Then at last by faith I touched Him, and, like sparks from smitten steel,  
Just so quick salvation reached me, oh, bless God, I know it's real!*

*But it's real, it's real;  
Oh, I know it's real;  
Praise God, the doubts are settled,  
For I know, I know it's real!*

—HOMER L. COX

I hope that is true in your heart tonight. I hope that you don't just have form without force, religion without reality, culture without Calvary. I pray God tonight that you're not just playing church, but you can say with the writer of that song, "It's real. It's real! Praise God, I know that it is real!"—because ours is a very phony world.

The thing I want for these young people, and the choir behind me, and for those that we were singing about, who are holding little babies—that they will look up at their mom and dad and they'll see a mom and dad who truly love the Lord: they're not phonies; they're not plastic parents; they're not phony Christians; they're real; they're not cardboard Christians.

I want my children to know that their daddy is real. When my first son was born, Steve, we were living in a little house trailer at Stetson University. We didn't even have any indoor bathroom in that little house trailer. We had a path, not a bath. And, of course, there was a community shower there, and toilet stalls, and so forth, that we would go to. I was living in that little house trailer and working our way through school, and we had very little. We got married knowing that it would be difficult. But, Joyce and I had been dating so long; we were so much in love. And, we were just living from hand to mouth—and it was God's hand to our mouth.

And, I wanted Joyce to stay home. I thought I needed to work to pay our school tuition and other things, and I had gone there on a football scholarship. But, I had turned from that to take some other work and finally was called to a little country church. And certainly, we weren't getting rich in that little country church. They were paying us thirty dollars a week—twenty-five dollars a week, I believe. And, we had to drive three hundred miles—twenty-five or thirty dollars a week, I can't remember which—and no car expense. We had an old car that I'd bought, and we were going back and forth.

And then, after I'd preached a little while, they said, "We've got more preacher than we bargained for. We're going to raise you five dollars." Joyce and I talked about that for a while, and we thought, "That's too much. We just can't take five dollars." So, we decided to split it and keep two dollars and fifty cents and give the other two dollars and

fifty cents over and above back to the church, lest we be overpaid. And, we were just eking out a living, but God never failed us. We never missed a meal.

I can remember one particular time, however, I had been working at A&P stacking groceries, walking home, stopped at a restaurant to get my dinner, reached in my pocket, and I had twenty cents. And, I looked at the menu, and there was a cheese sandwich for twenty cents. Actually, I had twenty-one cents. And, she said, “Do you want anything to drink?” I said, “No, a sandwich will be fine.” And, I walked out of there, and I had one penny in my pocket. But, I said, “Lord, I’ve still got some money.”

And, you know, I heard a preacher say once—I don’t know why I’m telling this; it’s not in my notes—but anyway, I heard a preacher say one time—he was in a revival meeting, a very small church, and I’d gone to listen to him; and, you know, they take a love offering for these evangelists, and he was an evangelist—and he said, “I don’t need any money.” And, I thought to myself, “You’re the first preacher I’ve ever heard say that—especially when they were going to take an offering.” He said, “I don’t need any money.” And, he said, “You know, my wife and I have forty dollars in the bank. We don’t need any money until that’s gone.” Isn’t that beautiful? Isn’t that beautiful how God takes care of His own? Well, I’m digressing.

We were living in that little trailer, and God was taking care of us and meeting our need. And then, God gave us our son, Steve, and Steve was not an accident or an incident. We wanted to start our family early, which we did. And so, God gave us our little son, Steve, and he was born at Fish Memorial Hospital in Deland, Florida. And, I remember when that little baby boy was born. I went and looked at him—the most beautiful thing I’d ever seen in the world. You know, they really look like a drowned rat when they’re first born—but to me, just beautiful. And, I remember going and getting back on my knees in that little house trailer—I can remember like it was yesterday—and thanking God for my son and praying to God, saying, “God, if I never ever get to pastor a church that amounts to anything, if I never ever have any so-called ‘success’ in life, I want to be a good dad. I want to my son to think that Abraham Lincoln and George Washington were the Jesse James boys compared to their preacher dad.” And, I tell you, our children are not perfect and their parents are not perfect, but they know we’re real. They know we love God. I would not be afraid to put any of my children up here and have you ask them whether or not their parents are phonies.

I want the boys and girls that come to our church—I want them to know that our staff is real. I want them to know that our deacons are real. I want them to know that our Sunday school teachers and our youth leaders are real. Now, when Brother Jim Whitmire is up here leading us in praise worship, I want them to believe that he loves God with all his heart and that he’s not just putting on a performance, but he is genuinely leading us in reality.

Now, our Lord here is speaking about hypocrites. Now, what is a hypocrite? He says, “Don’t be like the hypocrites.” (Matthew 6:5) Well, the word *hypocrite* literally means “actor”—“actor; an actor in a play.” That’s what the word *hypokrites* means in the Greek language. Jesus said, “Don’t be an actor. Don’t be putting on a performance.” He says that the hypocrites do what they do to be seen of men. Notice in verse 5: “*And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men.*” (Matthew 6:5) The word *seen* there, in verse 1, is the word *theaomai*, the word we get our word *theater* from. So, He says, “Don’t be actors playing the theater. Be real.”

Now, we have so many people who go to church, and Satan one day would like to give them an award, his Academy Award, because he has many who are hypocrites in this world. As a matter of fact, just turn over to chapter 7 and look, if you will, in verse 15. Our Lord continues this theme for a long time, and our Lord says, “*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*” (Matthew 7:15) These are they that, outside, they are one thing; inside, they are something else.

And then, go on over to Matthew 23—Jesus keeps on saying this thing—Matthew 23, verse 27 and 28: “*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!*”—actors—“*for ye are like unto whited sepulchres*”—in the Middle East, and especially among the Jews, they did not want to touch the dead. They would be ceremonially unclean. And so, they would not only bury their dead in these graves, these sepulchres, but they would take whitewash and wash them until they would be gleaming in the sun. And, the reason they would whitewash them is that they would stand out so the people could stay away from them. And so, the whitewash on the outside was a warning: “Stay away!” But, they would gleam in the sun, and they would literally, though they would be sepulchres, or graves, be beautiful. So, He says, “Outside, they’re like whited sepulchres”—“*which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness*”—that is, there would be the stench and the rottenness of decay on the inside. And then, He said to these Pharisees—“*Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy*”—there’s our word again—“*and iniquity.*” (Matthew 23:27–28)

Now, a hypocrite is not a person who is merely failing to live a Christian life. I fail. You fail. We all fail. That does not mean we’re hypocrites. When we make mistakes, stumble, fall, slip, sin, do whatever we do, that doesn’t mean we’re hypocrites. It may mean that we’re carnal. It may mean that we have been ambushed by the devil. It may mean many things. But, that’s not what our Lord here is talking about. Our Lord is not talking about an out-and-out sinner who refuses Christ and the gospel. What our Lord is

talking about is a phony person, a person who has a lot in the showcase but he doesn't have much in the warehouse.

Now, Jesus reserved His most severe language for the hypocrite. Jesus literally had words of compassion for people taken in sin—out-and-out sinners. For the publicans, the sinners, Jesus ate with them, He loved them, He fellowshiped with them, not because He approved of their sin, but He was a friend of sinners. I'm glad He was and is, aren't you? You'd better be, because you'd be a mess without it because you're a sinner. Jesus is a friend of sinners. But, His most severe words were for the hypocrites, those who were phony.

We hear a lot today in the news about not casting stones. You know, Jesus said, "Let him that is without sin cast the first stone." (John 8:7) To whom was He speaking? Jesus said to this woman who had been taken in adultery—she was just a pure, raw sinner, and Jesus warned her about her sin. She'd turned from her sin to the Messiah—Jesus said, "*Go, and sin no more.*" (John 8:11) He didn't say, "There, there. Just keep on sinning." No, here was a fallen woman. She needed compassion. She needed love, and Jesus came to her and forgave her. And, Jesus turned to those other people, those religious leaders standing there with stones in their hand and hatred in their heart, and malice and sin, and full of dead men's bones on the inside, practicing sin and still wearing the garb of religion, rotten on the inside—He said, "Let the one of you who is without sin cast the first stone." (John 8:7) He didn't say, "The one who's never sinned cast the first stone." He's not saying that judgment is not needed when it is appropriate. He's not saying that mercy is not to be given when it is needed. What He is saying is this: that these people are full of rottenness and sin and filth and debauchery on the inside, but on the outside these wolves are wearing sheep's clothing. These were the ones that Jesus condemned so much. That woman on the ground was just a pure, raw sinner, and she needed mercy. She wasn't somebody who pretended to be righteous. Had she pretended to be righteous when she was not, Jesus would not have said, "I forgive you. Go, and sin no more," until she repented and got right with God. She wasn't the kind that walked out of church on Sunday morning carrying a big black Bible and then went to commit adultery on Sunday afternoon. She wasn't that kind, no.

A sinner is a sinner is a sinner that needs the mercy of God. A hypocrite is a person who has a heart full of sin, and, having a heart full of sin, is at the same time, while practicing sin, trying to condemn other people. Jesus has His most severe words for these kinds of people. Now, they're play actors. They have form without force. Everything is in the show window. But, they don't have reality.

Now, there are three things we're going to notice about hypocrisy tonight—and very quickly; I'm not going to speak a long time.

## I. The Concealed Root of Hypocrisy

First of all, I want you to see the concealed root of hypocrisy. Now, I use the word *concealed* on purpose as an adjective because the root is underground. What makes a hypocrite? What motivates a hypocrite? What is the root of hypocrisy? Well, it really is a form of idolatry. They want to be seen of men. (Matthew 6:5) Notice, if you will, in chapter 6 and verse 1: *“Take heed that ye do not your alms before men”*—now, notice this—*“to be seen of them.”* (Matthew 6:1) Go, if you will, to verse 5: *“And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets”*—here it is—*“that they may be seen of men.”* (Matthew 6:5) Go look, if you will, in verse 16: *“Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites”*—*“be not, as the hypocrites”*—*“of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast.”* (Matthew 6:16)

And so, what motivates the hypocrite? What is it that makes a hypocrite a hypocrite? He wants the approval of men. He is more interested in the approval of men than he is the approval of God, and, therefore, he is an idolater, because he has another god in his heart which is approval.

### A. In the Matter of Giving

Our Lord gives illustrations of this, for example, in the matter of giving. He says here in verses 1 through 4: *“Take heed that ye do not your alms before men”*—the word *alms*, boys and girls, means *“to give to the poor”*—*“to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues.”* (Matthew 6:1–2)

G. Campbell Morgan tells us that the Pharisees of the day carried silver trumpets, and when they would go out to give money to the poor, they would blow the trumpet. And, when they would blow the trumpet, the needy would come. And, while the people were there watching, then the Pharisees would distribute money to the poor. They would sound a trumpet so everybody could see them doing this thing. There’s nothing wrong with giving to the poor. There is nothing wrong with giving to the poor publicly. There is much wrong with giving to the poor in order to be seen of men, when you have this sort of self-conscious righteousness.

The Lord says in verse 3: *“When you do your alms, don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.”* (Matthew 6:3) Now, what does He mean, *“Don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing”*? Well, have you ever reached in your pocket to get a handful of change? You have to buy something, you go to buy a newspaper or anything else, you reach in your pocket, you get your change, and you take your change out of your left hand. And so, Jesus just said, *“Hey, when you give, just go ahead and empty your pockets. Don’t let your right hand know what your left*



hand is doing, your left hand know what your right hand is doing.”

I do that sometimes when I’m overseas, and they, you know, they have funny money overseas. And, I get a handful of *solly molly goos*—I don’t know what they are. You know, I’ll be in a taxi. I just open my hand, and hold it out, and say, “You take whatever you want” because I don’t know how to even count the change. And, I suppose most people are honest because I know that maybe I didn’t cash more than ten dollars’ worth, so I know I can’t be taken too badly. If they ask for more, then I’ll give them more—but just hold out a handful. That’s what our Lord is saying here: “Just don’t let your right hand know what your left hand is doing, or don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. Give generously; give liberally—not to be seen of men.”

### **B. In the Matter of Praying**

He says the same thing, not only in our giving, but in our praying: “Don’t be a hypocrite.” Now, notice verses 5 to 8: *“And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.”* (Matthew 6:5–8)

Now, it’s not wrong to pray in public. I’ve prayed in public tonight. But, I trust I didn’t pray in public to be seen of you. I prayed because I wanted to pray in public. The Bible mentions many public prayers. In Acts chapter 4 and verse 24, it speaks of a public prayer: *“And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is.”* (Acts 4:24) They prayed publicly. They prayed vocally. They prayed out loud. Nothing wrong with that. Never ever be ashamed to pray in public—never! And, don’t fail to pray in a restaurant. When God gives you a meal, it can be one of your greatest witnesses just to bow your head and pray and thank God for the food. There’s nothing wrong with praying in public. What Jesus is warning about is doing your private devotions in public.

Now, it’s one thing to pray in the pulpit here and to lead the congregation in prayer, but would it not be a quite different thing for me to get out here at the corner of Interstate 40 somewhere, when the cars are going by, and get my Bible, and sit there and read, and kneel, and pray, so everybody could say, “Oh, there’s the preacher. He’s having his morning devotions there. Isn’t he a holy man?” Well, that would be ridiculous. That would be silly. But, that’s what the Pharisees were doing: they were praying to be

seen of men. Prayers that are pretense require an audience. He's just saying, "Don't do your private devotions in public in order to be seen of men." (Matthew 6:5)

### **1. You Don't Pray to Impress God**

And, He says in verse 7—why do we pray? Look. Why we pray? Why do we pray? Not to impress God—*"When [you] pray, [don't] use...vain repetitions, as the heathen do."* (Matthew 6:7) You don't have to be eloquent when you pray. You're not going to impress God, even if you're Shakespeare.

### **2. You Don't Pray to Inform God**

You don't pray to impress God, and you don't pray to inform God. Notice verse 8: *"Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him."* (Matthew 6:8) You don't have to inform God. God knows everything you need. He knows every thought of your mind. He knows when you go out. He knows when you come in. He watches you when you're asleep. There's not a thought in your mind but what He knows it altogether. There's not a deed in your life that He's not already aware of.

### **3. You Pray to Invite God and Enjoy God**

Well, then, if you don't pray to impress God and you don't pray to inform God, why do you pray? You pray to invite God and enjoy God. You just come to Him, in verse 9, and say, *"Our Father...Hallowed be thy name."* (Matthew 6:9) And, prayer is a wonderful way to have fellowship with God. But, the hypocrite, he prays just simply to be seen of men.

One of the things that really bothers me is to be in a public assembly somewhere and somebody says, "Now, let's all stand and say the Lord's Prayer." Friend, you don't say prayers; you *pray* prayers. Now, there's nothing wrong with praying the Lord's Prayer if that represents the desire of your heart. But, Jesus said, "Don't use vain repetition." (Matthew 6:7) He didn't say, "Pray this prayer." He said, "Pray in this manner." (Matthew 6:9) For us to "stand and say the Lord's Prayer" would be like for you to come into my house, and I would say, "Would you stand and say a conversation?" Prayer is talking with God, not to impress God, not to inform God, but to invite God and enjoy God. That's the way we're to pray.

### **C. In the Matter of Fasting**

Then the Lord mentions a third thing, a third matter, of wanting to be seen of men. Notice verses 16 through 18 of this same chapter. He says, *"Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites"—as the play actors—"of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father,*

*which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.”* (Matthew 6:16–18)

Now, fasting is right, and fasting is proper. Jesus didn't say, "If you fast..." He said, "When [you] fast..." (Matthew 6:16) Jesus expects us to fast. And yet, on the other hand, I am not to fast to be seen of men. Now, He's not saying that a public fast is wrong. There's nothing wrong with the pastor calling the church to fasting and prayer for a day, for a week, for a month—nothing wrong with that. There's nothing wrong for a nation to be called to fast. This November, we're calling all America to fasting and praying. We're trying to get millions of people to fast and pray for our country. And, I will be, along with Dr. Bill Bright and others, leading a meeting in Houston, Texas, fasting and praying, and we will be there together. I've done this for a number of years now, to fast and pray publicly. Jesus is not saying it's wrong to fast publicly, but Jesus is saying, "If you're having a private fast, don't tell anybody about it." The Pharisees, when they were fasting, put ashes on their head. They put on their ragged clothes. They would look very sad, very wan, and they would go around so humble because they were fasting, wanting everybody to know they were fasting. Jesus said, "Look, when you fast, put on some bright clothes, put a smile on your face, and don't let anybody know that you're fasting."

Friend, if you think it's hard to fast, let me tell you something: it's even more difficult to fast and not let anybody know about it—not let anybody know just how holy you are by fasting. So, there is that private prayer. There is that private fasting. There is that private giving, where we give with the right motive. And so, what is the root—what is the concealed, underground root—of hypocrisy? It is the desire to be seen of people, to be praised of people.

## **II. The Corrupting Fruit of Hypocrisy**

Now, think not only about the concealed root, but I want you to think about the corrupting fruit of hypocrisy.

### **A. Hypocrisy Deceives**

What does hypocrisy do? It deceives. You see, the emphasis here is "to be seen of men."

You know, I heard Robert Reich, former Cabinet member, last week, I believe, on a talk show, speaking about President Clinton. Robert Reich has been in the theater. He's been an actor. And, he said of the president, "He is an excellent method actor." Now, "method actor," as I understand it, is a person—Brother Jim, you've studied acting some in college—but I believe that a method actor is a person who feels the part so much that he actually lives the part, that he actually becomes, in his own mind, what he's doing, what he's saying, what he's feeling. So, if, in the play, there's a death and there's a

body in the casket, and he, in the play, is the bereaved person, he doesn't merely act bereaved; he becomes bereaved. I mean, he actually is brokenhearted in the play. That's a tremendous actor—a person who can so immerse himself in the play, in whatever it is, that he actually becomes what he is acting. And, rather than acting brokenhearted, he is, at that moment, brokenhearted. Rather than acting like he's rejoicing, if it's a scene that requires joy—or anger, or whatever—a method actor can so immerse himself to the point that when he says whatever he says, he literally believes what he is saying is reality. That's dangerous. That's good acting. But, when you take that and you put that into life, then you get to telling things, and you create your own reality, and you come to the place where you believe your own lies. John talks about that. He says, *"We deceive ourselves."* (1 John 1:8) And, what a deception this is—when a man is so good at what he does, he loses touch with reality and he literally deceives himself. Hypocrisy deceives.

And, this is the reason that Jesus said that hypocrites who are religious leaders are blind leading the blind. Listen to Matthew 23, verses 13 through 15: *"woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, [play actors]! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in"*—now, these are people who are supposed to show the way to heaven, but they're not going. And, they're leading others astray—*"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte"*—that is, one so-called "convert"—*"and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourself"* (Matthew 23:13–15)—the blind leading the blind.

## **B. Hypocrisy Defrauds**

What does hypocrisy do? It deceives. What else does it do? Friend, it defrauds. You see, look, if you will, in chapter 6, verse 2—the last part: *"Verily I say unto you, They have their reward"* (Matthew 6:2)—these people who give to be seen of men. Look, if you will, in verse 5: *"Verily I say unto you, They have their reward."* (Matthew 6:5) And then, the last part of verse 16: *"Verily I say unto you"*—those who fast to be seen of men—*"They have their reward."* (Matthew 6:16) Now, the word for *reward* there, I'm told, in the Greek language means "to be paid in full." That's all they get. Now, if you pray to be seen of men, if you're seen of men, that's it—no more! If you give to be seen of men and you're seen of men, that's it—there's no more! If you fast to be seen of men and you fast, that's it—all you've done is gone hungry and been seen of men; you have not fasted as unto the Lord. And, one of the worst things about hypocrisy is that it defrauds you; it keeps you from having the reward that God wants you to have.

† To be a hypocrite would be like cheating at solitaire. When you're playing a game with yourself and you cheat, it's kind of dumb. And, to be a hypocrite is to defraud yourself.†

### C. Hypocrisy Damns

Hypocrisy deceives. Hypocrisy defrauds. But, the worst thing about hypocrisy is it damns; it takes you to hell. Look, if you will, in chapter 7, verses 21 and following. Our Lord says here in chapter 7: *“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”* (Matthew 7:21–23) They're going to depart into everlasting fire. They've never been saved. They may preach, they may prophesy, they may do good works, they may take up the offering, they may sing in the choir, they may serve on a church staff, they may be a pastor—they may be all of these things, but they're going to die and go to hell because they are plastic prophets, they are cardboard Christians, they have fake faith, and they are not real.

Now, look up here and let me tell you something: in every church there are hypocrites. There are some hypocrites in the church tonight. And, that doesn't even necessarily even mean that you are what the world would call a “wicked person.” You just have form without force; you've never really been saved, and you know in your heart it is not real. You know that what you've seen, what you talk about, what you live, in your heart, is not reality to you. *The devil had just as soon send you to hell from that pew as he had the gutter.* As a matter of fact, he had rather have you do that.

### III. The Pursuit of Hypocrisy

Now, let me close this message tonight and talk not only about the concealed root of hypocrisy (the great desire to be seen of men), and let me talk not only about the fruit of this corrupting fruit, where it deceives and it defrauds and it damns, but think a little bit about the pursuit of hypocrisy—how we look into our hearts and into our lives and see if it's there.

Notice how chapter 6 begins again. Look at it—chapter 6, verse 1: *“Take heed”*—*“Take heed.”* (Matthew 6:1) You know, I had to ask myself as I was thinking about these scriptures, “Adrian, are you a hypocrite?” Now, I know I'm saved, but I mean, is there hypocrisy in me? With my wife? With my children? With the staff? With you, when I preach? Do I preach things that I don't live? Do I say things I don't believe? Jesus said, *“Take heed.”* (Matthew 6:1)

So, I want to ask you a few little questions tonight. You don't mind, do you? Shake your head this way. "No, I don't mind, pastor. Ask those questions." Okay. Now, I want to ask you just some honest questions, and let's just see if we are more concerned about what others think than what we ought to think.

For example, have you ever failed to obey the Lord because you felt that you might be rejected by other people? Have you? That's a form of hypocrisy. That means that you want the praise of men more than you want the praise of God. Now, you guys and gals in school, in college, in high school, middle school, there's so much pressure. Now, if you fail to obey God because you want to be received and you don't want to be rejected, you've got a touch of hypocrisy in you.

Now, let me ask you another question: Do you do things and are you able to do things that are right and good and not let anybody know? Or, do you always have to find some way to tell others when you do something that is good and right because somehow it just seems hollow if the Lord is the only one who knows? If you give some money, if you do a deed, if you do anything and you have this little gnawing void in you—you say, "Oh, I wish everybody else knew how good I was"—you may have a little hypocrisy in you.

Let me ask you another question: Is your private life consistent with your public image? If you had a window on your heart, would you want to be a stained-glass window? Or, would you want people to see inside of you? I mean, are you the same in private that you are in public? You know, I have to ask myself this question all the time, Mark, because I'm a public person: Am I getting up here saying things, doing things, acting a certain way, and I don't have that reality in my heart?

Let me ask you another question: When you do something good, are you wounded, are you hurt, when somebody else gets the credit? Somebody said, "You can do a tremendous amount of good if you don't care who gets the credit for it." But, does it bother you when other people get the credit for the things that you did? Well, if you did it as unto the Lord, what difference does it make who gets the credit for it? Or, let's just turn that on its head: Have you stopped serving, have you stopped attending, because nobody recognizes you, nobody pats you on the back, nobody says, "Thank you"—you don't get the praise that you think is due to you? Well, you've got a little touch of Pharisee in you if that's true.

Or, let's just go on a little further: Have you accepted praise and recognition for something you didn't deserve? Somebody says things about you, and you know they're not true; but you say, "Hmm, yeah, that's right. Tell me more."

All right, let me ask you another question: Do you love the praise of men more than the praise of God? What really means the most to you? Can you get alone and just say, "God, if you're pleased, it really doesn't matter if they're pleased or not." You know, I do

that a lot in my preaching. You know, not every sermon is a barnburner. I know that. You don't have to tell me that. I know that myself. I mean, I preach a lot. But, you know what I do before I preach? I did it this morning. I tell God what I'm going to preach. I kind of preach it to Him. And, if I don't feel good telling Him what I'm going to preach, I sure don't feel good telling you about it—I mean, because I want Him to be pleased. Now, here's the thing: sometimes I will preach a message, and, as far as I can tell, there's not much response. Maybe it's a yawner. And, you know, there's not much response, not a lot of "atta-boys" after I get finished preaching. I just kind of go back to my study, and that's it. But, you know what? If I know that I've preached the Word of God, if I know that He's pleased, that carries me a long way—carries me a long way just to know that.

Now, you know, if a preacher says he doesn't want to be encouraged in his preaching, he's probably lying. And Jim, when you do great music, you like people to tell you that they're blessed. That's a blessing. But, you know what we need to do? We need to be so divorced from the dependency upon the praise of men, to hear the Lord say, "Well done" and be satisfied with that. That may mean that we're not truly a hypocrite.

Let me ask you another question. This is the last one: Are you defeated by the hypocrisy of other people? Do you know what bothers a hypocrite almost more than anything else? Hypocrisy. Look, hypocrisy doesn't really bother me. It hurts me, but I'm not going to stumble over hypocrisy. You know, I hear people say, "Well, I'm not going to go down there to that church any more because there are hypocrites down there." I feel like saying, "Do tell. Oh, I am so surprised." Listen, one of the twelve apostles was a hypocrite. We bought a dozen eggs; one of them was a hypocrite.

Now, let me tell you something, friend: there are hypocrites in every walk of life. But, do you know what the hypocrite uses for an excuse? Hypocrisy. Anybody who uses hypocrisy for an excuse is himself a hypocrite. Do you know why I absolutely know that the church is not full of hypocrites? Do you know how I know that they're not all hypocrites? Do you know how I know? Because I'm not one. I know I'm real. I know I'm not perfect, but I know I'm real. I know—I know—that I love God. I'm not boasting about it; I'm just telling you what I know. I am real. So, when you tell me that they're all phonies, I know you're lying because I know I'm not.

And, the man who thinks they're all phonies must be a phony because if he thinks everybody else is a phony and he thinks everybody's a phony, that means he's a phony. You see, those who have reality know reality because they themselves experience it themselves. A hypocrite, therefore, is himself a hypocrite. And, you know, the man who hides behind a hypocrite is hiding behind something bigger than he is, or else he couldn't hide behind it, isn't that right? And, if you let a hypocrite come between you and God, the hypocrite is closer to God than you are. Don't let some hypocrites keep you

from the blessings of God.

There may be some hypocrites in the church, but the ol' ship of Zion is not going to sink just because there are some bad eggs on board. Jesus knows who the hypocrites are. I'd rather spend a few years with some hypocrites in the church than spend all eternity with every one of them in hell, hadn't you? So, these are just some tests about hypocrisy.

## Conclusion

You see, there's the concealed root of hypocrisy—that desire to be seen of men, which is really, in itself, idolatry. And, there's that corrupting fruit: it deceives (the hypocrite himself gets to believing his own lies after a while), it defrauds (it keeps you from getting the real blessings that God wants you to have; you just have your reward now), and it damns (it can carry you right on to hell). And so, therefore, we need to ask ourselves these questions and find out if we have reality.

Now, you can have hypocrisy in you and not be lost. I mean, there can be areas in your heart and in your life where you're a little hypocritical. And, you know, most likely, there are some in mine. I hope not. But, Jesus said, "*Take heed*"—"Take heed."  
(Matthew 6:1) Be watching.†



# Satan's Academy Award

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: December 27, 1992**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 6:1-2**

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## Introduction

**W**ould you turn now to Matthew chapter 6, and hold it open there before you—the Gospel of Matthew chapter 6. Every so often, the theater and film people of this generation have an award ceremony that they call the Academy Awards. And there they give awards to actors and actresses. Many of those actresses are beautiful to look upon. Many of them have faces like angels; they have morals like alley cats. And they give them an award for being an actress or for being an actor. And if a person, I suppose, leads a good clean moral life, and they're an actor, then that perhaps is legitimate. Perhaps most of them do not live that kind of life. The Academy Awards. I believe that the biggest actors are not just found in Hollywood. Many of them are found in the realm of religion. I want to speak to you today about "Satan's Academy Award."

The Lord tells about these who are actors. They are play actors. They are in the church. The Greeks used to have actors who would wear masks. If they wanted to look sorrowful, they would put on a sorrowful mask. If they wanted to look happy, they would put on a happy mask. The masks actually had handles, and they would just hold them in front of their faces. The word for that is *hypokrites*. It's the word we get our word *hypocrite* from.

I want you to look at what our Lord has to say here in Matthew chapter 6, verses 1 and 2: "*Take heed that ye do not your alms for men, to be seen of them:*"—do you see the word

see? It's the Greek word *theaomai*. It's a word we get our word *theater* from. "Take heed," Jesus says, "that you're not just playing in a theater"—*otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites*—the play actors—*do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men*—that is, the applause every actor wants. "Verily I say unto you, They have their reward." (Matthew 6:1-2) Verse 5: "And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are"—"the actors are"—*for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men.*" They're in a theater. "Verily I say unto you, They have their reward." (Matthew 6:5) On down to verse 16: "Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites,"—that is, the play actors—*of a sad countenance:*—they're wearing the sad mask today—*for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast.*" That is, it's a play. "Verily I say unto you, They have their reward." (Matthew 6:16)

I read an article about Art Linkletter. Many of us know Linkletter's been in the entertainment realm for many, many years. Art Linkletter said that he was a professing Christian, until one day he had a great crisis in his life. And he really needed help, and he was meeting with some young people who were turned-on, on-fire Christians: no pretense, no false front. And they were in a hotel lobby in San Francisco. It came time to pray, and those young people said, "Let's pray," and they got down on their knees in that hotel lobby. Ark Linkletter, being a public figure, said, "I really felt funny about getting down on my knees in a public place like that. But," he said, "I had such a need of God, I realized all of this time I had not been a true Christian." And these were his words. He said, "I was a cardboard Christian—a cardboard Christian." And he said, "I threw all of that away, and I humbled myself before God, and got on my knees, and broke through to God, and met reality."

Now, reality is what this world needs. The world is sick and tired of make-believe, cardboard Christians, and the reality is what the world hungers for. It is the greatest need in the church of the living God today: reality—not hypocrisy, but reality. I've said before, and I want to say again, that the greatest argument for Christ, and the greatest argument against Christ, is the life of a Christian: one way or the other, whether it is realism or hypocrisy.

Now I just want to pick out, before we really get into the meat of the message this morning, a few scriptures that show what the Lord Jesus had to say about hypocrisy. For example, in Matthew chapter 7 and verse 15, He says, "Beware of false prophets." The word *false* is *pseudo*, pseudo-prophets—*which come to you in sheep's clothing.*" (Matthew 7:15) Every actor has his garb that he wears. But inwardly they're ravening wolves. Jesus said, "Now, watch out for these pseudo-prophets." Then He said, in Matthew chapter 23, verses

27 and following, *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!”—play actors—“for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.”* (Matthew 23:27–28)

Jesus reserved His most severe language for the religious leaders of this time, the Pharisees. What was a Pharisee like? Well, he would read the Scriptures. He would worship. He would attend the services. He would bring a tithe. He was separated from the world. He tried to win others to his religion. But it was all outward. He didn’t know the Lord. And the Lord Jesus had the most excoriating, vituperative language for religious people. And yet, on the other hand, when Jesus would find the sinner caught in sin, in the web of sin, Jesus was the most compassionate. The woman taken in adultery, how compassionate was the Lord Jesus! When others said, “Stone her,” Jesus said, “Forgive her.” (John 8:1–11)

There was a tax collector named Zacchaeus. No one else would have anything to do with him, but Jesus went into his house, fellowshiped with him, and ate with him. As a matter of fact, they crucified Jesus because, they said, He was a friend of sinners. Thank God He is, because, if He’s not, He won’t have anything to do with me or with you. Jesus, the friend of sinners—Jesus—had the sternest words for these hypocrites, these actors, these who were candidates for Satan’s Academy Award.

Now I want you to look at the passage that is before us. And there are three basic things I want you to see in chapter 6.

## **I. The Shameful Display of Hypocrisy**

First of all, I want you to see what I’m going to call the shameful display of hypocrisy. Jesus gives three illustrations of hypocrisy: one in the area of almsgiving, one in the area of prayer, and one in the area of fasting. That is, in the area of our donations and our discipline, Jesus speaks of hypocrisy.

### **A. In the Area of Donations**

First of all, look in the area of donations. Verses 1 through 4: *“Take heed that ye do not your alms”—that is, your giving, your donations—“before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be a secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.”* (Matthew 6:1–4)

Now Jesus here is not talking about the gift that you bring to the church on Sunday, or that someone would bring to the synagogue on Saturday. He's talking about giving to poor people, giving alms, gifts of charity. Now He's not against this. He's not saying it is wrong to do this. As a matter of fact, if you back in chapter 5, and look in verse 42, you're going to see that our Lord says, *"Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn thou not away."* (Matthew 5:42)

The Lord is not against giving to the poor. As a matter of fact, the Bible clearly and definitely says this we ought to do, in Psalm 41, verse 1: *"Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble."* (Psalm 41:1) And all of us ought to be looking for poor people that we can give to and minister to.

Now it is not the deed that Jesus says is wrong that these Pharisees are doing; it was their motive, and it was their method. Now, if the devil cannot keep you from doing a right thing, He will get you to do a right thing in a wrong way. The Pharisees, in Jesus' time, literally had little silver trumpets. When they wanted to give money to the poor, they would go out and stand in the marketplace: "It's time now to give money to the poor!" *Ta-ta-ta-ta-ta*: they would blow their trumpet. And when they would blow the trumpet, the poor would come, saying, "We're going to receive something," and not only would the poor come, but everybody on the street would hear the trumpet. Their ears would be attracted to the sound of that silver trumpet, and they would sound their trumpet, and then they would throw out their goodies to the poor to be seen of men. Everybody would say, "There's the Pharisee. Isn't he a generous man? Look what he's given to the poor."

Have you ever noticed at Christmastime that people want to give to the poor? They always somehow manage to get some media attention out of it. And many times these are politicians who want to be seen giving things to the poor. I mean, it is a media event. They want to be seen giving to the poor. All of us have our own little trumpet that we can sound so that others can see us give to the poor. Very few people go out—some do—under cover of night, when nobody else knows about it, and just simply give, for giving's sake. But there are always those who want to be seen by men.

Now what our Lord is saying is that it is not wrong to do it. It is the motive and the method. Now, notice in verse 3: *"But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth."* (Matthew 6:3) What on earth does that mean? Well, both the right hand and the left hand are connected to the brain. And it's really the brain that knows what is going on. What's our Lord talking about? He's just simply saying, "Don't be so careful in the way that you give." Now, if you're walking down the street, and there's somebody who's in need, just reach into your pocket, your right hand—that's where most of us keep our change—and just give it to him." What do we do when we want to know exactly what we're

giving? Friend, when we want to know exactly what we're giving, we take it out of our right hand, we put it in our left hand, and we count it. See, our left hand has to know what our right hand is doing, in order for us to count it out, in order for us to measure it out. Our left hand has to know what our right hand is doing. That's the kind of giving that some people give. But our Lord said, "Just go ahead and give it. Don't wait for everybody to see. And don't be so careful. Don't keep score. Let God keep the score."

## **B. In the Area of Our Devotions**

Now our Lord speaks of hypocrisy, therefore, in the area of our donations. And then He speaks of hypocrisy in the area of our devotions. Continue to read, in verse 5: "*And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the [play actors] are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues...that they may be seen of men*"—that they are putting on a theater. "*Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.*" (Matthew 6:5)

Now I want to say, it is not wrong to pray in public, nor is it wrong to give in public. Don't misunderstand what Jesus has to say. It is not wrong to give in public. And it is certainly not wrong to pray in public. As a matter of fact, it is wrong not to pray in public. And we pray in public here. And the Bible encourages people to pray in public. The Bible illustrates how people prayed in public. For example, in the book of Acts, one of the great chapters is chapter 4, and it speaks of public prayer in Acts chapter 4 and verse 24: "*And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is.*" (Acts 4:24) Together they prayed. And God is glorified when people come together to pray. As a matter of fact, He's going to give us an illustration of how to pray, when He says, "Our Father." Not "My Father" but "Our Father": people are praying together.

Don't be ashamed to pray in public. There's nothing wrong with public prayer. When you go into a restaurant, and a meal is set before you, and you bow your head at home to thank God for the meal, bow it in that restaurant. Thank God for the meal. And don't care who says or who sees. You don't do it to be seen of men, but you're not ashamed to be seen of men. For Jesus said, "*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is heaven.*" (Matthew 5:16)

We have a little boy, Philip, who died. I took Philip to the emergency room while Joyce stayed home to pray. Philip was one of those little infant crib deaths. I wrapped him in my coat and drove through blinding tears to the emergency room of the hospital, while Joyce stayed with our two other little children. I cannot tell you the agony in my heart, as I burst through those hospital doors and beat on the door to get somebody to come and take that little baby, and see if they could revive the life in that child. And I don't mind telling you,

dear friend, there in that busy corridor, as they left me on the outside, I got on my knees in that corridor. I didn't care who saw me on my knees. I was down on my knees praying. I didn't care if the whole world saw me, because I was not ashamed to be seen praying in public, because I had a need. I wasn't doing it to be seen of men. There's nothing wrong with that kind of prayer.

But what our Lord is saying, my dear friend, is, "Do not pray to be seen of men." Now what our Lord here is talking about is your private devotion. And what Jesus is saying is you do not do your private devotions in public. One of the secrets of prayer is prayer in secret. And, my dear friend, if you don't pray in secret, don't pray in public—if all the praying you do is just simply outward. You see, prayer as a pretense always has to have an audience. But prayer as a reality knows that God alone is the audience.

I think I told you of a young lawyer one time, who graduated from law school, hung up his shingle, had a spanking brand new office, didn't have one client in the world, sitting there behind his desk, getting ready to do business. He hears footfalls, somebody walking down the hall. He's very excited: maybe this is a customer. He picks up the phone, prepared to act like he's busy: "Hello." "Yes." "No, I'm sorry." "I've got a heavy corporation case tomorrow." "Oh, no, no, no, I can't see you then." "Perhaps." "No, not next Wednesday. The Wednesday after next I think my secretary will have a place on her calendar for you—the Wednesday after next." Then he hangs the phone up. And he sees the man standing in front of him, and he says, "Now, good sir, what may I do for you?" He said, "I'm from the phone company. I came to hook up your telephone."

Now I think, dear friend, that this is the kind of praying that Jesus is talking about. Jesus is talking about that kind of hypocrisy when there's nobody on the other line. We're just simply praying to be seen of men. We're trying to impress them rather than to impress the Lord.

Now our Lord tells us how we are to pray. Look, if you will, in verse 7: "*But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.*" (Matthew 6:7) When you pray, you don't pray to impress God. God is not impressed with the rhetoric of your prayers. God is not impressed with your much speaking. God is not impressed with your eloquence. You don't have to be a junior-size Shakespeare in order to pray. And you don't have to use King James English to pray. And you'd better beware of using trite phrases that are often repeated. I am guilty of doing that. That is one of the great dangers of a preacher: that at times you get little shibboleths, little phrases, that you put into your prayers.

Down at the old church one day, I had gone from early in the morning to late at night, and I had meetings all day long. I was weary. I was brain dead. I was just at the end of

myself. A man saw me at the close of the service. He said, "Pastor Rogers, I must talk to you. I must. I have a very big problem." I said, "All right, come on in. Sit down and talk." And my heart was right. I was listening to that man. I wanted to help him. And, finally, when he finished, I said, "Let me pray for you." All day long, I also had been dictating letters, signing them, "In Jesus' name, Adrian Rogers." When I got to the end of that prayer, I prayed, "In Jesus' name, Adrian Rogers." "Oh," I thought, "God, what have I done? Did he hear me say that, Lord? I mean, did he realize what I said?" I guess God knew who it was down there praying, "In Jesus' name, Adrian Rogers." I said, "Dear God, don't let me fall into that kind of business."

Oh, my dear friend, we do not pray to impress God, nor do we pray to inform God. Look in verse 8: "*Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.*" (Matthew 6:8) You don't pray to impress God. You don't pray to inform God. You don't tell God one blessed thing when you pray that He doesn't already know. I've asked you before, does it ever occur to you that nothing ever occurs to God? I mean, God knows everything. God knows the beginning from the end. And He knows what you have need of before you ever ask Him.

So, if you don't pray to impress God, if you don't pray to inform God, what do you pray to do? You pray to invite God, and to enjoy God. Look, if you will, as He continues to tell us, "*After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.*" (Matthew 6:9-13)

Well, if God already knows that I have need of these things, why do I ask God? Why doesn't God just give them to me? I'll tell you why. God wants us to enjoy Him. God could do it without me; but, thank God, He will not.

Sometime ago, I was going to a speaking engagement, and the people said, "We'll send an airplane for you if you can come." I said, "All right. With that stipulation, I'll come"—because other than that, I could not come. My schedule was such that I could not come. But they said, "We'll send an airplane, and pick you up, and carry you over there." I said, "All right, I'll go." And it was to a college somewhere. And the man came over and landed out here in the Memphis Aero. I got in that airplane with him, and we were going over Arkansas. He said, "Are you a pilot?" I said, "No." He said, "Did you ever fly an airplane?" I said, "No." He said, "Would you like to?" I said, "Yes." So we're sitting there side by side. He's over here, and I'm over here. He said, "Do *this*, and do *this*; and don't do *this*, and don't do *that*." He said, "Now, take the controls." And so I did. For a long time I flew that airplane—

kind of like *this*, and kind of like *that*. But he's always sitting over there. He's always there with his hands on the control. He's just letting me fly the airplane. Now he didn't need me to fly the airplane. I couldn't fly it without him, but he could fly it without me. And if it had been me alone, I'd have piled it on the ground. But he just simply guided me, and helped me, and we had sweet fellowship, as I flew the airplane along with his help.

Now God could do it without you. But you wouldn't get the joy out of it. You wouldn't have the fellowship with Him, you wouldn't have that participation with Him, as together you do what He could do without you and you could never do without Him.

Why does God teach us to pray? Not to impress God; not to inform God; but to invite God—because God never ever wants me to be independent of Him and to fail see my need of Him. And if God just gave me what I needed without my ever asking, I would never really see my need of Him.

God does not force Himself upon me. God invites me to pray and to have fellowship with Him. And therefore the Lord Jesus gave us a prayer that no hypocrite can ever pray. Look at it, beginning in verse 9. I cannot say "*our*" when I pray, if there's no room for others and their needs. I cannot say "*Father*," if I'm a hypocrite and do not demonstrate the relationship of His fatherhood in my daily living. I cannot say "*who art in heaven*," if all of my interest and my pursuits are earthly things, like a hypocrite. I cannot say, "*Hallowed be thy name*," if I'm called by His name and I am not holy, as a hypocrite would be. I cannot say "*Thy kingdom come*," if I am unwilling to give up my own sovereignty and accept the righteous reign of God. I cannot say, "*Thy will be done*," if I'm unwilling, or resentful of God's will in my life. I cannot say, "*in earth, as it is in heaven*," unless I'm willing to give myself to His service here and now. I cannot say, "*Give [me] this day [my] daily bread*," unless I'm extending an honest effort to get my daily bread, or unless I'm genuinely concerned about the bread of my fellow man. I cannot say, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us," if I'm a hypocrite, and continue to hold a grudge in my heart. I cannot say, "*lead [me] not into temptation*," if I deliberately choose to remain in a situation where I'm likely to be tempted. I'm a hypocrite, if I do that. I cannot pray, "*deliver [me] from evil*," if I am not prepared to fight evil in the spiritual realm through prayer. I cannot say, "*thine is the kingdom*," if I do not give to my King the disciplined obedience of a loyal subject. I cannot say, "*thine is...the power*," if, as a hypocrite, I fear what my neighbors or friends may say or do. I cannot say, "*thine is...the glory*," if I'm seeking my own glory first. I cannot say "*for ever*," if I'm so concerned about today's affairs. I cannot say "*Amen*," unless I mean it: "By whatever cost, may this prayer be answered."



### C. In the Area of Our Disciplines

And so, what our Lord does, He talks about hypocrisy in the area of our donations. And then, He talks about hypocrisy in the area of our devotions. And then, He talks about hypocrisy in the area of our disciplines. Look, if you will, in chapter 6, verse 16: *“Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces.”* (Matthew 6:16) That is, they actually put on a mask. The play actors of Jesus’ day, these Pharisees, when they would have their fast day, they would take ashes, and put ashes on themselves. They would take dirt, and put dirt on their face. They would tear their clothes, and they would go around now, wearing the costume of an actor, because they were fasting.

Again, there’s nothing wrong with fasting; nothing wrong with giving to the poor; nothing wrong with praying in public; nothing wrong with fasting. We ought to fast. Jesus didn’t say, “if you fast”, but, “when you fast.” And Jesus expects me to fast, and Jesus expects you to fast. But what were the Pharisees doing? They were doing the right thing with the wrong motive and the wrong method. They put on these gloomy clothes, a gloomy face, and they were going around trying to look humble.

A lot of people in the ministry do that today. I always feel a little funny when people ask me, “Are you a preacher?” I mean, people I don’t even know. They’ll walk up to me and say, “Are you a preacher?” I mean, I hadn’t been witnessing to them, or anything. They just say, “Are you a preacher?” I say, “No, I’ve just been sick.” Why do they ask that? I don’t want to look like a preacher. I’m not ashamed of being a preacher. I think that a man of God ought to dress and act in such a way that no one will suspect that he is but be amazed when they find out that he is. *We ought to be supernaturally natural, and naturally supernatural. In all spiritual things, we ought to be natural; in all natural things, we ought to be spiritual.*

But these Pharisees were just hypocrites. They were just going on putting on some sort of a show in the area of their disciplines. And our Lord said, “I’m sick of it. You’re play actors.” You know something harder than fasting? It’s fasting, and not letting anybody know it. That’s more difficult than fasting: not to let anybody know that you’re fasting when you’re fasting.

## II. The Sinister Danger of Hypocrisy

Well, what our Lord is talking about here in these passages of Scripture are some sad demonstrations of hypocrisy. Now I want you to see the sinister danger of hypocrisy—the sinister danger of hypocrisy. What does hypocrisy do?

## A. It Deceives

Well, number one: It deceives. Look, if you will, in verse 1. He says, “You do your alms before men.” (Matthew 6:1) Look, if you will, in verse 5. He says, “...that they may be seen of men.” (Matthew 6:5) Look in verse 16: “...that they may appear unto men to fast.” (Matthew 6:16) That is, it’s all a means to deceive other people. It deceives. And the sad thing about it is this: that the hypocrite who deceives other people begins after a while to deceive himself.

And then, the tragedy is this: that you have the problem leading the blind. Now just stay there in Matthew 6, and turn to Matthew 23. This theme runs all the way through the book of Matthew. Turn to Matthew chapter 23, and look, if you will, in verse 13: “*But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows’ houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte,*”—that’s one convert to your religion—“*and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.*” (Matthew 23:13–15)

You see, the Pharisees were deceived, and they were deceivers. They were actors. And whenever they would make a convert, he would be a twofold child of hell. It is the blind leading the blind. One of the great problems in American Christianity today is hypocrisy, because not only is the hypocrite going to hell; he’s taking so many with him. It deceives.

## B. It Defrauds

Number two: It defrauds. Go back to Matthew 6, and look, if you will, in verses 2 and 3. Jesus says, in the last part of verse 2, “*They have their reward.*” (Matthew 6:2) Look, if you will, in the last part of verse 6: “*Thy Father which seeth thee in secret shall reward thee openly.*” (Matthew 6:6) Look in verse 16: “*Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.*” (Matthew 6:16)

In all of these passages, our Lord is talking about the word *reward*: the reward, the reward, the reward! Is it wrong or right to serve God for reward? It is right to serve God for reward. Our Lord teaches us to serve God for reward. As a matter of fact, we’re going to find, in this Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus said, “*Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.*” (Matthew 6:20) Now that doesn’t make any sense at all, unless there is some treasure in heaven that you can lay up. And our Lord does not discourage it. The Lord does encourage you to have a reward.

But the problem with many people is that many people are going to defraud themselves. They're going to cheat themselves. For Jesus said, "These people who do things to be seen of men, they already have their reward." And the word *reward* is a technical word, which means "paid in full, no more payment is due; it is complete; it is paid in full." It's a very technical word of a bill that has been completely, totally, paid.

That is, if you pray to be seen of men, you're seen of men; you get your pay. You don't get any more. If you give to be seen of men, you're paid in full. When you're seen of men, you don't get any more pay. If you fast to be seen of men, when you'll get your reward is when you're seen of men. You are paid in full; you don't get any more. The sad thing, my dear friend, is that, when you get what you want, one day you will not want what you got; that is, that you have defrauded yourself; you have cheated yourself. There's no place in heaven where our Lord is going to say, "Enter thou into thy reward, and, well done, thou good and faithful servant." You're not going to get any of that. There won't be any reward in heaven for you. You have cheated yourself.

Did you know that the things you're going to be rewarded for in heaven are the things that you probably don't even remember doing here? Did you know that? Did you know, if we remember what we do, God forgets it? If we forget it, God remembers it. It's a strange thing.

Go back to Matthew 25. Look, let me show you something. This theme runs throughout the book of Matthew. Matthew 25, verse 34—our Lord is talking about that time when some people are going to receive a very wonderful reward. And look, if you will, in verse 34: "*Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?*" "Lord, I don't remember that. When did all of this happen, God—these things that you're rewarding me for? I don't remember it." "*And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*" (Matthew 25:34–40)

The things that they forget, God remembered. The things that we remember, God forgets. They said, "Lord, I don't remember doing that." And I dare say the best good that you do for the Lord Jesus is when you do that unconscious good: you don't even let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. You're not praying to be seen of men, but you're

not ashamed that men will see you pray. You just simply do it because it is real. It's in your heart. That's what the world yearns for, and that's what the world longs for.

### C. It Destroys

My dear friend, what does this hypocrisy do? It deceives. It defrauds. And it destroys. Look, if you will, in Matthew chapter 7, verse 21—oh, one of the most terrifying passages of Scripture in all of the Bible! Look at it: *“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”* (Matthew 7:21–23)

These play actors thought they were doing something good. God says it is iniquity. Now I want to remind you—listen to me, because I dare say there are many people that I'm preaching to today who've never really been saved; you are religious; you say, “Lord, Lord”; you give your money; you go to Sunday School—but Jesus calls it iniquity, because you have never been saved; you've never been born again.

You say “Well, I'm not a drunkard. I'm not a thief. I'm not a harlot.” My friend, *the devil had rather send you to hell from the pew than from the gutter.* And these people in Matthew chapter 7, verse 22, they were hypocrites. They had religion, but they did not have reality. They had form, but they did not have force. They had plenty on the shelves, but they had nothing in the warehouse. They were not saved.

What is the danger of hypocrisy? My dear friend, it deceives. It defrauds. It destroys. That's why Jesus said so much about it.

### III. The Serious Discernment of Hypocrisy

Now, one last thing, and I'll be finished. Let me talk to you about the serious discernment of hypocrisy. If it's such a dangerous thing, we'd better look at it very carefully. Go back to chapter 6, and look in verse 1. Jesus said, *“Take heed.”* (Matthew 6:1) Do you see that? Jesus said, *“Take heed.”* Now you'd better be very careful.

You know, when I prepared this sermon, I had to do some real hard searching. I had to do some hard searching on my knees this morning before I came out here to preach. I had to ask myself, “Adrian, is there some Pharisee in you?” And, very frankly, I had to do some business with God.

I want to give you some questions I want you to ask yourself. I've tried to ask these questions to myself:

Have I ever failed to obey God because I feared rejection by other people? You see, the play actors are always concerned about what they will think rather than what He will think.

Question number two: Am I willing, and do I often do service for God, and service for others, that I never tell anybody about—I never let anyone know it?

Number three: Is my private life consistent with my public life? I had to ask myself this morning on my knees, “Adrian, are you what the people of Bellevue think you are?”

All of these are just questions that ask this: Do we love the praise of men more than we love the praise of God? Are we really serving God from our hearts? If so, we have a reward in heaven.

I’m not going to let some hypocrite keep me from serving God, dear friend. I’m just not going to do it. There are some people who say, “Well, they’re hypocrites—they’re hypocrites. I’m not going to be a Christian because of the hypocrites.” Well, I’ve got news for you, my dear friend. *If you’re hiding behind a hypocrite, you’re smaller than he is—or you couldn’t hide behind him.* I’m going to tell you something else. If you’re hiding behind him, he’s closer to God than you are—or you couldn’t be hiding behind him. You say, “Well, there are hypocrites in the church.” Well, do tell. Do tell. One of Jesus’ twelve disciples was a hypocrite. Thank God the eleven didn’t up and quit.

Every now and then, somebody picks up the paper and reads about some charlatan in the ministry, maybe some television preacher or something like that. They say, “Ha, ha, ha! See what they all are?” That’s a lie, and you know it. It’s not what they all are. And you know it’s a lie.

## Conclusion

Do you know why it doesn’t shake me when I learn of some hypocrite? Do you know why it doesn’t shake me? I’ll tell you why it doesn’t shake me: because I know one person who’s not a hypocrite. Do you know who He is? And you ought to know one who’s not. You see, no hypocrite on earth is going to shake you, if you know what you have is real. It will cause you grief. It will cause you heartache. It will cause you pity. It will cause you righteous indignation. But it will not shake your faith—because you know God personally. You say, “Well, I don’t want to go to church because of all those hypocrites down there.” Well, my dear friend, it would be better to come to church and spend a few years with some of them than to go to hell and spend eternity with all of them.

Let me tell you something. There always have been hypocrites. There always will be. The Lord Jesus Christ devoted the sixth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew to the problem of hypocrites. But oh, how wonderful it is to know Jesus Christ: to know Him, to serve Him, and love Him, with reality in your heart and in your life!

# Enjoying the Family of God

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** December 27, 1983

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 6:5–13

*“After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed by thy name.”*

MATTHEW 6:9

## Outline

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### Conclusion

## Introduction

Now, I want you to take your Bibles, please, and open up God’s word to Matthew, chapter 6, and we’re going to begin reading in verse 5. And, please have an open Bible in your hand. If you don’t have a Bible with you, look there in the pew before you. There ought to be a Bible there for you to use. Or, look on with your neighbor. You’ll always get so much more from any message if you’ll use the Word of God. Matthew chapter 6—we’re going to begin reading in verse 5.

Now, we’re talking today on this subject: “Enjoying the Family of God.” And, this is

the second in a series of messages on what is commonly called “the Lord’s Prayer,” more aptly called “the model prayer.” And, we’re calling the entire series “The Principles of Prevailing Prayer”—prayer that is answered. Today: “Enjoying the Family of God.” Matthew chapter 6 and verse 5: *“And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”* (Matthew 6:5–13) Now, how should we pray?

#### **A. We Are to Pray Secretly**

Well, the Lord Jesus, first of all, in verses 5 and 6, says that we’re to pray secretly. (Matthew 6:5–6) The secret of praying is praying in secret. What a man is in his prayer closet is what he is. You can’t measure a preacher by what he is in the pulpit but by what he is in his prayer life in private. And, that frightens me and challenges me, and it ought to frighten you and challenge you. We are to get alone with God and to pray in secret.

#### **B. We Are to Pray Sincerely**

But, not only are we to pray secretly; we’re to pray sincerely. In verses 7 and 8, He says, “When you pray, don’t use vain repetition.” (Matthew 6:7) Now, there are a lot of people who just like to rattle off prayer. And, they repeat little words, little phrases, but they’re not sincere. They don’t even really think about what they’re talking about.

In Tibet, they pray with a prayer wheel. They have a little wheel on the end of a stick, and they just roll it round and round and round and round. And, every time the wheel goes around, that’s a prayer. I know some Baptists like that, but the difference is the wheels are in their head. And, they’re just going round and round and round, but they don’t really think about what they’re talking about. They’re just simply using vain repetition. Did you ever hear anybody say something like this: “Say a prayer for me”? Now, that kind of bothers me when I hear people ask a request like that: “Say a prayer for me.” We don’t say prayers; we *pray* prayers. What’s the difference?

† Well, suppose I came to visit you, and I sat down in your living room, and you

looked at me and said, “Say a conversation.” It would be ridiculous. You see, I don’t say conversation; I talk. You don’t say prayers; you pray.†

We are talking with God, not just rattling off little things. Even this prayer that I’ve just read to you, I called it “the Model Prayer” because it’s a guide to pray. Jesus said in verse 9: “*After this manner...pray ye.*” (Matthew 6:9) He didn’t say to pray this prayer. We’re not all supposed to stand up and say, “*Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.*” (Matthew 6:9) That’s all right if you’re praying that prayer out of your heart, but just to repeat it, to use vain repetition... We’re not “*heard for [our] much speaking.*” (Matthew 6:7)

### C. We Are to Pray Spiritually

We are to pray secretly. We are to pray sincerely. We are to pray spiritually. Our Lord taught us how to pray, beginning in verse 9.

And, verse 9 is going to be the verse that we’re going to look at for today. It’s the key verse for today. And, look at it again: “*After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.*” (Matthew 6:9) And, there are three things I want you to see in that verse with me today: first of all, I want you to see our Heavenly Father; secondly, I want you to see our human family; and thirdly, I want you to see our holy faith. I believe all three are talked about in verse 9. Okay, let’s look at it.

## I. Our Heavenly Father

First of all, I want you to notice our Heavenly Father. Jesus, when He taught us to pray, taught us that we could come to God and address God as our Father.

### A. Who He Is

Now, people have always been talking about God, and who He is, and what He’s like. Aristotle, the philosopher, said that God is “the Unmoved Mover.” Huxley said God is “eternal energy.” Arnold said that God is “the absolute unknown.” In *Star Wars*, He’s “the Force,” and to some people, He’s “the Man upstairs.” Frankly, all that leaves me cold. I’m glad I don’t have to pray to eternal energy. I’m glad I don’t have to call upon the Force. I am glad that I don’t have to think about the Unmoved Mover. I am glad that Jesus taught me when I pray, I can come to Him and say, “Father.” Jesus taught us to pray to God as Father. Do you know, come to think of it, that may be one of the most important words in all of the Bible—Father, Father. “When ye pray, say, ‘Our Father.’” (Matthew 6:9) That’s who He is.

### B. Where He Is

Now, let’s think about where He is. The Scripture says, “*Our Father which art in heaven.*” (Matthew 6:9) But literally, in the Greek language it is “in the heavens.” It’s



plural. *“Our Father which art in [the heavens].”* (Matthew 6:9) The word *heaven* is used twice in this prayer—first of all, *“Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name”*—and later on—*“Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”* (Matthew 6:9–10) The first time it is plural. The second time it is singular. Now, that’s not by accident, dear friend; that is by divine design. And, not one jot nor one tittle is in the Scripture by mistake.

And so, why does the Bible say that we’re to pray to God, *“Our Father which art in [the heavens]”*? (Matthew 6:9) Well, there are three heavens. Do you remember the Apostle Paul said he was caught up into the third heaven, into paradise, and he saw there things not lawful for man to utter? (2 Corinthians 12:2–4) The first heaven is what? That’s the heaven of the atmosphere, the air that surrounds us. The very atmosphere that we live in is called, in the Bible, “the heavens.” You know, the Bible speaks of *“the fowls of the air”* and *“the birds of the heavens.”* (Genesis 6:7; Jeremiah 4:25) And so, the atmosphere where the birds fly, where the sparrows are, that’s the first heaven. And then, the second heaven is where the sun, the moon, and the stars are. The Bible says, *“The heavens declare the glory of God.”* (Psalms 19:1) The Bible speaks of the sun, the moon, and the stars as *“the host of heaven.”* (Deuteronomy 4:19) Now, the third heaven is where God dwells on high in that glorious place called “paradise,” the third heaven, where Paul was caught up to. Someone has well said, “We see the first heaven by day. We see the second heaven by night, and we see that third heaven by faith.” And, thank God for the three heavens.

Now, why are we taught to pray to our Father who is in the heavens? Well, what I believe Jesus is teaching us about is God is everywhere and there’s nowhere where God is not. Now, so many times, if we take this and don’t understand that He uses it in the plural, we might pray like this: *“Our Father which art in heaven.”* (Matthew 6:9) That is, He’s way out there—God—trying to reach Him. Oh, no, friend. He is way out there, but He’s right here—He’s right here. *“Our Father which art in [the heavens].”* (Matthew 6:9) He is as close to us as the air that surrounds us, as our breath. That’s what the theologians call “the transcendence and the immanence of God.” Do you know, I like the idea that God is up there because that means He rules over all and there’s nothing that He does not see, nothing that He’s not aware of. But, I like the idea that He’s here because now I can know Him and love Him and have fellowship with Him.

You know, I was really blessed by doing some study about that phrase that says “not a sparrow falls without your Heavenly Father.” (Matthew 10:29) Do you know how often we say that? We often sing it and talk about it. “Not a sparrow falls but what He knows about it.” Well, that is true, but that’s not what the Bible says. It literally says, “Not a sparrow falls without your Heavenly Father.” (Matthew 10:29) Now, what does that mean? It means that no sparrow ever died alone; not one of them died alone. Did you

know that He's there with a dying sparrow? I mean, when a sparrow dies, God is with him. "No sparrow falls without the Father." (Matthew 10:29) That means not only did God attend the funeral, but God was there at the deathbed when a sparrow falls, when a little sparrow falls. "*Not two sparrows sold for a farthing*" (Matthew 10:29)—for a penny? That's the kind of God we have—the God where the birds of the air fill the air. He's the God of those heavens. And then, I want to tell you, He's the God of the stellar heavens, and He's the God of that heavenly home that we have there. What a wonderful, wonderful God! So, who is He? He's our Father. Where is He? He's in the first heaven. He's in the second heaven. He's in the third heaven. He rules over all, and He's right here with us. Hallelujah! Now, what does that mean to us? What does that mean to us? He's our Father.

### **1. A Lesson Concerning His Conception**

Well, first of all, that tells me something about His children. You see, this prayer is not a prayer for everybody. This prayer is only a prayer for the children of God. Now, you can't come to God and call Him Father if you're not His child. You say, "Well, everybody's God's child." Oh no they're not. The Bible says in the first chapter of John, "*He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the [children] of God, even to them that believe on his name.*" (John 1:11–12) And, the Bible says in the book of Galatians, chapter 3, verse 26 that we're "*children of God by faith in Jesus Christ.*" (Galatians 3:26) That's the way you become a child of God.

You know, Jesus was talking to the unsaved people of His day, and He said to them, "*Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.*" (John 8:44) That's John 8:44. So, not everybody's a child of God. The only way that you can be a child of God is to receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. You see, you come to God as a father, but what did Jesus say? John 14:6: "*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*" (John 14:6) Isn't that right? The only way you can come to God is through Jesus. The only way that you can pray this prayer, therefore—"Our Father which art in heaven" (Matthew 6:9)—is to have Christ as your personal Savior and the elder brother. Then God is your Father.

So, the very first thing that tells me is a lesson concerning conception. I am God's child, not by creation, but by conception. God has conceived me. I've been born again. I am a "*[partaker] of the divine nature.*" (2 Peter 1:4) God's seed is in me. I am His child. He fathered me. He sired me. And, therefore, I can call him Father.

### **2. A Lesson Concerning His Care**

But, not only does it tell me something about His children; it also tells me something about His care. Did you know because He's my Father, He's got to take care of me? I'll tell you one thing about God: He'll never be arrested for child desertion. He'll never be

arrested for neglecting His children. You see, listen, when you bring a child into the world, you bring a responsibility in the world. I wish some people knew that today. I mean, there is a responsibility to sire a child, to father a child. And, God is never going to be arrested for child abuse and child neglect. He's going to take care of His own. And, how we must insult the Father when we worry, and stew, and fuss, and wrinkle our brow like God is not going to take care of us!

I want you to notice the logic that Jesus uses here in this same sixth chapter. Look, if you will, in verse 26: *"Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father"—not their Heavenly Father; your Heavenly Father—"feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?"* (Matthew 6:26) Do you see that? "Your Heavenly Father feeds the fowls of the air. Aren't you better than a bird?" (Matthew 6:26) Now, what's God saying? Listen to the logic: What farmer would feed his chickens and starve his children? See? I mean, if God takes care of the birds, God's going to take care of the believers. If God takes care of the fowls of the air, He's going to take care of His own. We belong to God. He's going to take care of us. I'm not a beggar; I'm a child, so I can come and expect God to take care of me.

¶ Now, when my wife cooks us a meal, as she did Thanksgiving Day—boy, I wish you could have seen what we had. I sat about three inches from the table and ate 'til I touched it. It was good—super! But now, when Joyce worked and had that fantastic meal there, then she didn't say, "All right now, everybody come in! All you kids get down on the floor and squirm and beg and plead and cry, and maybe I'll let you eat." She didn't say that. She said, "Come, dears! Dinner's ready!" What a dinner it was!¶

### 3. A Lesson Concerning His Correction

You see, that's what God says. We're His children. We don't come to Him as beggars. You see, not only is there the lesson concerning His conception, but there's the lesson concerning His care—and not only the lesson concerning that, but the lesson concerning His correction, because if I address him as Father, then that means He has every right—indeed, He has the duty—to correct me and to discipline me. Do you know what the Bible says in Hebrews chapter 12, verse 6? *"For whom the [Father] loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth...for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?"* (Hebrews 12:6–7) Do you know what that means? That means that God loves us so much that God will not allow us to live in sin without correcting us. And, you ought to be glad that you have a Father like that.

¶ Did your daddy ever used to tell you, "I am doing this because I love you," when he whipped you? Oh boy, that was one thing that was hard for me to believe! I couldn't stand that much love. And then: "Son, this hurts me more than it hurts you." That's when I really didn't believe—"This hurts me more than it hurts you." But, you know, when I've

gotten to be a papa and a daddy, I've understood that. You know, the Bible says, "*No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.*" (Hebrews 12:11) When I was getting a whipping, I never did say, "Hot-diggety-dog! I'm getting a whipping! This is wonderful! Boy, it's going to make me a better boy!" I never did do that. I just wasn't that much of a philosopher, because folks, it hurt. But, I want to tell you something: I have never known a man whose father lovingly chastised him who, when he got to be a grown man, did not speak lovingly and with respect and reverence about his father who did that, because, you know why? It shows us that they cared enough—they cared enough. It is a mark of the father's love. "*Whom the [Father loves] he [chastens].*" (Hebrews 12:6)†

You say, "Well, I'm a member of this church. I'm living in sin. I don't tithe. I don't witness. I don't pray. I'm living high, wide, and handsome, and God doesn't chastise me." I'll tell you why: because you're going straight to hell. You've never been saved. "*Whom the Lord [loves] he [chastens].*" (Hebrews 12:6) The Bible says, "*If ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.*" (Hebrews 12:8) "Pastor, what does that mean?" It means this: "If you were my child," the Father says, "I would have chastened you long ago. If you live that way and I don't chastise you, it's because I never fathered you, I never sired you. You're not a part of my family!"

You see, I've told our people before, God deals with His people on a cash basis. He deals with the unsaved on a credit basis. You see, He deals with His people as a father, but He deals with the unsaved as judge. Now, what I mean by cash is that when we as Christians disobey, God moves in immediately. But, the unsaved person—God doesn't bother him. He goes on in sin. And, if you think God judges the unsaved, He doesn't—He judges the unsaved at the Final Judgment, not before. And, he's just living by credit. He's just storing it up. The Bible says in Romans 2:5: "*But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.*" (Romans 2:5) What that verse means in plain English is this: that you are just putting wrath in the bank. God is just dealing with you on a credit basis, and one day you're going to pay at the Judgment.

Listen, if you're being chastised, just thank God for it. Just thank God that God loves you enough. You see, when you come to God as a father, that means there's a lesson concerning conception. He has conceived you. You've been born again by the Holy Spirit of God and become a partaker of the divine nature. (2 Peter 1:4) That means, correspondingly, that God has taken a responsibility, and there's a lesson concerning care—that God is going to take care of you. He's honor-bound to do it. And, that means there's a lesson concerning correction, because He loves you so much. If you step out of bounds, He's going to step in. "*For what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?*"

(Hebrews 12:7) “*Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.*” (Hebrews 12:6)

#### 4. A Lesson Concerning His Compassion

But, I want to tell you, there’s another lesson—and a beautiful lesson—and it’s the lesson concerning compassion. You know, because He has fathered us, we’re His, and He loves us. I was reading this morning in Psalm 103 and verse 13: “*Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.*” (Psalms 103:13) “*Like as a father pitieth his children...*” (Psalms 103:13)

I love my children. I would die for my children. There’s nothing that I have that is not at their disposal if they need it. And, if they need it and I don’t have it, I’d go out and try to find it and get it because I love my children. But, you know, my love for my children is faint compared to God’s love for me. The Bible says, “*When my father and my mother [cast me off], then [will] the LORD...take me up.*” (Psalms 27:10) Oh listen, how God loves us! How marvelously God loves us! You see, we have the Father’s compassion, and God doesn’t stop loving us when we sin. He still loves us.

Do you know what keeps me on the straight and narrow? It’s not because I’m afraid of what God might do to me. That’s not it. Oh, He will chastise me, but it’s not the chastisement that keeps me on the straight and narrow. I love my Father—I’m talking about my Heavenly Father. Do you know the difference between a slave and a son? When a slave disobeys, he’s afraid of the master’s whip. But, when a son disobeys, he fears his father’s displeasure. You see, when we as Christians sin against God, not only do we break God’s law; we break God’s heart. I don’t want to grieve my Father. I think of how many times I must have brought grief to my mother and father in this world. Do you know why I grieve them so much? Because they love me so much. Did you know you’ll only be grieved by somebody that you love? That’s what grieves you. That’s the reason the Bible says in the book of Ephesians, the fourth chapter, “*Grieve not the holy Spirit of God.*” (Ephesians 4:30) *Grieve* is a love word. You see, when God loves us, then we grieve Him.

¶ One man heard his boys, his two sons—they were talking, and they were little boys. And, one of them said to the other one, “Don’t you do that! If you do that, Daddy won’t love you any more!” When the father heard that, he interrupted. He said, “Boys, that’s not true.” He said, “There’s nothing you can do that will stop me from loving you.” And, the little boy didn’t understand. He said, “Daddy, do you mean that you love us when we’re bad as well as you do when we’re good?” He said, “That’s right. I love you just as much when you’re bad as I do when you’re good, but there’s a difference: when you’re good, it’s a love that makes me glad, but when you’re bad, it’s a love that hurts me.”¶

Did you know that love can hurt? Love can hurt. I don’t want to hurt God. I don’t want

to hurt the One who loves me that much. He is my Father. And so, I can see in this that I'm His child. And, because I'm His child, I'm in His care. And, because I'm in His care, I'll have His correction. But, His correction is always going to be with His compassion, that He loves me.

Do you know the only time in the Bible you'll ever find a picture of God being in a hurry? How many of you know where that is? Just kind of nod your head. Do you know where that is? The only picture in the Bible of God being in a hurry? It's in the fifteenth chapter of Luke. It's when that prodigal son was coming home. And, the Bible says, "His father saw him, and while he was yet a great way off, he had compassion upon him and ran and fell on his neck." (Luke 15:20) Oh, the father running to welcome him home—that's a picture of our great God, the Father! The compassion of the Father! How much He loves me today! I'm so grateful! I'm so glad that Jesus taught me that I can pray to Him as a Father. So, that's the very first thing I want you to think about, is our Heavenly Father: who He is, where He is, and what that means to me.

## II. Our Human Family

Now, the second thing I want you to think about is our human family, because look again in verse 9. You see what it says? "*After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father*" (Matthew 6:9)—not "my Father"; "Our Father." Now, look up here. I want to tell you something: you're not an only child—you are not an only child. You are a part of the family of God. It is not my Father; it is our Father.

Now, here is a prayer that is to be prayed alone in a closet; and yet, alone in a closet, we're thinking about other people. "*Our Father which art in heaven...*" (Matthew 6:9) And, did you know that you can't be right with the Father if you're wrong with His children? Did you know that? "If you forgive not men their trespasses against you, neither shall your Heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses against Him." (Matthew 6:15) "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive those who trespass against us." (Matthew 6:12) You cannot be spiritually right with God and consciously wrong with your brother. Not only is there a Heavenly Father; there is a human family. "*Our Father...*" (Matthew 6:9) As I was thinking about this, I thought about three things, dear friend.

### A. There Is the Family Love to Share

First of all, there is a family love to share. We're part of the family of God. We've got to love one another. Don't tell me that you love the Father if you don't love His children. How can you love God if you don't love what God loves? You see, how can a man say, "I love God," whom he has not seen, if he doesn't love his brother? (1 John 4:20) So, we are to love the Father. There is the family love to share.

That's one thing I like about Bellevue Church. Boy, it's the love in this church! I

praise the Lord for it. And, it's not sticky, gooey sentimentality. Many of us don't even know one another's name. Many of you are sitting by a person that you don't even know their name, but yet there's the love that permeates the atmosphere of this place. That's supernatural love. That's the love that's in the family. I'm so glad I'm a part of a family of God. I'm enjoying the family of God. There's the family love to share.

### **B. There Is the Family Likeness to Wear**

But, wait a minute—there's also the family likeness to wear. Did you know the members of a family are supposed to be alike? And, they're supposed to be like their father. Have you ever heard this expression: "Like father, like son"? Or, "He's a chip off the old block"?

† Do you know what used to make me feel good as a boy? When somebody would say to me something like this: "Aren't you Arden Rogers' son?" Or, "You look like you belong to A. D. Rogers." "Well, I do!" "Well, you certainly look like him," Or, "You talk like him." Boy, as a kid, that would make me feel so good. I don't know what it is—just to have a child...to be told that the son...you remind them of their dad. I so loved and admired my dad. He seemed to be so smart, so wise, so strong—never could fool him about anything. And yet, I knew my dad was stern at times, but I was just so proud of my papa. And, for you to say, "Hey, you remind me of A. D. Rogers, of Arden Rogers," that's a blessing to me.†

I'll tell you another thing that's a blessing to me: if people can look at me and be reminded of my Father in heaven. I want to wear His likeness. I want others to see Jesus in me, and I want His likeness to be displayed in me. And, I want to be a reflection of the Father, who has fathered me, because the Bible says His seed remains in me. (1 John 3:9) I've been sired by heaven and by the Father above.

### **C. There Is the Family Load to Bear**

But, not only is there the family love to share, the family likeness to wear, but folks, listen to me—there's the family load to bear. Did you know everybody's supposed to have a job in the family? The littlest child can carry out the trash, pick up his toys, straighten up his room. I mean, whether you've just gotten saved or whether you've been saved for a long time, did you know that we've got a tremendous job in this family? Did you know that? Folks, think about that love. I mean, think about it. How do you think that's going to be done? It's going to be done by you, you, and you, and you, and you; him, her, and me; them, him, those two—each one, our part. Smile. Say "amen." Nod your head. And, by the way, let me tell you about saying "amen." You see, I preach until I think you understand it, and you may be here until 3:30 if you don't start saying "amen."

Listen. Listen, folks, there is the family load to share. We can't all bear the same load. We don't expect as much of a child as we do an adult. We don't expect as much as an invalid as we do a strong person. *"Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required."* (Luke 12:48) But, when we come on Love Offering Sunday, we each one are going to come doing our part, whatever it is. And then, the Father will be pleased. He knows what we can do. Some of you may be able to do things you never even dreamed of doing. Some of you may have money that you didn't even know you had—some insurance policy somewhere. Some of you may have a piece of property. Some of you may have jewelry. Some of you may have an heirloom, an antique, that you can translate into the Love Offering. You know, we keep asking God to give us, give us: "Give us, Lord!" And, He may have already given it to us, and all we need to do is look around and find out what God has already given us, that we may give it back to Him.

Folks, I want to tell you this much: you're not going to out-give the Father. You're not going to do it. He has taught us, *"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom."* (Luke 6:38) And so, I just thank God that there's a family load to share.

### **III. Our Holy Faith**

Now finally, I want you to think not only of the Heavenly Father and the human family, but I want you to think of our holy faith. For notice what this says. Notice what it says. It says this: *"Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name."* (Matthew 6:9) What a wonderful name that He has!

#### **A. We Are to Remember His Name**

Now, the word *hallowed* means "holy"—*"[Holy] be your name"* (Matthew 6:9)—"to be held in reverence, to be respected, to be sanctified in our sight." Oh, our holy faith! *"Hallowed be thy name."* (Matthew 6:9) Why does He say, *"Hallowed be thy name"* (Matthew 6:9)? Because God's name and God's nature are linked together. For example, God has taught us all of His names in the Old Testament.

One of His names, for example, is Elohim. Do you know what that means? Elohim means "the Almighty God," "the God of strength." But now, look right up here for just a moment. I want to talk to you about the names of God. Elohim means "the God of might." Jehovah means He's "the self-existing God"—always was, always will be. He has called Himself by various names. Jehovah Shalom—He's "the God who is our peace," "the Lord of our peace." He's called Himself Jehovah Jireh. That means He's "the Lord who will provide." He's called Himself Jehovah Nissi. That means He's "the God who is our banner." That is, we march to victory under the banner of this great



God. He's called Himself Jehovah Tsidkenu. That means He's "the Lord our righteousness." He's called Himself Jehovah Rapha. That means He's "God our healer." All of these names in the Bible are given. Jehovah Shammah—that means He's "the God who's ever present."

But, do you know what Jesus said? Listen to me. Listen. Here's what Jesus said: Jesus said, *"I have manifested [His] name."* (John 17:6) Did you know that all of the names of God are wrapped up in Jesus? Did you know that? Did you know that Jesus is our righteousness, Jesus is our peace, Jesus is our healer, Jesus is our banner? That's the reason that when you say, "Jesus," folks, you've said it all. All of the names of God are in that one name.

Let me tell you this. Listen to it. In Philippians, the second chapter, the Bible says, God has *"given him a name which is above every name"*—and what is that name?—*"That at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."* (Philippians 2:9–11) You think that God the Father is jealous of His names? No, it is to the glory of God the Father that every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord. And, that name is a name that is above every name.

And so, when we say, *"Hallowed be thy name,"* (Matthew 6:9) as we understand it in the radiant beams of the New Testament, we're understanding that all of the names of God are wrapped up in the Lord Jesus Christ. Bill Gaither was right when he said, "You know, there is just something about that name." His name is wonderful. *"Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name."* (Matthew 6:9) Oh, all of the names of the Father are in the Lord Jesus! Thank God for Jesus! Hallelujah!

## **B. We Are to Reverence the Name**

Not only are we to recognize the name, but friend, we're to reverence the name. You see, here's our Lord teaching us how to pray. Let me tell you now how to get ready to pray. Are you ready? Are you listening? Listen. Number one: You recognize that God is your Father, and you put away all fear. And, you can come up, as it were, and sit in His lap and put your arms around His neck. He's your Father. And, you can come to Him. But secondly, you come to Him with praise. You begin to say, "Father, hallowed be thy name." Praise the Lord. Just spend time in His presence, loving Him, praising Him, worshipping Him, giving glory to His name. Do it, and prayer will become real. *If you're having difficulty praying, try praising. You'll have an ocean to swim in.*

One of the grandest things I've ever learned about prayer is to spend time praising the Lord. Start this way: *"Hallowed be thy name."* (Matthew 6:9) Notice how this prayer begins: "thy name," "thy kingdom," "thy will." Then it talks about "our bread," and the rest

of it. But, it starts with God's glory. *God's not some sort of a sanctified bellhop or a glorified Santa Claus we come to with a shopping list. You need to come to Him as your Father.* And, come to Him giving Him the glory and giving Him the praise. And, dear friend, when you come to the Father through Jesus and in the name of Jesus, you need to pray, "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name." (Matthew 6:9)

### C. We Are to Rely on the Name

We are to remember the name. We are to reverence the name. And, friend—and I'm finished—we are to rely upon the name. Oh, the name is powerful! The name is powerful—because Jesus said, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." (John 16:24) We need to be like little David who came against Goliath. He said, "[You come] to me with a sword, and...a spear, and...a shield: but I come to [you] in the name of the LORD of hosts." (1 Samuel 17:45) Oh, rely upon the name!

¶ I read about a man who was a lawyer—a very wealthy, affluent man. He met a beggar on the street. The beggar was a panhandler asking for money, and the lawyer said, "I think I know you." The beggar says, "And I know you. We were college classmates." "That's right. The second floor of the dorm." And, they talked about it. They had a little reunion. The lawyer said to him, "God has prospered me. I've been blessed. I want to help you to get a new start." And, the lawyer wrote for that beggar a check for one hundred dollars. That's back when a hundred dollars was almost a thousand dollars in worth. The beggar took it. The lawyer friend said to him, "I want you to get a new start. Clean yourself up. Get a job. This will help you to get over this emergency."

The beggar took that check, and he went to the bank and he stood outside the bank. He looked in the bank, and there in the bank he saw those men all dressed up in their banker's suits. He saw that clean, polished marble. He saw the efficiency and the cleanliness of that bank. He looked at himself—the rags, the beard, the filth, the grime. He said, "If I go in there, they won't cash this check for me. They'll think I stole it. They won't even cash it for me." And, he didn't have enough courage even to go into the bank.

Later on, the lawyer saw him on the streets again, still in his rags, and the lawyer said to him, "John, did you squander that money?" He said, "No." He said, "I haven't even cashed the check." And, he told the lawyer why he didn't have enough courage to go in the bank. And, the lawyer, with his legal mind, said, "Now John, you listen to me. You go in that bank, and you cash that check. And, don't you worry about how you look or what you wear. It is not how you look or what you wear that counts, but my signature upon that check that counts."

Now friend, when I heard that story, I thought, "Oh, hallelujah! When I come to the

Father, when I pray in Jesus' name, when I rely upon His name, I am not presenting myself, but I am presenting all that He is. And, I'm putting His signature upon my prayer."f

## Conclusion

Now, listen—listen. Your Heavenly Father—the key word is *relationship*. Are you listening? Are you saved? You're not ready to pray unless you're born again. The key word is *relationship*. Do you have a relationship to God through Christ? Have you been born again? The human family—the key word is *fellowship*. Are you in fellowship with your brothers and sisters in Christ? Don't get the idea that you're going to have your prayers answered if you're out of fellowship with a brother or sister in Christ. The holy faith—the key word is *worship*. Three "ships": relationship, fellowship, worship. That's the threshold of prayer: relationship, fellowship, worship—our Heavenly Father, our human family, our holy faith. Hallowed, hallowed, hallowed be thy name, dear Father.f

# How to Pray for Daily Bread

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** January 8, 1984

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 6:9–11, 19–20, 24–34

*“Give us this day our daily bread.”*

MATTHEW 6:11

## Outline

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- I. A Definite Priority to Be Established
- II. A Daily Provision to Be Enjoyed
  - A. Worry Is Needless
  - B. Worry Is Senseless
  - C. Worry Is Useless
  - D. Worry Is Faithless
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- III. A Divine Provider to Be Exalted
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Conclusion

## Introduction

So, Matthew chapter 6, we begin in verse 9—Matthew chapter 6 and verse 9: *“After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven”*—and then, we come to the key phrase for the message today—*“Give us this day our daily bread.”* (Matthew 6:9–11) Now, I want you to see that this prayer is a model prayer. It’s not primarily the Lord’s Prayer, as it is often called, because in this prayer forgiveness is asked for. Jesus never needed to pray for forgiveness, did He? Of course not! He was sinless. So, it was not the Lord’s Prayer. It is the disciples’ prayer or, more aptly, a model prayer. He didn’t tell us to pray this exact prayer—though you may if you wish—but He said, *“Pray in this manner.”* And, remember He prefaced it by saying that it’s not the length of our prayer, the loudness of our prayer, the language of our prayer, or the logic of our prayer that is really all that important. We’re not *“heard for [our] much speaking.”* (Matthew 6:7) We’re not to come to argue with God or to shout at God. But, prayer is the heart speaking to God and a child communing with his Father.

Now, we’ve talked about other aspects of this prayer, but oh, I want to tell you the

one today is exciting because it tells me that God is going to meet my needs. Do you have any needs? Wonderful! Then God, dear friend, is here to meet your needs. You see, this is a model prayer. Jesus was not just saying that the only thing that we could pray for was bread, but He used that to be illustrative of any need that we have. For the Bible says in the book of Philippians, chapter 4, and verse 19: *“But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 4:19) And, why shouldn’t He? Now listen, we think about our obligations to God—and we have some—but have you ever thought about God’s obligation to you?

¶ I brought some children into this world, and when I brought those children into this world, that made me obligated to them. I need to take care of my children. And, if I don’t take care of my children, I have *“[departed from] the faith...[I’m] worse than an infidel.”* (1 Timothy 5:8) As a matter of fact, I could get arrested for child neglect if I failed to take care of my children, right?¶

Friend, God will never be arrested for child neglect. God is not going to be embarrassed about the way He takes care of His children. God is going to take care of you. He’s honor-bound to take care of you. He must take care of you if you will come and meet Him at His condition and allow Him to do it, for *“my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 4:19)

Some time ago, a young man came to me and he said, “God has called me to preach.” And, he said, “He wants me to go away to college and study, and I know the college He wants me to go to. But, I can’t go.” I said, “Why can’t you go?” “Oh,” he said, “I don’t have the finances. I don’t have the wherewithal to go.” I said, “Well, listen, if I could get a millionaire to underwrite your expenses, would you go?” He thought I knew a millionaire. I said, “If I could get a millionaire to underwrite your expenses, would you go?” “Oh, boy,” he said, “I certainly would!” I said, “Well, you have the One who owns the world”—amen?—“a Father in heaven!” I firmly believe this: *where God guides, He supplies, and anything that God orders, He can pay the bill for.* I cannot believe that there’s a man that God wants to go to school, to seminary, or anywhere else, and that man cannot afford to go. I just don’t believe that. I believe, dear friend, if God wants him to go, he can go. And, *behind every command of God is the omnipotent power of God to carry out that command*, for *“my God shall [meet] all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 4:19)

I know what it is to go to school and work your way through school and live from hand to mouth. Joyce and I were married through seven years of college and seminary, and I didn’t allow her to work. I said, “You stay home and take care of the family, and I’m going to go to school and I’m going to go to work.” And, I don’t say it braggingly, but God took care of us, folks. It was hand to mouth—from God’s hand to our mouth. And, we would have been beneath the poverty level, according to any way that anybody

would speak of poverty. But, I want to tell you, we were rich. I told her, “Listen, I don’t know whether I can get out of school and take care of you, but I believe we can keep on going to school, and I can take care of you” because God met our needs. And, He’ll meet your need. God’s not going to be arrested for child neglect. *“My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 4:19) Hallelujah! *“Our Father which art in heaven... Give us this day our daily bread.”* (Matthew 6:9–11)

Now, there are four thoughts that I want to place on your heart.

## **I. A Definite Priority to Be Established**

Number one is this: There is a definite priority that should be established. I want you to look at this prayer again. See how it begins in verse 9: *“After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven”*—number one—*“Hallowed be thy name”*—number two—*“Thy kingdom come”*—number three—*“Thy will be done.”* (Matthew 6:9–10) Do you see it? “Thy name,” “thy kingdom,” “thy will.” And then, after that, “our bread,” “our debts,” “our protection,” “our temptations.” Do you see that? First of all, we take God’s viewpoint. And, first of all, the prayer is not for my needs, but it is for God’s glory. And, there’s a definite priority that needs to be established.

Now, all of this is wrapped up in the same chapter in verse 33. Look at it—Matthew chapter 6 and verse 33. Read it: *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness”*—*“Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done”* (Matthew 6:10)—*“seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things”*—daily bread—*“shall be added unto you.”* (Matthew 6:33) Do you see that? A priority that must be established. Ladies and gentlemen, God is not going to take second place. Don’t you know that? Do you know what’s wrong with many so-called Christians in America? They’re trying to put things first and God second, and they wonder why it doesn’t work. God does not—will not—work in second place. *“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.”* (Matthew 6:33)

Now, people say, “Well, I prayed, and it didn’t work.” Don’t you tell me it didn’t work unless you were putting God and His kingdom first. Don’t tell me that God is not faithful. Listen, friend, when all else fails, read the instructions. Just read the instructions. *“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”* (Matthew 6:33) That is God’s Word. It cannot fail. It never has failed. It never will fail. An old saint put in the margin of her Bible by this verse, “T & P.” Someone asked her, “What does that mean?” She said, “It means, ‘tried and proven’.”

*“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”* (Matthew 6:33) See? It just makes sense. What is daily bread for, anyway? To give us strength. Now, why should God give you strength to serve the

devil? I mean, why should God give you strength unless your strength is going to be used for His glory, for His kingdom, for His will, for His work? But, when I say, “Dear God, I seek you first. I put your interest first. I put your business first. I want to take care of your affairs,” then God says, “Very well, my son, and I’ll take care of your affairs, also.” *“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”* (Matthew 6:33) And, don’t you tell me that that’s not true unless you’ve been putting God first.

Do you give Him the first thoughts in the morning? Do you give Him the first day of the week? Do you give the first fruits of your income? *“Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses burst out with new wine.”* (Proverbs 3:9–10) Or, do you say, “Well, we’ll pay all our bills and see what we have left, and maybe we can give the Lord something”? Put God first and things in second place.

Is God the first in your desires? Is there anything that you love more than you love Him? The Bible says that *“in all things he [should] have the preeminence.”* (Colossians 1:18) I’m telling you, ladies and gentlemen, that God is going to take care of our daily bread if we understand there is a definite priority that must be established: thy kingdom, our bread. *“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”* (Matthew 6:33)

## **II. A Daily Provision to Be Enjoyed**

Now, there’s a second thing I want us to see: not only a definite priority that must be established, but a daily provision that ought to be enjoyed. Aren’t you glad God said, “bread”? Don’t you love bread? I love it too much. Bread’s so good. Those hot biscuits—first bite is a half moon; the second, a total eclipse. Do you know what I’m talking about? Boy, it’s good! Nothing better than fresh bread! Yesterday, my wife took out of the oven a loaf of bread—just a loaf of bread. We sliced it and put melted butter and honey on it. Friend, I had to almost get out of there before I consumed it—I mean, the loaf! It was good. God wants to meet our needs, and there is a daily provision to be enjoyed. And, when God gives you bread, He wants you to eat it and He wants you to enjoy it because it’s good and it’s good for you.

But now, notice—a daily provision to be enjoyed. *“Give us this day our daily bread.”* (Matthew 6:11) That means I’m not to worry about what I’m going to have to eat tomorrow if I’ve got something to eat today. Do you know what the Bible says? The Bible says if I have food and clothes, I’m to be content. (1 Timothy 6:8) But, how many people do you know that are content with food and clothes? I mean, we think we’ve got to have a lot of bread in the bank, and if we don’t have a lot of bread in the bank, we’re going to hardly enjoy the bread that we have to eat today.

### A. Worry Is Needless

Now, I want you to see what Jesus said. He taught us how to pray, and then He explained it. Just go on here and look, if you will, in verse 25, and He tells us here that worry about tomorrow's bread is just needless. Look. He says in verse 25: *"Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life"—that is, "Don't worry about your life"—"what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?"* (Matthew 6:25) I mean, there's more to life than just eating and drinking and wearing clothes. There's a God in heaven! Worry, dear friend, is needless, therefore.

### B. Worry Is Senseless

But, not only is it needless—I want you to see the Savior's argument—He says that it's senseless. Look, if you will, in verse 26: *"Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not"—*you've never known a chicken who was a farmer. You might have known some farmers who were chickens, but you never knew a chicken who was a farmer—*"Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?"* (Matthew 6:26) You see, Jesus said for you to worry about tomorrow's bread is senseless. It doesn't make sense. For what farmer would feed his chickens and starve his children? Do you see the logic of the Lord Jesus?

### C. Worry Is Useless

But, not only is it needless and senseless; it's useless. Look, if you will, in verse 27: *"Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?"* (Matthew 6:27) Now, which basketball player who wants to be seven feet tall can be seven feet tall by worrying about it? You can't do it. Worry is useless. It doesn't do any good. That's the best thing you can say about it: it doesn't do any good. I mean, worry never solved a problem, lifted a burden, dried a tear, or soothed a wrinkled brow. Worry is useless. *"Which of you by taking [anxious] thought can add one cubit unto his stature?"* (Matthew 6:27)

### D. Worry Is Faithless

But, He goes on to say worry is faithless. Begin reading in verse 28, and look at it: *"And why take ye thought"—*that is, "anxious thought"—*"for raiment?"—*or "clothing"—*"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these"—*take that camera right there and put it on those, would you, sir? Right there, up close. And, I want you look at those flowers. My goodness, those are beautiful! I don't know what ol' King Solomon had to wear, but he never had anything like that. Isn't that



gorgeous? Isn't that beautiful? Now, listen to the logic. I mean, God just causes that to come up out of the ground—*“Solomon in all of his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven”*—listen. In two or three days, these flowers will be gone. Friend, listen—*“shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?”* (Matthew 6:28–30)

Not only is worry useless; it is faithless. Did you know that worry is a slander against God? Worry says, “Either, God, you care, but you're not able to do anything, or else you're able, but you don't care.” Worry says, “God, this one's too big for you.” Did you know that worry and faith are just the opposite? You take worry and turn it inside out—you have faith. Take faith and turn it inside out, and you have worry. And without faith it is impossible to please God. (Hebrews 11:6)

### **E. Worry Is Excuseless**

What does Jesus tell us? It is needless. It is senseless. It is useless. It is faithless. But then, He tells us it is excuseless. Look, if you will, in verse 31: *“Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?”*—now, listen to this next phrase, friend, because it's a kicker—*“(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek).”* (Matthew 6:31–32) One translation I read said, “These are the things that the pagans go after.” Worry is pagan! It is excuseless! You're acting as though there's no God when you worry. You're acting like an unsaved person when you worry about tomorrow's bread.

Now listen, we're to enjoy today's bread. You know, many of us are just enduring today to get to tomorrow, and others of us are enduring today, worrying about tomorrow. But, if we have food today, we're to be content. Continue to read this chapter, and look at it again. I'm going to bring you back to verse 33 that we've already mentioned: *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and these things”*—that is, your daily bread—*“shall be added unto you”*—now, notice the conclusion—*“Take therefore no thought for the morrow”*—do you see that? Jesus said, “Pray for daily bread; take no thought for the morrow.” Why?—*“for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”* (Matthew 6:33–34)

Now, come up close and I want to give you a lesson. I hope you'll never forget it. Are you listening? God has sort of a divine ecology, a balance of problems and strength. Did you know that God gives you trouble every day? You say, “I sure do.” God gives it to you, not the devil. Now, he may give you some too, but God sees to it that you have some trouble every day. Why? God wants you to have enough trouble to keep you leaning on Him, to keep you dependent upon Him, to keep you from being self-sufficient, where you say, “I don't need God.” So, God knows how much trouble you need, and God gives you some trouble every day.

But, wait a minute. God, when He gives you that trouble, God also gives you strength every day so you can be victorious every day. So, on the one hand, on this side, God gives you trouble; and then, He balances it out on this side with strength. That's exactly what the last verse means when it says, "*Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof*" (Matthew 6:34) "Sufficient" is what? The strength for the evil. The word *evil* here doesn't mean "sin." It means "evil" like an "evil smell" or something like that, you see. That is, we have difficulty. God gives us difficulty, and then God gives us sufficient strength to meet that difficulty.

Now, when does He give it to us? As we need it. Listen. The Bible says, "*As [your] days [are], so shall [your] strength be.*" (Deuteronomy 33:25) I mean, I have trouble today; I have strength today. When I have trouble tomorrow, I'll have strength tomorrow. But, God never gives me tomorrow's strength for today's problems. Are you understanding that? I am not to worry about tomorrow. I've got enough to take care of today, and God gives me sufficient strength today to take care of my needs today, as "*sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*" (Matthew 6:34) I have all that I need to meet today, but I don't have enough to meet tomorrow.

Now, what happens when I go out into tomorrow and I get tomorrow's problems and I bring tomorrow's problems into today? I upset the whole thing. It all gets out of balance, and I find I'm trying to use today's strength on tomorrow's problems. And, worry doesn't take the sorrow out of tomorrow; it takes the strength out of today—worry doesn't take the sorrow out of tomorrow; it takes the strength out of today. And then, when I get to tomorrow, I get to tomorrow out of breath because I'm already worn out trying to handle tomorrow's problems today. And, it just makes tomorrow worse.

What I'm to do—I'm to say, "God, give me this day my daily bread. I take no thought for the morrow. The morrow shall take thought for the things of itself." I'm not against planning. The Bible's not against planning. The Bible says, "*Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise.*" (Proverbs 6:6) The ant gathers her food in the summertime for the wintertime. Jesus said, "*Which of you, intending to build a tower, [doesn't sit] down first, and [count] the cost, [if] he [has enough] to [build] it?"*" (Luke 14:28) The Bible is not against planning for the future, but the Bible is definitely against worrying about tomorrow. I tell you, it is needless. It is senseless. It is faithless. It is useless. It is pagan. It is excuseless. I'm to pray to God today that God will give me today my daily bread. It's just wonderful how God does it. God gives you problems, and God gives you strength; and God keeps you standing upright, and God keeps you balanced.

Now, you say, "Well, I don't want any problems." Well, friend, *all sunshine makes a desert*. You say, "Then give me all problems." *All rain makes a swamp. But, you see, when God gives you sunshine and rain, God gives you a garden, and God makes you*

*fruitful for Him.* And so, in your life, some rain is going to fall, and in your life, some sun is going to shine. But, God is going to give you strength for today's needs, not for tomorrow's needs. And so, Jesus taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." (Matthew 6:11) And friend, don't fail to enjoy. It's good! And, enjoy what God is doing for you today. It's a lot better when you get it day by day. It's fresher.

Now, you want a bank full of bread. What would you do if you had a warehouse full of bread? It would get stale and moldy before you could eat it anyway, wouldn't it? I mean, you want all that laid up for you in the future. Now, I want to ask you a question: Hadn't you rather live in a bakery than have a warehouse full of bread, especially if your father owned the bakery and he was a good baker? You see, do you remember those times when you just were down to nothing and God came and supplied? Wasn't that sweet? I mean, wasn't that wonderful? Wasn't that bread good? Because it's fresh! You know, there's nothing that smells better than bread that just came out of the oven. And, there's nothing that's sweeter than having God, when you don't have anything else, just bake you a fresh loaf of some kind of spiritual bread and serve it to you, and you know that it's God that did it. How good that is! How sweet that is, as we depend upon God!

You know, so many of us, we act just like pagans. We think if we can't see it on the bank account that somehow we're not going to be taken care of. Come on, folks, be honest. I heard a preacher say one time, "I don't need any money." Boy, when I heard that, I perked up my ears. He was the first preacher I believe I ever heard say that. He said, "I don't need any money." He was preaching. He said, "I don't need any money." And then, he said something like this: he said, "My wife and I have nineteen dollars in the bank, and we don't need any money until that's gone." Now, you think about that. You say that you need money; but friend, you don't need a thing until you're out of everything. And, if you have Jesus, you'll never be out of everything.

So, what I'm trying to say is that there is a daily provision to be enjoyed. Don't let tomorrow take the joy out of today. "*Having food and [clothes] be...content.*" (1 Timothy 6:8) And, learn to pray, and seek the Lord, and say, "Dear Lord, give me today my daily bread. Yes, I'll plan for tomorrow, but I refuse to worry about tomorrow. I'm going to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. And Lord, you're not going to be arrested for child neglect."

### **III. A Divine Provider to Be Exalted**

Now, there's a definite priority that needs to be established. There is a daily provision that needs to be enjoyed. Thirdly, dear friend, there is a divine Provider that needs to be exalted. You see, Jesus taught us to pray for bread that we might recognize who is the source of all things. The Bible says that it is God "*who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.*" (1 Timothy 6:17) So many times we fail to understand that God is the source.

¶ A little boy was carrying a loaf of bread, and a man said to him, “Son, where did you get that bread?” “Oh,” he said, “I got it from the baker.” He said, “But where did the baker get it?” “Oh,” he said, “he baked it.” “With what did he bake it?” “Well, with flour.” “Well, where did he get the flour?” “Well, he ground some corn.” “But where did he get the corn?” “Well, he got it from the merchant.” “But where did the merchant get it?” “Oh, he got it from the farmer.” “Where did the farmer get it?” “Well, he got it from God.” Then, the man said, “Son, where did you get that loaf of bread?” He said, “I got it from God.” You see, we need to understand that, don’t we? You see, it is God who gives us everything.¶

Now, some of you say, “Well, you know, I’ve got plenty in the bank. I don’t need to ask God to give me my daily bread.” How foolish you are! How foolish you are! I want you to look here in this sixth chapter, if you will, in verse 19: *“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal”*—you know, all that you’ve got in the bank, somebody might be getting it right now—*“But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal.”* (Matthew 6:19–20) I don’t care how much money you have in the bank; you’d better learn to pray at the beginning of each day, “God, give me today my daily bread.” You don’t know how quickly it can be taken from you or you can be taken from it.

I was down in Florida, and the pastor said, “Let’s go witness to a man. He’s a fine young man, a real entrepreneur, a businessman.” He was educated and handsome; articulate, witty, charming; a real man’s kind of a man. The pastor loved him so much. He said, “I want him to come to know the Lord.” He reminded me of the rich, young ruler. The man decided he wanted to host the pastor and the evangelist. We went to one of the finest restaurants. We had a sumptuous meal. The man wanted to be our host. He paid. Then, we began to talk, and the talk was fine and lighthearted and happy. But then, we turned the conversation to the Lord, and even then he began to tease a little and speak lightheartedly about the things of the Lord. But, I refused to let him get off that easy. And, we pushed the dishes aside, and I leaned over the table and began to speak with that young, wealthy wheeler-dealer about the things of God. And, after a while, he told me when he seemed to get in a corner, “Look, mister. I don’t need God. I’ve got it.” And, he began to tell me about his ability, and his wealth, and his money. And, he said, “Other people may need God. I don’t need God.” And, I forgot for a moment I was a guest, and I said, “I want to tell you something, mister: just an air bubble hits your brain, and you’ll become so incapacitated you’ll turn into a slobbering idiot. You won’t be able to handle your business. You talk about what you’ve done.”

The Bible says, *“The plowing of the wicked, is sin.”* (Proverbs 21:4) Do you know what that means? It means, when a man goes out and plows a field, and he uses God’s

rain and God's sunshine and God's earth, and God causes those seeds to germinate, and that man doesn't give God the glory, that man's a sinner. I don't care how much you've got; you'd better learn to pray to God to give you your daily bread. *"Give us this day our daily bread."* (Matthew 6:11) There is a Divine Provider to be exalted, and we need to pray, even though we think we have it.

And, we need to also remember that it doesn't say, "Give me my daily bread"; it says, *"Give us...our daily bread."* (Matthew 6:11) And, if you've got plenty, there are plenty who don't have plenty, and you'd better learn how to pray for them. And, when you're praying and asking God to give you bread, remember that it's a corporate thing: *"Give us this day our daily bread."* (Matthew 6:11) And, if you're sitting there happy, fat, and sassy, learn to pray for those who don't have much; learn to intercede: "And God bless them, and God help them." But, I'm telling you, there's a Divine Provider who needs to be exalted. We get that bread from God. And, to fail to give Him the glory is a horrible sin.

#### **IV. A Diligent Performance To Be Expected**

Now, one final thing I want to say: dear friend, there is a diligent performance to be expected. When I pray for daily bread, that gives me no excuse for laziness. And, if I fail to work for that for which I pray, then my prayer will not be answered. You say, "But wait a minute. God feeds the birds." He does, but He doesn't throw it in the nest. Come on, folks. Have you ever seen a bird scratch for his food? Hunt for his food? Peck for his food? Every bird gets up early every morning and goes to work. Every bird does that. Most of them are up and at work before you're up and at work. It's those early birds that God is feeding. They're out there working.

Listen, let me give you some scripture here. Turn to Genesis chapter 3 and verse 19. Let me show what God said back over here in the dawn of creation about this matter of bread. Genesis chapter 3 and verse 19: *"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread"*—*"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread."* (Genesis 3:19) Now, do you know what that means translated into the modern idiom? "You're going to have to work for it."

Let me show you something here. Turn in the New Testament to 2 Thessalonians, the third chapter and the tenth verse. It's not a real hard book to find. It's harder to say than it is to find. Turn to 2 Thessalonians, the third chapter, the tenth verse. Now, there were some hyperspiritual people—"spiritual" in quotation marks, not really spiritual—in the church at Corinth who were saying, "Well, we're just going to pray and wait on Jesus to get back. We're not going to go to work. We're too spiritual to go to work. We're just going to pray and trust the Lord." And, Paul's answer to these people was in 2 Thessalonians chapter 3, verse 10: *"For even when we were with you, this we*

*commanded you*—not “suggested you,” but “commanded you”—“*that if any would not work, neither should he eat.*” (2 Thessalonians 3:10) Do you see that? “*If any would not work, neither should he eat.*” (2 Thessalonians 3:10) Do you know what ought to happen to a person who refuses to work? Let him go hungry. You say, “Oh, that’s unloving!” Well, I didn’t write it; God wrote it. “*If any man would not work, neither should he eat.*” (2 Thessalonians 3:10)

Now, it doesn’t say, “If any man *cannot* work.” We have a responsibility to take care of those who cannot take care of themselves. That’s not what it says. It’s not talking about a man who wants a job and can’t get one, although there’s some kind of work—if a man wants a job rather than a position—for most anybody. It’s not talking about those who are crippled. It’s not talking about widows, and orphans, and people like that who cannot supply for themselves. But, the Bible clearly and plainly says that a sluggard, a person who refuses to work, in my estimation, he can sit around all day long and say “God, give me today my daily bread,” and God is under no obligation to feed that man at all. As a matter of fact, I don’t believe God will.

Let me give you some other scripture to point out what I’m talking about. Turn to Proverbs chapter 20, right, almost, in the middle of the Bible, and look with me in Proverbs chapter 20 and verse 4: “*The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold*”—that is, “It is just too cold to go to work today”—“*therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing.*” (Proverbs 20:4) Look, if you will, in Proverbs chapter 20 and verse 13: “*Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty; open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread.*” (Proverbs 20:13) As a matter of fact, you might put “Proverbs 20, verse 13,” right alongside Matthew 6, verse 11: “*Give us this day our daily bread.*” (Matthew 6:11)

What I’m trying to say is this, dear friend: that there’s a balance in the Bible—not only a balance between God’s trouble that He gives us and God’s strength that He gives us, but there’s a balance between the fact that we should pray and work. The Bible says, “*Faith without works is dead.*” (James 1:26) And, prayer is no substitute for work, and work is no substitute for prayer. I must learn to pray, no matter what kind of job I have, “Give me today my daily bread.” But, I also must learn to pray and ask God to give me the strength.

You fellows who are praying for a girlfriend, you’d better say “amen” by shaving. You’re praying for a job, you’d better say “amen” by reading the want ads. You’re praying for daily bread, you’d better say “amen” with a hammer or a saw, a shovel, a job, shoe leather—somehow! “*If [a man will] not work, neither [shall] he eat.*” (2 Thessalonians 3:10) “Of the sweat of your brow, you’re going to eat your bread.” (Genesis 3:19) That’s what God says. That’s not being hardhearted. Friend, that’s a principle in all of the Bible.

Now, how do you build a Sunday school—a great Sunday school? I want us to have

a great Sunday school. I saw a tract one time; it said, “How to Build a Great Sunday School.” Boy, I was interested in that! I opened it up, and on the inside it said, “Go to work!” Sure, we must pray. Sure, we must say, “God, bless our church.” Do you think that we can claim our Canaan without work, blood, sweat, and tears? We’re not going to. You say, “Well, God gave Joshua Jericho.” Yeah, but he didn’t go in a rocking chair, and neither are we. I’m saying that God wants to meet our needs, and God will meet our needs. But, ladies and gentlemen, there is a diligent performance that is expected. God doesn’t throw it in the nest of those little birds.

## Conclusion

Well, that’s my message for today, but let me tell you something, friend: there’s something far more important than feeding your body, and that is knowing the Lord Jesus Christ. What difference would it make if you had three square meals a day for ninety years and died and went to hell? What difference would it make? You’d spend all eternity in hell if you lived in a bakery and then died and went to hell.

† Suppose a man falls in love with a girl and he wants to marry her, so he says to her, “Wilt thou?” and she wilts. And, she just decides she’s going to marry him so he goes out and just hocks everything that he has and buys a gorgeous solitary diamond. And, he brings it to her wrapped up and says, “Take this in the house; it’s for you”—she doesn’t know what it is. It’s a surprise—“I’m coming back later to see what you think of it.” Suppose he comes back later and says, “What did you think of the gift?” Now, you know every diamond comes in a little box—or most of them do—with a hinge and a latch, covered, generally, with velvet on the outside, or leather, and on the inside there’s satin. So, he says, “What did you think of the gift?” “Oh,” she said, “I love it. It’s so cute. Look at the little hinge. And it’s so fuzzy! And, look how smooth it is on the inside! And look at the little latch! Thank you. Thank you, sweetheart.” “Yes,” he said, “But what about what was in the box?” “Oh, you mean that wire and glass? I threw that away. But thank you! Thank you for this box.”

Now ladies, you know that woman’s got trouble, right? I mean, there’s something missing somewhere, right? You say, “Nobody would be that stupid.” Well, let me tell you, America’s filled with people that stupid. This body is the box. The soul is the diamond within the box. What we do is feed the box, and dress the box, and pamper the box, and heat the box, and cool the box, and bathe the box, and dress the box. *“[But] what [should] it profit a man, if he...gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what [should] a man give in exchange for his soul?”* (Mark 8:36–37)†

Oh, my friends, Jesus is the Bread of heaven, and unless you feed on Christ, it makes no difference how much daily bread you have. Do you know Christ? Are you saved? Are you born again? If you were to die right now, would you go to heaven? Do

you know that your sins are forgiven? Do you know that Christ is in your heart?†



# How to Pray for Our Daily Bread

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: January 31, 1993**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 6:9-13**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Establish a Proper Priority
- II. Express Your Prayerful Petition
- III. Exercise a Personal Performance
- IV. Enjoy a Present Provision

Conclusion

## Introduction

**T**ake your Bibles, find Matthew chapter 6, and again we begin in verse 9, as we continue our journey through the Sermon on the Mount. And we've been for months in this study, and we will be months to come, I believe. Today, I want to talk to you on this subject: "How to Pray for Daily Bread." As I read this prayer that our Lord gave, I want to remind you, it is the Model Prayer. The Lord did not necessarily say, "Pray this prayer," but He said, "Pray in this manner." And He taught us something very wonderful about prayer. He taught us it's not the length of our prayer; He taught us it's not the logic of our prayer; He taught us it's not the language of our prayer, but the faith of our prayer, the focus of our prayer, the force of our prayer, that causes this prayer to be heard in heaven. Listen to what our Lord said, in verse 9: *"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."* (Matthew 6:9-13)

Now, look again, especially at verse 11, *"Give us this day our daily bread."* Do you have a need today? God delights to meet your need. It gives God honor to meet your need. It is really a dishonor to the Heavenly Father if He does not meet the needs of His children. Now verse 11 teaches us to pray for our daily bread, but bread is symbolic of any need that you may have. Of course, it is a chief need, because we must have bread in order to live. May I give you four steps teaching you how to pray for your need, to have your need met: "How to Pray for Daily Bread."

## I. Establish a Proper Priority

Number one—put it down big, plain and straight: You must establish a proper priority. Do you have it? You must establish a proper priority. Notice the priority in this prayer. Look again in verse 9: “*After this manner pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done.*” Do you see that? “*Thy name,*” “*Thy kingdom,*” “*Thy will.*” And then, notice how the prayer changes, in verse 11: “*Our bread,*” continuing, “*our debts,*” our temptations. First of all, there is God’s name, God’s kingdom, God’s will; and then, our need.

Now, if you don’t get that priority straight, you’ll never have power in prayer. God is not some sort of a heavenly bellhop up there running around to meet your needs. *Prayer is not some sort of a place where man gets his will done in heaven. Prayer is the way that God gets His will done on earth.* That’s so very important that we understand this. One of the keys to understanding it all is the way the Lord Jesus Christ summed it up in Matthew chapter 6, verse 33. And that is an incredible verse. Look at it. We’re in Matthew chapter 6, but look in verse 33. Our Lord sums it up by saying this: “*But seek ye first...*”—first, that’s the priority—“*seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*” (Matthew 6:33)

See? “*Thy name,*” “*Thy kingdom,*” “*Thy will*”; “*our bread,*” “*our debts,*” our temptation. Do you see it? It’s so very plain. There must be a priority established. And if you don’t establish that priority, you’re not going to get your prayers answered. *Answered prayer is not for rebels.* Can you say from your heart, “Dear God, the desire of my heart, first of all, is your kingdom; first of all, is your will”?

Now, you see, you’re asking God to give you bread. What is bread for? Well, bread is to strengthen and nourish your body. When you eat bread, the chemistry of your body turns that bread into strength. Well, what is strength for? For activity. Why should God give you more strength to serve the devil? Good question, isn’t it? Why should God strengthen you to serve the devil? Why should God give your body strength, if you’re not going to use that strength to serve Him? So you must pray, “Lord, thy will,” before you pray, “Our bread.”

*I’ve done many things working my way through school. I did not have parents who were able to pay my way through school. You know, they say that today college bread is a four-year loaf on Daddy’s dough. Well, I didn’t have that four-year loaf on Daddy’s dough. I had to work my way through school. And I did a myriad of different things.*

*One of the things I used to do every summer was to do construction work. I can remember down in West Palm Beach, Florida, we were remodeling the Palm Beach Mercantile Store. I was working for McLaren Construction Company. And I had the very exotic and high-skilled job of pushing a wheelbarrow. And we were pouring a concrete slab*

on top of a building. And it was a huge thing that we had to pour, and all of the steel network was in there, and there were runners made of wood there, just planks to run the wheelbarrows. And we were taking wheelbarrows full of concrete, and running them back to the nethermost parts of that great big slab where the crane could not reach, to dump the concrete. And we'd been working all afternoon, and there was still work to do; and when you're pouring concrete, you just pour it until you get finished. You just don't stop. You have to keep on going. And the quitting time came, but we could not possibly quit. And our employer, Mr. McLaren, said, "Men, you've got to just keep working"—"just keep working, keep working, keep working."

Well, friend, after a while, it got time for bread and beans, and I was getting, not hungry, but hongry. And if you've ever been that way, I will never forget, after a while, a truck came up, and it was loaded with the best sandwiches and hot coffee and other things, and Mr. McLaren just said, "Fellows, go help yourself." He didn't make us pay for it—nothing else. He said, "It's right there. Just go help yourself. Just grab a sandwich. But don't slow down. Just keep working." And so I realized what he was doing. He wanted my strength. And so I got his food.

That's what the heavenly Father's saying: "Listen. As long as you're doing my work, as long as you're serving me, as long as you have your priorities correct, then, when you say, 'Thy name,' 'thy kingdom,' 'thy will,' then you can say, 'Dear God, give me this day my daily bread.'" But if you're not submitted to the will of God, if you have not established that priority, if Matthew chapter 6 and verse 33 is not tested, tried, and proved in your heart, then why should you expect God to answer your prayer? Again, I want to ask this question: Why should God give you more strength to serve the devil? Why should He? Of course He shouldn't!

Now, listen. An old saint, when she used to read her Bible, would find a verse, and she would put "*t and p*" by that verse. Do you know what that "*t and p*" stood for? It stood for "tried and proven"—"tried and proven." And by Matthew 6:33 she had put "*t and p*"—"tried and proven": "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*"

*There's one place that God will not work—and that is second place.* The Bible says, "In all things He must have the preeminence." *God does not want a place in your life. God doesn't want prominence in your life. God demands preeminence.* "Seek ye"—what?—"first the kingdom of God"—"*Seek ye first the kingdom of God.*"

So, if you're praying for bread, or praying for any need, there is a priority that must be established. So, the first point is: Establish a proper priority—Establish a proper priority. When you come to God in prayer, you have to ask yourself, "Dear God, is the burning, consuming desire of my heart that your name would be glorified? Is the burning,

consuming desire of my heart that your kingdom will come? Is the burning, consuming desire of my heart is that your will will be done in earth as it is in heaven?"

Now, don't tell me it won't work, if you've not tried it. Don't tell me that Matthew chapter 6 and verse 33 is just but a vain promise, if you've not put it to practice. *"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and these things shall be added unto you."* Have you got that one?

## **II. Express Your Prayerful Petition**

All right now, let's move on to the second thing. Not only should you establish a proper priority, but then you must express your prayerful petition. You ask God. You see, Jesus taught us to ask. Jesus taught us to pray this way: *"Give us this day our daily bread."* May I tell you why some people don't have their needs met? They don't ask. It's that simple. They don't ask. You're in Matthew 6. Turn over to Matthew 7, and look in verse 11: *"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?"* (Matthew 7:11) Look in verse 9: *"What man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?"* (Matthew 7:9) "Lord, give us some bread. We need some bread." When you establish the priority, you express the petition. You just simply say, "Lord, I have a need."

You know what James said? The Apostle James, in James chapter 4 and verse 2, said that many people have not because they ask not. (James 4:2) They don't have, because they don't ask. Did you know that you deny yourself when you don't pray? Did you know that prayer is the key that unlocks heaven's treasury?

One day, many, many years ago, down in Florida, I was into my study, and I was thinking, and I had a thought that literally staggered me. I mean, it just staggered me. It hit me like a sledgehammer. I don't believe I've ever had a thought in all of my life that had the impact on my heart that this thought had. When I tell you what it is, you're going to say, "Well, everybody knows that." Well, I knew it too. I knew it up *here*. But it hit me with such a force I have never forgotten it. May I tell you what the thought is that I had. Do you want to know this staggering thought? You're going to be disappointed, but maybe not. When I tell you, you're going to say, "Oh, I was expecting something different." Here's the thought—here's the thought I had: God answers prayer—God answers prayer. I thought to myself, "Self, is that true the One who created the universes, the great eternal God, will hear me, that I can talk to Him, that I can call upon Him, and He will answer me and show me great and mighty things?" And then I said to myself, "Self, if that is true—and it is true—you are an unmitigated fool if you don't learn how to pray."

Now, if there is nothing to it—I mean if God doesn't answer prayer; if there is nothing—let's forget the whole thing. But if God does answer prayer, let's pray. What fools we are—what fools we are—if we don't learn to pray. “You have not, because you ask not.”

An illustration that I often use about prayer is this. I used to pastor a little church when I was in college, First Baptist Church of Fellsmere. It was also the last and only Baptist Church at Fellsmere, a town of about five hundred people, a little town out there in the Indian River country where the Indian River citrus grows. I had a dear senior deacon there, Mr. Ingram. I used to stay in his home when I'd go down there to preach, drive down about 130 miles from Stetson University where I was in college, and preached on the weekends to that little congregation. And one day Mr. Ingram, who had all these orange trees in his yard, said, “Adrian, I'm going to give you some grapefruit, and some oranges, and tangerines, and so forth.” I said, “Well, thank you, Mr. Ingram.” But I wasn't prepared for what he did, because he brought several great big what we would call duffle bags, canvas sacks, full of oranges, and put them in the trunk of my car.

I said, “Mr. Ingram, I can't eat all of those oranges.” “Well,” he said, “son, take them back to college and throw them away.” So I put them in the trunk of my car, and took them back to Deland, in Florida, where I was going to school, and lugged them upstairs, because Joyce and I were living in a little garage apartment, and had them in a closet—had a closet full of oranges.

And we were having lunch one day, and sitting up there in a garage apartment, and I looked down in our backyard, and in the backyard of our garage apartment we had a sour orange tree. Do you know what a sour orange is? That's an ornamental shrub. The oranges are beautiful, dark orange—beautiful—kind of a pebbly skin, but you don't eat them. They're not fit for man nor beast. I mean, one taste, and you have lockjaw. It's absolutely bitter and sour, but beautiful. And I looked out there, and I saw a little guy about knee-high to a grasshopper sneaking around in our backyard. And he looked suspicious. He was looking around to see if anyone was looking. Of course, I was looking. And just like God watches us all the time, I was looking down. And it dawned on me what he was going to do. He was going to steal a sour orange. And I thought, “Well, I just think I'll let him.” And so I just watched as he got that limb and pulled it down, and got one of those oranges, and unhooked it, and started off with it.

Now I didn't have any extra money in those days, but I believe I would have given a dollar bill to see him take the first bite. You know, it was just so strange to me to see that fellow stealing a sour orange. And then I got to thinking, “You know, that's so pathetic. Had that boy simply come and knocked on my door, and said, mister, can I have one of those oranges?” you know what I would have told him? “Absolutely not: because that's not what

you need. But, son, if you will come in here, I will load you down with the best oranges that you've ever seen. I've got oranges that are spoiling. I've got oranges that are going to waste. I have oranges I don't know what to do with. I'd be glad to give them to you." But he didn't ask. And so he got his little sour orange and went away.

I wonder some day, when we get to heaven, if God's not going to take us through heaven, and then He's going to say, "By the way, just stop right here. I want to open this closet door. I want you to look in there. You see all those things? Those were yours, but you never asked for them. Those were blessings I wanted to give you. I wanted to help you. I wanted to bless you. But you did it your way, didn't you? Those were the blessings you could have had but you did not have, simply because you did not ask."

Friend, after a priority, then there comes a petition. The Lord taught us to pray, "*Give us this day our daily bread.*" "*Ask, and ye shall receive,*" (John 16:24) the Bible says. Now that doesn't mean that you have the key to Fort Knox. That doesn't mean that you're going to get everything you want. As a matter of fact, in the King James Version of the Scripture, it says, "*Give us this day our daily bread.*" Isn't that what it says? But, you know, the word *daily bread* may be translated different ways. "*Daily bread*" is a fine translation, but it may be also translated, "Give us this day bread sufficient for us"—"bread sufficient for us." The idea of *daily* is there, because it begins this way: "Give us this day bread sufficient for us." That means that God is going to meet our need "*according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus*"—Philippians 4, verse 19. (Philippians 4:19) It doesn't say God's going to meet our greed. God is going to meet our need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

And our Lord taught us to pray for bread, not for cake necessarily. Sometimes we want things we don't need, isn't that true? And sometimes we need things we don't want. My dad used to say, "You need a spanking." Well, I didn't want one, but I guess he was right: I needed one. "And my God will supply all of your need—your need—according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." "Give us this day bread sufficient for us"—what we need. Proverbs 30, verses 7 and following: "*Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die: remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me.*" (Proverbs 30:7-8) "Give me this day bread suited to my need."

Listen, friend. There's no need too small. There's no need too big. Whatever you need, you seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and God delights to meet your need. He says, "Ask of me, and I will answer thee."

This past Easter season I took my wife Joyce and went to Moscow. I'm talking about Moscow in Russia. And there I preached, along with Josh McDowell and Bill Bright, in Red Square. There was erected in Red Square a thirty-thousand-dollar sound stage, a choir of hundreds of people from across America, and some from the former Soviet Union sat on

that platform. And here was a service that was telecast nationwide on national television presenting the Lord Jesus Christ during the Orthodox Easter. That night Josh McDowell and I were to share the platform. There was a concert. We had prayed, “O God, give us good weather,” because it had been snowing off and on all that week, and sometimes snow mixed with rain. And it was an outside concert.

At seven o’clock, when the concert was to begin, thousands had gathered out there at the foot of that stage. We were going to have a musical concert, and then present the Lord Jesus Christ. It would be my joy to tell people how to know Christ, how to be saved, to these former Soviets who had been taught there is no God; to tell them and preach the glorious gospel of Christ. And months and months and months and months of preparation had gone into this. The choirs had practiced. We preachers had prayed. The stage was set. The people were gathered.

It began to rain. The rain started coming down. I was with Bill Bright in a trailer that had been parked near to the stage, and we were there praying. Someone came in the door, brushing the rain off, and said, “The concert has been cancelled.” Bill Bright said, “What? They can’t cancel the concert.” He said, “Oh, yes, the rain has caused the concert to be cancelled.”

They had a great grand piano on the stage, a very expensive instrument. The contract said, “If it begins to rain, the piano must be covered.” That was in the contract—a very expensive instrument. Well, you can’t have a concert without a piano. The sound people said, “We cannot have all of these wires running everywhere in this mammoth sound stage. All of this electrical equipment, with it raining, somebody might get electrocuted. The concert is cancelled.”

Bill Bright went to the platform. He said, “No, we prayed too much. There are too many souls at stake. The concert cannot be cancelled.” The man in charge said, “We’ll give it ten minutes. If it doesn’t stop raining in ten minutes, the concert will be cancelled.” The skies were absolutely grey, the rain coming down. We have this on film. A little group of leaders got underneath a little shed, underneath a portion of the paraphernalia, there by the scaffolding, and they began to pray, “Lord, let the concert go on. Lord, stop the rain.” And then, Brother Jim, they lifted their face to heaven in that rain, and began to sing this: “Stop the rain, Lord. Stop the rain. Stop the rain. Stop the rain, Lord. Stop the rain.”

I’m here to testify to you, in nine and one-half minutes it looked like God just wiped His hand across that sky. It got as blue as if you’d painted it with a brush—in nine and one-half minutes. The concert went on. I stood and preached, and gave the invitation, and thousands lifted their hands that they were coming to Christ.

Now you can tell me that that was just a coincidence; it would have happened anyway. Well, you believe it your way. I'll believe it my way. But, friend, I want to tell you that I believe that there's a God in the heaven who answers the prayer of God's people. Whether it be a small thing, if it concerns you, it concerns Him. Whether it's controlling the weather in Moscow, there's a God that reigns in the heavens. And many times we have not because we ask not.

### III. Exercise a Personal Performance

Now there's a third thing, if you were pray for daily bread. Not only must you establish a proper priority; not only must you express a prayerful petition; but, also, you must exercise a personal performance. Now this is very important. Prayer is not a substitute for work. It is not a substitute for diligence. If you pray for bread, do you know how you say *amen*? You work for it.

Let me give you some verses. Somebody says, "Well, you know, I'm not going to work. God just feeds the fowls of the air." Well, He does feed the fowls of the air. Chapter 6—look, if you will, in verse 26—look at it: "*Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather in barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?*" (Matthew 6:26) You say, "Well, God feeds the birds. Then, God will feed me." Well, that's true. But how does God feed the birds? Does God throw it in the nest? No. They get out and scratch for it.

How is God going to feed you? You want God to give you bread? Let me give you some verses. Genesis chapter 3, verse 19: "*In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.*" (Galatians 3:19) Here's another verse—2 Thessalonians 3, verse 10: "*For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.*" (2 Thessalonians 3:10) Is that cruel? It's not cruel. That's Bible. Proverbs 20, verse 4: "*The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing.*" (Proverbs 20:4) Too lazy to plow? Then you won't have anything to eat. Proverbs 28, verse 19: "*He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that followeth after vain persons shall have poverty enough.*" (Proverbs 28:19)

There's a priority. There's a petition. There's also a performance. Then you ask God for anything. Do you just sit back and do nothing, and say, "Well, I'm going to show my faith by doing nothing"? To the contrary, you will show your faith by doing something. For faith without works is dead—dead. (James 2:17, 26) It is the proof of your faith.

Do you want a house? Pray for it. Then say *amen* with a hammer and saw. You want a wife? Pray for one. Then go shave, and put on some cologne, learn some manners, how to be thoughtful.



Dwight L. Moody was asked to pray for a preacher who was in bad health. And you know what Moody said? Moody, kids, was an evangelist. He was the Billy Graham of his day, but he was in many ways an unlettered man, but full of a lot of wisdom. And Moody was asked to pray for the health of a fellow preacher: “Pray for Brother So-and-So; he’s sick.” Do you know what Moody said? Moody said, “I will not pray for it.” “Well, why, Mr. Moody? Why won’t you pray for him?” He said, “Because he does ten days work in five, and eats everything in sight.” That is, “Why should I pray for him to have health, when he himself will not even practice the rudiments of health?”

Are you asking God to give you, *carte blanche*, to let you do whatever you want—to be lazy, to be indolent, to be selfish, to be indulgent—and then just say, “Dear God, just through prayer counteract all of that”? Oh, no, God doesn’t do that. Friend, the Bible says, “You pray for bread.” “I will give you bread,” God says. But He also says, “If a man will not work, neither should he eat.” (2 Thessalonians 3:10) And so, there is a performance that we are to exercise: exercise a proper performance.

#### **IV. Enjoy a Present Provision**

One last thing: Enjoy a present provision. Now, notice the prayer: “Give us this day our daily bread”—not tomorrow; just today—just today. “And, Lord, help me to enjoy what you’ve given me today, whether it be little or whether it be much. I know how to be abased. I know how to abound. (Philippians 4:12) I’ve learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.” (Philippians 4:11)

One of the wisest things I’ve ever read was written by a philosopher who said this: “To whom little is not enough, nothing is enough.” Did that get in? “To whom little is not enough, nothing is not enough.” If you’ve not learned in whatsoever state you are in to be content, you will never be content. Be content with a little, and don’t worry about tomorrow. “Give us this day our daily bread.” “Having food and clothing,” the Bible says, “let us therewith be content.” (1 Timothy 6:8)

Now I know what I want, and I know what you want. I want to have enough that I don’t have to depend on God. I want to have some money in the bank, you know, and I want to have something there so that, when tomorrow comes, I don’t have to worry about it. Isn’t that what we want? We call that *security*.

Question: Is that really security? Who is more secure: the man who has a warehouse full of stale bread, or the man whose father is a rich baker? Which had you rather have? A warehouse full of bread that the rats can get, that the thieves can get, or just have a father who is a very, very rich baker? See? “Our Father...give us this day our daily bread.”

Now we want to have it all laid up, you know. The Bible says, “Don’t trust in uncertain riches.” (1 Timothy 6:17) That can take weeks. You say, “Money talks.” That’s right. It says, “Goodbye.” I mean, it’s gone. You say, “Well, I’ve got it all.” Well, you may not have it all. “Give us this day our daily bread.”

Now the old trolleys would run with an arm up there, and that arm would be attached to an electric wire, and the power for that trolley comes from that wire. So this is the way the trolley runs all the way to the end of the line. It just keeps its arm connected to that power up there. How does an automobile run? Well, an automobile has a gasoline tank. So the automobile pulls into the gasoline station, fills the tank, and it will go as far as the tank will go, the tank full of gasoline. But when the gasoline gets low, he has to start looking for another station. Isn’t that right? That’s the way it works.

Well, so many of us want to live like the automobile. We want to have a tank full, and so we say, “Well, I can see three hundred miles”—or two hundred miles, whatever kind of mileage you get—“and I want to see my way all the way clear, because I’ve got this much in the tank.”

But you know how God wants us to live? Not like the automobile, but like the trolley. “I’ll always have enough as long as I’m in connection—always have enough. It’s not how much I’ve got in the tank; it’s just what I’m connected to.”

That’s the way the child of God is to live: just stay connected to God; just stay connected to Him. Your source is not in the tank. Your source is not in the bank. Your source is above you. “Our Father...give us this day our daily bread.”

I heard a preacher preach one time. He said, “I don’t need any money.” Well, you don’t hear many preachers say that. He was a country preacher. And he reminds me of the country preacher who went to cash his check, and the banker said, “Preacher, I hate to give you these old dirty bills; that’s all I’ve got.” He said, “Don’t worry about it. No germs could live on my salary.” This guy was kind of like that, you know; he was a dear sweet man. And I went to hear him in a little church one Sunday morning. He was just blessing me incredibly. But then he said this: “I don’t need any money.” Well, very frankly, when I looked at him, I thought, “You know, is that true?” “I don’t need any money.” Then he said something that I’ve never been able to forget. He said, “My wife and I have forty dollars in the bank.” He said, “We don’t need any money, until that’s gone.” You know, we’re saying, “O God, just give us so much, so we can just rest in that and trust in that.” What was he saying? He was saying, “God has given me today my daily bread.”

Well, listen. What do you do? What you do? How do you pray for daily bread? Number one: Establish a proper priority—“*Seek ye first the kingdom of God.*” Secondly: Express a prayerful petition. Ask God. Ask Him for what you need. Come to Him. Tell Him about it. “If

*ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"* (Matthew 7:11) Ask Him. "Ask and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." (Matthew 7:7)

A priority, a petition, a performance: "If any man will not work, neither should he eat." God has not promised to bless your laziness and your indolence. And then, last of all, dear friend, there is a provision, a daily provision to enjoy this day. Just thank God for what He's given you this day. Has God taken care of you today? Then don't worry about tomorrow. The Bible does not tell us not to plan, but the Bible very clearly tells us not to worry. And as we continue in this series in the Sermon on the Mount, we're going to find out where Jesus said, "Take no thought for tomorrow. Tomorrow will take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." (Matthew 6:34)

One last thing. Listen. Jesus said, in Matthew chapter 4 and verse 4, "*Man shall not live by bread alone.*" (Matthew 4:4) Isn't that what He said? That's what He said. Now He says, "*Give us this day our daily bread.*" But He also said, "*Man shall not live by bread alone.*" And then He said, "*I am the bread of life.*" (John 6:35) There's more than one kind of bread. Every piece of bread that you eat, in order for you to eat that, a corn of wheat had to fall in the ground and die, in order for you to eat that bread. Jesus is heaven's bread for earth's hunger. And Jesus, the Son of God, came, died, and was buried and raised again, and became the bread of life that you and I could have our deepest, deepest hunger met.

## **Conclusion**

Do you know Jesus? Friend, if you fared sumptuously every day, and had bread enough, and to spare, and you died and went to hell, so what? You can eat today a Sunday dinner, and it can be wonderful; but if you don't have Jesus, there's a hidden hunger that will never be satisfied until it's satisfied in the Lord Jesus Christ. Matthew 4 verse 4: "*Man shall not live by bread alone.*" Jesus is heaven's bread.

I read something a while back that just spoke to me. After World War II there were some little boys. They called them the Junior Gestapo. Twelve- and thirteen-year-old boys had been taken by Hitler, moved out of their home, put in youth camps: the future Gestapo for Hitler. Well, Hitler lost the war. These boys had been displaced from their parents. Many times, their parents were dead. They were also displaced. And these little boys had gone from city to city, from slum to slum. And the humanitarians got these boys, the Junior Gestapo, and put them in tent cities to try to straighten them out. The boys were frightened. They would wake up in the nighttime screaming, with nightmares. They couldn't get them to sleep all night long.

A psychiatrist said a part of it was that the boys had such an uncertain future. They were not supposed to face this kind of thing at eleven or twelve years of age, or at any time. And the boys were waking up in the middle of the night having nightmares, just screaming. The psychiatrist said, "I believe I have a plan." And this is what he did. He fed the boys a big meal at nighttime, and then gave them a piece of bread, and said, "Hold this in your hand tonight. Hold it with both hands. It will be your breakfast in the morning." And they went to sleep, and slept all night, because they had their breakfast in their hand the next morning. Somehow just going to sleep at night holding in the hand a piece of bread helped them to sleep all night.

Friend, when I go to bed tonight, I'm going to have bread, not in my hand, but in my heart. His name is Jesus. And I know that I know He'll be sufficient for tomorrow.

# Knowing and Doing the Will of God

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: January 1, 1984**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 6:9–13**

*“Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”*

MATTHEW 6:10

## Outline

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## Introduction

Some call it the Lord's Prayer. It is really the model prayer, or the disciples' prayer. But, we're using it as a guide in our series of messages entitled "The Principles of Powerful Prayer." Today, we're going to be talking about "Knowing and Doing the Will of God." Notice what the Savior said: *"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."* (Matthew 6:9–13) "Knowing and Doing the Will of God." Our key verse—verse 10: *"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."* (Matthew 6:10) What's wrong with the earth? What's wrong with this world? What's happened? Why is there so much sin, so much

confusion, so much heartache, so much sorrow, so much war and animosity?

Turn to Isaiah chapter 14, and let me show you something here that we need to be familiar with. We're going to find out how sin found its way into Planet Earth. Isaiah chapter 14. In Isaiah chapter 14, you're going to find out how Lucifer, the son of the morning, became Satan, the father of the night. This is the story of the making of a devil—how God's great, shining, bright, glorious creature named Lucifer became the hideous monster that we know as the devil. Isaiah chapter 14, verse 12: *"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!"*—now, I want you to see what Lucifer did. Lucifer interposed his will against God's will. Notice, in the next two verses, five times Satan uses this phrase "I will." Notice—*"For thou hast said in thine heart"*—one—*"I will ascend into heaven"*—two—*"I will exalt my throne above the stars of God"*—three—*"I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north"*—four—*"I will ascend above the heights of the clouds"*—five—*"I will be like the most High."* (Isaiah 14:12–14) "I will..." "I will..." "I will..." "I will..." "I will..." Five times he said, "I will." Satan began to be Satan when he said to the Father, "Not thy will, but mine, be done." And, that's why there's so much heartache on earth—because Satan deceived Eve, and Eve said to God, "Not thy will, but mine, be done." Adam said to God, "Not thy will, but mine, be done." They didn't use those exact words, but that's what their actions said when they took their will and put their will against the will of God. And, all sin is just simply saying, "I will."

Most of us think this New Year that we need more willpower. That's the one thing we need less of, perhaps. We need to surrender our will to Him and say, "Not my will, but thine, be done." Oh, to have the will of God done in one's life is what prayer is all about! Powerful prayer, dear friend, is submitting yourself to the will of God.

Now, don't get the idea that God's will is always done. I hear people say after some tragedy, "Oh well, it was the will of God." Some deaths, some sorrow, some heartache, some rape, some murder, some pillage, some vile, terrible, loathsome thing—someone says, "Oh well, who can fight the will of God? It's God's will." It is not God's will. Murder is not God's will. War is not God's will. Rape is not God's will. Stealing is not God's will. Lying is not God's will. Lust is not God's will. Hate is not God's will. And, don't let anybody tell you that it is, and don't let anybody tell you that God's will is always done. If God's will is always done, then why, pray tell, did Jesus tell us to pray that God's will would be done? We're to pray that the will of God will be done: *"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done."* (Matthew 6:10)

It's not always done. It's not always done in the unsaved. You would think the modern humanists would teach us to pray this way: "Our brothers, which are upon the earth, our kingdom come, our will be done on earth, because there is no heaven." I want

to tell you something, friend: God's will is not always done in the lives and the hearts of those who claim to be Christians. There's not a heartache, not a sin, not a failure but somehow comes to us when we say, "Not thy will, but mine, be done." It's possible for a Christian to take self and put self upon the throne and to say "no" to his Lord. And, at that time when we cease to do the will of God, it's at that time that prayer is no longer powerful in our lives. We just know and do the will of God for prayer to be powerful.

*Prayer is not some sort of an exercise where we bend God's will to fit our will. Prayer is just simply finding the will of God and getting in on it.*

Turn to 1 John chapter 5. Let me show you a verse of Scripture—1 John now, not the Gospel of John, but 1 John, back near the back of your Bible—1 John chapter 5, and look in verses 14 and 15: "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us"—isn't that wonderful? If we ask according to the will of God, not trying to superimpose our will upon Him, not asking Him to rubberstamp what we wish, but "if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us." (1 John 5:14) And, verse 15 is yet more wonderful—"And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." (1 John 5:14–15) So, the key to answered prayer is to do the will of God. Prayer is not for rebels. Prayer is for those who know the will of God, ask for the will of God, and who are willing to do the will of God.

There are three things I want to say this morning about the will of God—knowing and doing the will of God—three thoughts I want to leave with you.

## **I. We Are to Desire the Will of God**

First of all, dear friends, brothers and sisters in Christ, my dear friends, we are to desire the will of God. It is something that we're to long for. It is something that we're to yearn for. It is something that we're to pray for—to want to know the will of God. The psalmist said in Psalm 40, verse 8: "I delight to do thy will." (Psalms 40:8)

You see, *the will of God is not something that we have to do. The will of God is something that we get to do.* The will of God is not merely for the glory of God. It is also for our welfare. God's will is best for us. So many times when we're told that we must pray in the will of God, people think that takes the blessings out of prayer. Friend, praying in the will of God does not mean fewer blessings for you; it means more blessings for you. Not only is praying in the will of God right; it is also wise. For *God wants for you what you would want for yourself if you knew enough to want it.* The will of God is the happiest place, the best place. Jim Elliot said, "God always gives the best to those who leave the choice with Him." I think that is tremendous!

And, just the opposite—when you strike out on your own and when you try to superimpose your will against God's will, that's when you run into trouble. You need to

be like that country preacher who prayed, “Lord, help me to cooperate with you so you won’t have to operate on me.” So many times we try to do it our way and go against God’s will. Friend, God’s will is best. There is no better place in the world than God’s will.

Listen, friend, a businessman who is not a preacher, if he’s a businessman in the will of God, is in a higher position than he would be if he were a preacher preaching the gospel out of the will of God. Don’t get the idea that some people are better, are closer to God or more near God’s will, because they’re preachers, or pastors, or evangelists, or song leaders. No matter who you are, if you’re in God’s will, you can’t be in a higher place. If you were the President of the United States, or the Queen of England, it wouldn’t make any difference—if you’re a multimillionaire. The best place, the happiest place, the most wonderful place on earth is the will of God.

To know the will of God is the greatest knowledge. To do the will of God is the greatest achievement. We ask for people this year that they’ll have a successful and a prosperous New Year. Do you know what success is? *Success is simply the progressive realization of the will of God for your life.* And, that doesn’t mean the will of God is going to be easy. It’s not always easy. Many times it’s hard. Gethsemane wasn’t easy. It was in Gethsemane that Jesus prayed with the sweat, the perspiration, as drops of blood—when Jesus said to the Father, “*Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.*” (Luke 22:42) But, I want to remind you that Gethsemane was turned to Calvary, and Calvary was turned to Easter. And, God’s will may not always be easy, but God’s will is always best.

Bobby Richardson was the second baseman for the New York Yankees, a great Christian. And, he was speaking to the Fellowship of Christian Athletes one time and was asked to lead in prayer. And, his prayer was very short, but it was a good one. Here’s what he prayed: “Lord, thy will—nothing less, nothing more, nothing else. Amen.” It’s a good prayer: “Lord, thy will—nothing less, nothing more, nothing else. Amen.” Would you make that your prayer for the coming year? “Lord, I want to know and do your will. I desire to do your will.” Don’t be afraid, my friend, of the will of God. Love the will of God. Pray for the will of God. You are to desire the will of God.

## **II. We Are to Discern the Will of God**

But secondly, not only are you to desire the will of God; you are to discern the will of God. For what good is it for you to want the will of God if you don’t know the will of God? Now, God has a will for us, and God’s not trying to hide it from us. It’s not God’s will that you not know His will. So, God wants you to know His will and His way for your life in this coming year. And so, how are you going to discern the will of God? I want to give you three principles this morning for knowing the will of God, for discerning the will of



God.

## A. The Surrender Principle

Principle number one I want to call “the surrender principle.” Turn, if you will for just a moment, to Romans chapter 12, and let’s look in verses 1 and 2. Now, Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 2, is familiar to most any Bible student, but yet we need to look at it again this morning: *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”* (Romans 12:1–2) Now, here God gives us one principle for knowing His will, for proving that God’s will is good and acceptable and perfect, that you might “prove,” or understand or know, the will of God. Now, what is the principle of surrender?

### 1. There Is a Reasonable Presentation

Well, first of all, there must be a reasonable presentation. Look: *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God”*—that is, “because of the mercies of God”—*“that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”* (Romans 12:1) That is, it’s reasonable to do this. It is reasonable for me to come to the Lord and say, “Lord, here I am. Lord, I just take my hands off my life. I give it to you. I present it to you.”

Why is that so reasonable? Well, he says, *“I beseech you therefore...”* (Romans 12:1) Now, I’ve told you before, whenever you see a *therefore*, see what it’s there for. What is that word *therefore* there for? He’s been talking in the first eleven chapters of what all the Lord has done for us—how He suffered, bled, and died in agony and blood upon the cross. He’s been talking about the grace of God, the goodness of God, the righteousness of God, the love of God. And then, on the basis of that, he says, “It’s reasonable that you present yourself to Him.” (Romans 12:1) It’s only reasonable. I’m not my own; I’m bought with a price. (1 Corinthians 6:19–20) I need to present myself to Him. Friend, I’ll never know the will of God, you’ll never know the will of God, until you make this reasonable presentation.

You say, “But Mr. Rogers, I’m afraid. I’m afraid just to give it all to Him.” Friend, that’s unreasonable. When you’re afraid to take your hands off your life and give it to God, it is because you distrust the wisdom of the goodness of God. And, to distrust the wisdom of the goodness of God is unreasonable in the light of Calvary. It’s really unthinkable that we would hold back our lives. And yet, so many do. Do you know, there are many of us who are absolutely afraid to say, “There it is, Lord. I just take hands off. I take hands off the ownership of my property. I take hands off the right to guide my

children's lives. I take hands off my right to live. I take hands off my right to die. I take hands off my right to marry or to stay single. Whatever it is, Lord, I give it to you. It is thine." Have you done that? Friend, it's unreasonable, if you're a Christian, if you've not.

Now, let me tell you something: any Christian who says, "Lord, show me your will so I can know whether I want to do it or not" is in serious trouble. You don't say, "Lord, show me your will so I can make up my mind whether I want to do it or not." You'll not know God's will that way. You say to God, "My mind is made up. I will do it. Now, show me." The Bible says, "He that wills to do God's will shall know—John 7:17—"He who wills to do God's will shall know it." (John 7:17) You just simply come to the Lord, and you have a contract; and you sign the bottom of it, and He fills in all the terms. And, you just give it to Him. You sign the check and let Him fill in the amount. You just simply present yourself to Him.

Friend, have you done that? Let me find out whether you've done it or not. I want to ask you a question: Is there anything you would not do if you knew Jesus Christ wanted you to do it? Is there any place you would not go if you knew Jesus Christ wanted you to go? Is there anything you would not say if you knew Jesus Christ wanted you to say it? Is there anything you would not be if you knew Jesus Christ wanted you to be it? Is there anything you would not give if you knew that Jesus Christ wanted you to give it? Have you done that? Have you made a reasonable presentation?

## 2. There Is a Renewing Transformation

Now, watch what happens when you do that. When there is a reasonable presentation, then there is a renewing transformation. Look at the Scripture here now in verse 2. He says, "*And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind*"—"be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed." (Romans 12:2) Now, look at that word *transformed*. It is translated in another place in the Bible "transfigured." It is the same word. When Jesus was on the Mount of Transfiguration, remember, He took Peter, James, and John and went up to a high mountain. And there, He was transfigured, and His garments became white as snow, glistening like the sun. And, there Jesus' glory was manifested. The Bible, describing that term, says that Jesus was "transfigured," (Matthew 17:2; Mark 9:2–3) but it's the same word that is translated "transformed" here. And, both this word *transfigured* and this word *transformed* come from a word that we get our English word *metamorphosis* from. Do you know what a metamorphosis is? A metamorphosis is a transformation that takes place in an animal, an organism, or a person. It actually means "a change of form"—a metamorphosis, "a change of form."

† For example, when a caterpillar goes into that chrysalis, that cocoon, and sleeps awhile and then comes out, and he emerges as a beautiful monarch butterfly, that caterpillar has gone through a transformation, a transfiguration. A metamorphosis is

when the inner nature comes to the surface. The inner nature of that caterpillar is a butterfly, but it has to go through a metamorphosis.†

What was the inner nature of the Lord Jesus? Glory! That glory was there, but when He was transformed, He went through that metamorphosis. That inner glory came to the surface, and, therefore, you saw the glory that was the Lord Jesus. It was there all the time, but He had to go through a metamorphosis for it to be displayed.

Now, the Bible says that a Christian is to go through a metamorphosis. That is, his inner nature is to come to the surface. What is the inner nature of a Christian? Jesus Christ. But, many times the inner nature of a Christian is not seen because he's not transformed. Rather than being transformed, he's conformed. Notice what this verse says: *"Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed."* (Romans 12:2) Now, Paul is making a play on words. What he is saying is, "Don't let this world squeeze you into its mold, but rather, let your real nature come forth." Your real nature as a Christian is not going to come forth, it is not going to be known, until you come to the Lord and say, "Here, Lord, I present myself to you. It is my reasonable service." And, the reason that many of us don't have the testimony that we ought to have, and the reason that our lives are not transformed, is that we have not presented ourselves to Him as the Bible teaches it is our reasonable service to do.

†Now, we're saved, but we're like the little boy's dog. Somebody asked a little boy who had a mongrel dog, "What kind of dog is that?" And, the little fellow said, "Why, he's a police dog." The man said, "Well, he doesn't look like a police dog." And, the little fellow said, "Well, he's in 'the Secret Service'."†

Now, I know a lot of Christians who are saved, but they're in "the Secret Service." I mean, they're squeezed in. They're not transformed. They have not gone through a metamorphosis.

### **3. There Is a Resulting Revelation**

Now listen, I'm talking to you about how to know the will of God. First of all, there is a reasonable presentation. You say, "Here it is, Lord. It's reasonable. You died for me. I'm not my own. I give it to you. I do, Lord. I do." Then there is a renewing transformation. I am renewed in the spirit of my mind. I'm *"transformed by the renewing of [my] mind."* (Romans 12:2) God gives me a new mind. I have a new tool to think with. I have a renewed mind. And so, the third thing is the resulting revelation. I know the will of God. With my new mind, I can know the will of God. He says, *"Be [renewed in] your mind, that [you might] prove what is that good, and [perfect], and [acceptable], will of God."* (Romans 12:2)

How does this work? Well, I now can think His thoughts after Him. Do you remember what the Apostle Paul said? *"We have the mind of Christ."* (1 Corinthians 2:16) Or

again, he said, *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 2:5) Do you know what wisdom is? Having the mind of Christ. Wisdom is seeing light from God’s point of view, having the mind of Christ.

Do you see it? Reasonable presentation plus renewing transformation equals revealed revelation. *“That [I might know]”—“that I might prove”—“what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”* (Romans 12:2) How does it work? With my new mind, I have wisdom and I think God’s thoughts after Him.

Now, there are some people who think the will of God is like a map. The will of God is not like a map; it’s like a compass. God doesn’t give you a map and just say, “Here’s where you’re going to go the rest of your life.” That would take all the excitement out. The Holy Spirit just points the direction, and God gives you wisdom. Day by day you use the mind that God has given you. You don’t pray, “Now Lord, which shoe should I put on first? What color socks should I wear? Should I hold my fork in my left hand or in my right hand? Should I comb my hair today or not?” Oh, that’s ridiculous! Friend, once you present your body to Christ, He transforms your mind.

What does He transform your mind for? For you to use it. Continue to read here in Romans chapter 12. Look, if you will, in verse 3: *“For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.”* (Romans 12:3) Now, three times in one verse he says, “Think! Think! Think!” Don’t think that God renewed your mind so that you couldn’t use it. He renewed your mind that you might use it. You are to think God’s thoughts after Him. You are to walk in wisdom. And, God will reveal His will to you, as you have a mind that is transformed, a mind that is renewed. And then, you can *“prove what is that good, and [perfect], and [acceptable], will of God.”* (Romans 12:2) That’s what the Bible calls wisdom. Wisdom is not getting warm around the heart and wet around the lashes. It is sanctified spiritual sense. *“If any [man] lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”* (James 1:5) You can think God’s thoughts after Him. You can have the mind of Christ, but it will only come when you say, “Lord, I present myself to you.” A reasonable presentation plus a renewing transformation equals a revealed revelation. *“[You will] prove what is that good, and [perfect], and [acceptable], will of God.”* (Romans 12:2) Now, that’s one principle. I want to call that “the surrender principle.”

## **B. The Scripture Principle**

There is another principle, and I want to call that “the Scripture principle,” because, you see, one way that you’re going to think the thoughts of Christ and use your renewed mind is by meditating on the Word of God. That’s the reason Jesus said, in John the

fifteenth chapter, the seventh verse, *“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”* (John 15:7) What are His words? The Bible. These are His words. *You can't separate the Lord of the Word from the Word of the Lord.* And so, you are to have Him in you, and you're to have His words in you.

Now, in God's Word is wisdom and knowledge and guidance to know God's will. And so, you must saturate yourself with the Word of God. The way to be powerful in prayer, the way to know God's will for your life, is to know the Word of God. You cannot know the will of God without knowing the Word of God. Many people today are floundering around because they don't know God's Word. God's Word is to be a light and a lamp to your feet and to your path. (Psalms 119:105) You're to read it. God's Word is to illumine you and to guide you. I want to give you a suggestion: you go home today and read the one hundred and nineteenth psalm, and you'll know what I'm talking about. There comes wisdom from knowing and understanding God's Word.

### **C. The Spirit Principle**

So, there's the Scripture principle. But, I want to tell you, there's a third principle, and it's the Spirit principle. And, that is letting the Holy Spirit of God, who lives inside of you, guide you to know God's will. The Bible says in the eighth chapter of Romans, the fourteenth verse, *“As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”* (Romans 8:14) The Spirit of God is there to lead us.

In John chapter 16, verse 7, Jesus said He was going to give us another Comforter, and He was talking about the Holy Spirit. (John 16:7) And, the word for *Comforter* that Jesus used there is the word *parakletos*, sometimes translated “advocate.” But, what it really means is “a guide who walks by your side.” The Holy Spirit is here to guide you. Jesus said, *“He will guide you.”* (John 16:13) And, the Bible says, *“The meek will he guide [with wisdom].”* (Psalms 25:9) He will guide you. If in all of your ways you will acknowledge Him, He will direct your path. (Proverbs 3:6)

There are times when you need special guidance and your renewed mind cannot tell you what to do, and God's Word does not speak to the issue specifically, and you need a supernatural, mystical guidance of the Holy Spirit of God. And, He is there to guide you, for the Bible says, *“We know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit [Himself] maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”* (Romans 8:26) That's the reason that we must be filled with the Spirit to know the will of God. God's Spirit sweetly, mystically, intuitively speaks to our hearts. Jesus said, *“My sheep hear my voice,”* (John 10:27) and He speaks through His dear Holy Spirit.

Thank God for the Holy Spirit of God, who has guided my life and shown me what to do and what not to do when a renewed mind could not do it and when the Word of God

as such had no specific answer. Yet God's Holy Spirit has said, "Adrian, do this. Don't do that. Go here. Don't go there. Speak this. Don't say that." So many times I've felt God's Holy Spirit guide me. There have been times when I've been preaching that I've felt the Spirit of God put thoughts and ideas into my heart and into my mind right in the midst of a message and I felt God's dear, sweet, wonderful Holy Spirit of God was guiding me and leading me.

And, He helps us to pray. You see, that's called "*praying...in the Spirit*" (Ephesians 6:18)—when the Holy Spirit of God makes intercession. You see, *the prayer that gets to heaven is the prayer that starts in heaven*. Prayer is the Holy Spirit finding a desire in the heart of the Father, then putting that prayer into our heart and sending it back to heaven, because "*of him, and through him, and to him, are all things.*" (Romans 11:36) That is the divine triangle, and what we do in prayer is just close the circuit. Therefore, to know the will of God we must be filled with the Spirit as well as filled with the Scripture.

Let me show you a verse of Scripture. Turn to Ephesians chapter 5 here for just a moment. Ephesians chapter 5—let's look at it—verse 17: "*Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is*"—all right. Wonderful. He says, "Don't be unwise. You're to know the will of the Lord." But now, look in verse 18—"*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.*" (Ephesians 5:17–18) Obviously, to know the will of the Lord and to do the will of the Lord we must be filled with the Spirit of God.

Now folks, listen to me. You want to know God's will for 1984? You want God to guide you in this New Year? You want God to give you leadership? Let's check up again. There is the surrender principle. Have you presented your body a living sacrifice? Have you done it? Have you said, "Lord, I give myself to you. I take my hands off. If there is anything you want me to do, Lord, your wish is my command. I will do it. I will, I will, if you'll only help me"? Secondly, is there the Scripture principle in your life? Are you a student of the Word of God? If not, I suggest that you become one. Thirdly, the Spirit principle—are you consciously filled with the Holy Spirit? Have you yielded all to Him? Have you said, "Come, gracious Spirit of God. Come and possess me. Lead me. Pray with me. Agonize with me. Help me to pray in the Spirit through the Son to the Father"?

### **III. We Must Do the Will of God**

Now finally, not only must we desire the will of God and not only must we discern the will of God, but beloved, we must do the will of God. Now, what did Jesus teach us to pray? "*Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be*"—what?—"done." (Matthew 6:9–10) The will of God is something that you do.

And, how is it to be done? It is to be done as it is in heaven. And, how is God's will done in heaven?

### A. It Is Done Confidently

First of all, it's done confidently. The angels are not afraid to do His will in heaven. Don't be afraid of God's will, friend. God loves you. Remember how we're to pray—not, "Our Tyrant which art in heaven" but, "*Our Father which art in heaven.*" (Matthew 6:9) He loves you more than any earthly father ever loved a child. "*When my father and...mother [cast me off], then [will] the LORD...take me up.*" (Psalms 27:10) He loves me with the tender compassion of a father.

### B. It Is Done Completely

So, I'm to do it confidently, but I am to do it completely. How is God's will done in heaven? Half-heartedly? Incompletely? No. Listen. What is the will of God? Not partial obedience. Completely—don't give Him half; give Him all. Don't obey in some area and not in another area. You say, "Well, I'm doing all right in my church life but not in my business life." Then God's will is not being done in your life. You say, "I'm doing all right in my business life but not in my social life, my date life." Friend, give it all to Him. Is there any area of your life where you cannot say, "God, thy will be done"?

### C. It Is Done Continually

It is to be done, dear friend, confidently. It is to be done completely. It is to be done continually because that's the way it's done in heaven. God's will is done moment by moment in heaven. Why don't you say, "Dear Lord, I want your will all through the year. I'm not just going to have a good day and then a bad day; a good week, then a bad week. But, all this year, Lord, I'm going to walk in your will. And, when I come to 1985, if 1985 gets here, I'm going to look back and I'm going to say, 'For a year, Lord, I've walked with you. For a year I did your will confidently, I did it completely, and I did it, dear Lord, continually—your will'?" We are to do the will of God.

## Conclusion

Now friend, listen to me: powerful prayer is not for rebels. The only way to get your prayer answered is to do the will of God, to want the will of God, to know the will of God. *There's nothing that lies outside the reach of prayer except that which lies outside the will of God. "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us...we have the petitions that we desired of him."* (1 John 5:14–15) I want the ambition of your life, your very being, this year to be this: "Thy will be done in my life, as it is in heaven."†

# Overcoming Temptations

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** January 22, 1984

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 6:9–13

*“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”*

MATTHEW 6:13

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## Introduction

Take your Bibles now, and turn—would you, please?—to Matthew chapter 6. We’re dealing with prayer. We’re in a series of messages entitled “Principles of Prayer.” These are coming from that wonderful passage of Scripture sometimes called “the Lord’s Prayer,” more aptly called “the disciples’ prayer” or “the model prayer.” I suppose many of you know it by heart. Let’s look at it again and read the entire prayer, and then we’re going to come back to our key verse for this morning, which is verse 13. Matthew chapter 6, verse 9: Jesus said, *“After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”* (Matthew 6:9–13)



Prayer is the Christian's greatest privilege. Prayer is the Christian's greatest responsibility and highest duty. Alas, it is the Christian's greatest failure. My life is no greater than my prayer life. My victory is no greater than the prayer life and the victory that I have in prayer. How important it is that we say with the disciples, "*Lord, teach us to pray!*" (Luke 11:1)

Now, we've already talked about this prayer and the many elements of it. Now today, we come to a key element where we're dealing today with temptation and how to overcome it; for notice, if we will, in verse 13, Jesus taught us to pray, "*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*" (Matthew 6:13) I wonder, are you really concerned about overcoming temptation?

¶ I heard of a man who went to see his doctor and he said, "Doctor, I have been misbehaving some lately, and my conscience has been bothering me so I thought I would see if you could help me." The doctor said, "Well, what do you expect me to do—give you something to strengthen your willpower?" He said, "No, I was hoping you would give me something to weaken my conscience."¶

Now, a lot of us are about that way. We really have no strong desire to overcome temptation. And, if you don't, then there's very little I, or anybody else, can do to help you. But, if you would like to be a victor rather than a victim, an overcomer rather than overcome—if you would like to learn how to turn temptations into triumphs—then I want you to pay attention because the scripture today is going to be a real blessing.

Now, right away as we get into this scripture, we've got a problem: Why should I ask God not to lead me into temptation? I mean, does God lead people into temptation? I mean, do I have to say, "Hey, Lord, don't do that any more. Lord, quit enticing me to sin"? Is that the problem? I mean, is God trying to allure me, and entrap me, and entice me to sin? Is God going to cripple me and then blame me for limping? Is that what God is going to do? Am I fighting God as well as fighting sin? Is it God that is leading me into sin? And, am I asking God, "O God, don't do that any more"? No, no, no, no, no, no, no. Listen, friend, God never tempts anybody with evil. Don't you know that? God never induces you to sin. The Bible says in James chapter 1 and verse 13: "The Lord tempteth no man with evil; neither can He be tempted with evil." (James 1:13) If a temptation comes to you to sin, it did not come from God, because if it comes from God, you've got a perfect excuse. You can say, "Who can overcome God?"

What does this mean, therefore, when it says, "*And lead us not into temptation?*" (Matthew 6:13) It doesn't say, "Tempt us not," because He never does that, but "*Lead us not into temptation.*" (Matthew 6:13) That is, "Lead us out of temptation. You're not the source of it, Father, and, therefore, you be the help in it." You know, the Bible says, "[God] knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation." (2 Peter 2:9) "Lead us, lest we fall in temptation." That's the idea. That's the truth that we're dealing with today. And

remember, the prayer is, “Lord, lead us”; that is, that God is going to be the One who leads us. You see, a man needs three things. First of all, he needs direction: “[*Lord,*] *lead us.*” (Matthew 6:13) Number two, he needs deliverance: “*but deliver us.*” (Matthew 6:13) And, number three, he needs dynamic, or power: “*For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory.*” (Matthew 6:13) It’s all right here: the divine direction, the divine deliverance, and the divine dynamic are all right here in this prayer.

Now, I don’t have time to talk about all of those this morning, but we’re going to talk about the first one, the divine direction. “*And [*Lord,*] lead us not into temptation.*” (Matthew 6:13) Now, how does God lead us? Well, the Lord leads us with His power, but He also leads us by His examples. So, I want you to turn to Luke chapter 4, and we’re going to leave the passage in Matthew and let that merely be the springboard into a classic illustration of how to overcome temptation in answer to prayer. Now, the reason that I’ve chosen the passage in Luke chapter 4 is because of the three ingredients that are in Luke chapter 4. First of all, we see our enemy who is there, who is Satan. Secondly, we see the experience that is there, which is temptation. And thirdly, we see the example who is there, the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, it’s really a terrific passage to study in overcoming temptation.

## **I. The Subject of the Temptation**

Now, let me ask you a question: How many of you think that you’re being tempted because there’s something wrong in you and something’s just not right and that’s the reason you’re being tempted? If you were better, you wouldn’t be tempted like you are—do you feel that way? And, you know, if you were just a better person, you wouldn’t be tempted. I hope you don’t feel that way. You know, a lot of folks feel that way. They think that when they’re tempted, there must be something drastically wrong with them, that there must be some horrible something in them or they never would be tempted that way. Well, don’t think that way, folks, because Jesus was tempted.

I want you to see something here. Look, if you will, in Luke chapter 4, verse 1: “*And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, Being forty days tempted of the devil.*” (Luke 4:1–2) Forty days the Lord Jesus was tempted of the devil. Now, the subject of temptation in this passage is Jesus. It was Jesus who is being tempted. Did you know that you haven’t felt a temptation that Jesus hasn’t felt? Did you know that Jesus, the very Son of God, sinless and perfect, was tempted? I can’t deny that, friend. It’s in the Bible. The Bible says in here clearly and plainly, “*For forty days Jesus was tempted of the devil.*” (Luke 4:2) That tells me something right away—that you don’t have to be sinful to be tempted. Amen? But, it tells me something else: you don’t have to give in to temptation either, because Jesus didn’t. The Bible says in the book of Hebrews chapter 4 and verse 15: “*For we have not*

a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities”—that means He feels what we feel—“*but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*” (Hebrews 4:15) Every temptation that you felt Jesus felt—and I’m going to explain that more later on, but just put it down: every temptation you feel Jesus felt. “[Jesus] was in”—A-L-L—“*all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*” (Hebrews 4:15) He never sinned one time, and that tells me clearly and plainly, therefore, that it is not a sin to be tempted. Jesus was tempted of the devil. He was the subject of temptation.

## II. The Setting of the Temptation

Now, I want you to notice the setting of this temptation. When was He tempted? Well, go back to chapter 3, and let me show you something here in verse 21: “[And] now when all of the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice from heaven, which said, *Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.*” (Luke 3:21–22)

Now, I want you to get the setting. Jesus has just been baptized. Now, what was the baptism of the Lord Jesus? That was Jesus beginning, commencing, inaugurating His public ministry. You see, baptism deals with identification. When I am baptized, I’m identifying myself with Christ and His death, burial, and resurrection. When Jesus was baptized, He was identifying Himself with me. Jesus, when He was baptized, was showing that He was going to suffer, bleed, die, be buried, and raised again. And, that’s the meaning of His baptism. So, there’s a very real sense in which we identify ourselves with Christ, who identified Himself with us through baptism. So, Jesus is now inaugurating His public ministry; Jesus is being baptized. And, He’s being baptized—the Bible says He’s praying during this baptism. And, the Bible doesn’t say that incidentally but emphatically—that Jesus was praying when He was being baptized. And then, on top of that, the Holy Spirit comes down out of heaven in a bodily shape, like a dove. Everybody could see it. And, on top of that, God spoke.

Have you ever wondered what it must have sounded like for God to speak? What would the voice of God sound like? God spoke, and God said, “*Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.*” (Luke 3:22) Now, you talk about a mountaintop experience! Folks, that was one. You talk about a high point! That was one. Now, when was Jesus tempted? Right after that. Right then. That was the setting. He had just come out of a glorious spiritual experience.

I want to ask you a question. Look up here and be honest: Have you ever gotten in an argument with your wife or husband on the way home from church? Don’t look so pious. On the way home from church, out of a great spiritual experience. You preachers will know that the devil will sometimes attack your home after your church has had a

great revival meeting—really will. I tell you, there is a spiritual principle, and here's what it is: it's what I call "the devil after the dove." First of all, the Holy Spirit descends like a dove, and then He's tempted of the devil.

Now, why is that? Well, of course, the enemy is going to counterattack. When God does something great, when you have the approval of God, you're going to have the attack of the enemy. Remember what Leonard Ravenhill said? "When God opens the windows of heaven to bless us, the devil's going to open the doors of hell to blast us." You see, I could take you through the Bible, had we time today, and show you person after person who, after great spiritual experience, went down. "Pastor, are you saying we ought not, therefore, have great spiritual experiences?" No, I'm not saying that at all. Of course we ought to have great spiritual experiences. But, I'm saying that when you do, you'd better not start coasting—you'd better not say, "I've got it made"—because the devil, the enemy, is going to counterattack. And, that was the setting of the temptation of the Lord Jesus. And, dear friend, there's never a time—there's never a time, there's never a time—when you could say, "I've got it made; I'm just going to coast all the way to glory." You can't do that.

I'll tell you something about the setting of this temptation. Do you know where He was tempted? Well, you can look at it right here in the Scripture. The Bible says, "[in] the wilderness" (Luke 4:1) in verse 1. That's very interesting to me. Do you know where Adam fell? In a garden. Do you know where Jesus overcame? In the wilderness. I like that. Do you know why? That just knocks to smithereens the so-called "social gospel." Do you know what the social gospel says? "We've just got to change man's environment; and when we change man's environment, then we're going to fix man." Well, I want to ask you a question: Where did man get in difficulty? In the Garden of Eden. You're not going to have a better environment than that. Where did Jesus overcome? In the wilderness. What I'm trying to say, dear friend, is that man's problem is greater than man's environment. I'm for having a good environment, but I want to tell you, this matter of overcoming the devil is not primarily a matter of isolation; it is insulation. It is having God in you, with you, through you, and working in His mighty power. That was the setting of the temptation. Dear friend, it was after a great spiritual experience and it was in a wilderness that Jesus, the Lamb of God, the Son of God, overcame.

### **III. The Source of the Temptation**

Now, I want you to notice something else: I want you to notice not only the setting of this temptation, but I want you to notice the very source of this temptation. Look again, if you will, in chapter 4, verse 1: "*And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, Being forty days tempted of the*"—what's

that next word? I can't hear you—"devil." (Luke 4:1-2) Hey, I want to tell you something, friend: the devil's real. You say, "Everybody believes that." No, they don't. A lot of people today think that the idea of the devil is old-fashioned, medieval superstition. Now friend, you'd better start believing your Bible. There's a devil, and he is R-E-A-L—real. He's real. Don't explain him away.

I went to a semi-liberal college. I took Religion. My professor there was one of these sophisticated intellectual top-waters, and he told me and told our class, "There is no personal devil. The devil is but the personification of evil. That is, when people conceive of evil, they give it a name and call it 'the devil,' and the devil is a metaphor, a figure of speech, a simile, a form of speech, but not a real, actual devil." I said, "Professor, I want to ask you a question." I said, "In Mark 5, there's a man possessed of demons. His name was Legion. And, Jesus drove the demons out of that man, according to Mark chapter 5. And, they went into some pigs, and those pigs went down to a steep place, into the sea. There were two thousand of them, and they were drowned in the sea." I said, "Now, if the devil is but a figure of speech, a metaphor, what was it that caused those pigs to commit hogacide?" I mean, I want to ask you a question: Really, honestly, do you think that a metaphor could do that? Do you think a figure of speech could do that? Do you think personification of evil could do that? No, the devil's real. And, the reason that some of us are not getting the victory is that we're trying to deny reality. The devil's real. You have an enemy. I mean, you have an enemy.

Now, don't get swelled up about it. It's not that you're that important. Evil people have always known if you can't hurt someone, hurt someone that someone loves, and you've hurt that someone anyway. The devil's real war is with God, and the devil is trying to get at God through getting at you, and to harm you, and to hurt you. And, he's already made plans today to sabotage your family and to harm your life. As a matter of fact, he'll let you succeed, he'll let you climb high, he'll let you do good in order that he might bring you all the further down. You say, "He's not after me." He may be after you more than you realize. Your success may be the work of the devil to bring you up in order that he might bring you down. What I'm trying to say is, the devil is very sinister. He's very clever. He is very real. And, your denying the devil is only going to cause you to get into deeper trouble.

¶ I heard of a prizefighter who was losing. He was being battered and buffered, and his face was bruised and bleeding. And, he was hoping that his corner would throw in the towel, but they just let him fight. Finally, he looked over there, and when he got back to the corner, he said, "Look, man, quit this thing! Call it off! He's killing me!" And, his corner said, "Ah," he said, "you're doing fine. He hasn't laid a glove on you!" This man said, "Then watch that ref because somebody's tearing me up."¶

Now listen, the devil's real, and to deny him is not going to do you any good

whatever. Now, how did the devil tempt the Lord Jesus? Well, you remember the three ways that the devil tempted the Lord Jesus. First of all, he said, “Turn these stones into bread.” (Luke 4:3) We’re going to look at that in a moment. Secondly, he said, “I’ll give you the kingdoms of the world if you worship me.” (Luke 4:5–6) Thirdly, he said, “Cast yourself down from the pinnacle of the temple.” (Luke 4:9)

Now, some of you, when I said awhile back that “Jesus was tempted at all points like as you are,” (Hebrews 4:15) you kind of arched your eyebrows and you thought about that. You may not have said anything out loud, but you said, “I wonder... I wonder... did Jesus ever really face what I face? Has Jesus ever been tempted to run a red light? Was Jesus ever tempted to smoke cigarettes? Was Jesus ever tempted to take dope?” No. “Well,” you say, “I’ve been. So, how could Jesus be tempted in all points like as I am and yet He never faced some of the things that I face?” You see, friend, you need to understand there are only three temptations—only three; not four, not two, but three. That’s all there is. And, Jesus felt all three of them right here in this chapter, and I’m going to show you. And, they are the same three temptations that Adam faced in the Garden of Eden, and they’re the same temptations that you’re going to face this Monday morning, or even this Sunday afternoon.

Now, let me give you some scripture. First John 2 and verse 16—now, listen to it—1 John 2 and verse 16: *“For all that is in the world”*—now, what’s that little word? *All*—*“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.”* (1 John 2:16) How much? *“All that is in the world.”* (1 John 2:16) Folks, that’s it. *“All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.”* (1 John 2:16) All temptation is either the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life.

Now, the lust of the flesh deals with doing. The lust of the eyes deals with having. The pride of life deals with being. I’ll illustrate this in a moment, and it will become clearer. You see, the devil is either going to tempt you to do something wrong, to have something wrong, or to be something wrong—doing, having, or being. The lust of the flesh is doing. The lust of the eyes is having. The pride of life is being. The first is a temptation in the area of our passions. The second is a temptation in the area of our possessions, and the third is a temptation in the area of pride. Either in passions, possessions, or pride is the way the devil’s going to get you, or me, or anybody else. And, Jesus felt all three of these. So did Adam in the Garden of Eden, and so did Eve in the Garden of Eden.

For example, in the idea of the lust of the flesh, what tempted Eve when she saw that tree? She saw the fruit, that it was good for food—pleasant, good to taste. (Genesis 2:9) In other words, her flesh was involved—satisfied the cravings of her flesh. But, what else did she see? It was beautiful to look at. Remember? That’s the lust of the

eyes—not only to do something, but to have something. And, what else? It was desired to make one wise—not only to do something and to have something but to be someone, you see, to be a little tin god of your own. See? That was the first temptation there in the Garden of Eden: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Now, those were the same temptations that the Lord Jesus faced, only in a different form. Let me show you what I'm talking about here, and it will begin to make sense to you, as we study here in the Word of God.

### **A. The Lust of the Flesh**

For example, look, if you will, in verses 3 and 4 now, where we left off reading—chapter 4, verse 3: *“And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread. And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.”* (Luke 4:3) “Turn this stone into bread!” Those of you who have been to Palestine, as I have, or to Israel, you know that all over the ground there are little stones. Some of them I picked them up. I started to bring one home one time. It looked like a little brown loaf of bread. They're just all over. And, you can just see he's saying, “Well, look, it even looks like a piece of a loaf of bread. Turn it into bread.”

Now, I think one of the great understatements of the Bible, if we can say the Bible has understatements, is, “He fasted forty days, and afterward He was hungry.” (Luke 4:2) I would think so, wouldn't you? I mean, He was hungry. I mean, He was famished. “Turn these stones into bread.” Now, He was there, led of the Spirit, to fast and pray and to seek the face of God. And, there's nothing wrong with bread. There's nothing wrong with eating bread. I've already showed you that Jesus taught us to pray, *“Give us this day our daily bread.”* (Matthew 6:11) Jesus fed the disciples with fish and bread. Jesus went to parties. Jesus ate. Jesus went to banquets. But, the devil said, “Put bread above the will of God. Pamper your flesh. Commit spiritual suicide.” Jesus refused. But, you see, He felt the appeal to His body. And, in that temptation is captured and encapsulated all of the physical temptations—all of the desires—of the yearnings of your flesh. Jesus overcame His flesh; and so, you may overcome yours—the lust of the flesh.

### **B. The Lust of the Eyes**

And then, the lust of the eyes. We're not finished yet. Continue to read, if you will. Look in verses 5 and following in this: *“And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.”* (Luke 4:5–7) That is, not just in His passions, but now in His possessions. “All

will be thine. You see it? Do you see it, Jesus? Do you see these kingdoms?”

Did you know that the eyes have an appetite? Have you ever heard this expression: “Feast your eyes upon that”? That’s the reason why people want things. Why do people want things they don’t even need, they can’t even use them? It is the lust of the eyes—the lust of the eyes, see? Possessions. Now again, there’s nothing wrong with possessions. It’s *“the LORD, thy God...that giveth thee power to get wealth.”* (Deuteronomy 8:18) But, you see, when these things get perverted by the devil, they become temptations. I wish I had more time to talk about that, but I’ll never get finished if I do.

### **C. The Pride of Life**

Let me move into the third one, the third temptation here, which is the pride of life—and this is an interesting one—beginning in verse 9: *“And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee: And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.”* (Luke 4:9–11) Wouldn’t that be a great way for the Messiah to come into the temple? I mean, you know, they were expecting the Messiah. One of the reasons that they repudiated Jesus—He didn’t have enough pomp, He didn’t have enough glory, He didn’t have enough circumstance for them. They were looking for a spectacular Messiah.

Now, suppose one day when everybody was worshipping, Jesus just came floating down out of heaven like that? Wouldn’t that have been something? You know, I’ve been thinking about a way to come in the pulpit. I’m going to get a wire, and I’m going to come sliding down a wire in a puff of smoke and just—*sloomph!*—“there he is.” Boy, wouldn’t that be impressive? You say, “That would be ridiculous.” Yeah, it would. You see, what the devil was saying is, “Make a spectacular entrance.” What it was was an appeal to His pride to do something spectacular, to get glory and attention to Himself in a God-forbidden way.

You see, Jesus faced every temptation that you face. Jesus faced the lust of the flesh. Jesus faced the lust of the eyes. Jesus faced the pride of life. And folks, that’s all there is. That is all that is in the world. And, Jesus overcame every one of them. That is the source of temptation.

## **IV. The Subduing of Temptation**

But now, let me get right into the heart of the message in the time I have left and deal with the subduing of temptation. And, I want to give you six principles that were true in the life of the Lord Jesus that can be true in your life. And, I promise you on the



authority of the Word of God, if you take these six principles and you live by them, you will be a victor and not a victim, you will become an overcomer and not overcome, and you will know victory in Jesus your Savior forever, because our God did not call us to fail. For the Bible says, *“Thanks be unto God, [who] causeth us [always] to triumph in Christ [Jesus].”* (2 Corinthians 2:14) Are you interested? Are you ready for these principles? I want you to get a piece of paper, and I want you to jot them down. There are six principles here that will cause you to live victoriously, and they’re right in the scripture that we have before us in Luke chapter 3 and Luke chapter 4.

### **A. The Principle of Sonship**

Principle number one I want to call “the principle of sonship.” Look, if you will, please, in Luke chapter 3 and beginning in verse 21: *“Now when all of the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son.”* (Luke 3:21–22) Now, the only way to overcome the devil is to be a son of God. You say, “Like Jesus?” Well, Jesus was the only begotten Son of God. But, I want to tell you, because Jesus became a Son of man, we all can become sons of God. You see, the Bible says that by believing in Christ, we become the children of God, (Galatians 3:26) and Christ becomes our elder brother. (Hebrews 2:11) And, you see, how did Jesus overcome the devil? Well, He overcame the devil through His relationship to the Father. He was the Son of God; therefore, God was in Him. Therefore, God was with Him; and, therefore, He overcame as a Son of God.

Are you listening to me? Do you know how this prayer in Matthew chapter 6 begins? How? *“Our”*—what’s the next word?—*“Father...”* (Matthew 6:9) Are you His child? Not if you haven’t been born into His family you’re not. Not if you haven’t been born again you’re not. There is a principle of sonship. Jesus overcame the devil because He was the Son of God. I may overcome the devil because I am a son of God. There is a principle of sonship. Are you saved? Are you sure you’re saved? Do you know you’re saved? Are you born again? Are you? Why don’t you right now say, “Come into my heart, Lord Jesus, and save me”? You’re not going to overcome the devil without being a child of God. You can’t do it.

### **B. The Principle of Submission**

The second principle—not only the principle of sonship—second principle: the principle of submission, because not only did Jesus hear the voice saying, *“Thou art my beloved Son,”* (Luke 3:22) but He heard God say, *“Thou art my beloved Son; in [whom] I am well pleased.”* (Luke 3:22) Why was God the Father well pleased with God the Son? I’ll tell you why: God the Son said, *“I do always those things [to] please him.”* (John 8:29) That

is, Jesus lived the life of submission.

Are you paying attention? Did you know that you can be saved and go down? Did you know that you can be saved and still stumble and fall? Did you know that you can be a child of God and be overcome by the devil unless you're submitted to the Father? Did you know that there are a lot of Christians who are carnal and indifferent, and they have been saved, but God is not well pleased with them? As a matter of fact, He's very displeased with them. Is He pleased with you? Have you submitted yourself to Him? Folks, look at me. Victory is not for rebels. There's no way that you're going to be victorious unless God is pleased with you. Is God pleased with you? I mean, is God pleased with you? It's not rhetoric. As God looks down at you right now, is He pleased? Can you say, "I do those things that please Him"? Are you living that kind of a life? There's a principle of submission.

### **C. The Principle of Spiritual Power**

Third principle: There's a principle of spiritual power. Now, look at it again here in this passage—verse 22: "*And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him.*" (Luke 3:22) Now look, when a person is a son, and when a person is submitted, then that person is going to know spiritual power. You see, Jesus overcame the devil with spiritual power. Look in chapter 4 and verse 1: "*And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.*" (Luke 4:1) I mean, the Holy Spirit now has charge of the Lord Jesus' life. I want you to look again, if you will, please, in verse 14. Look at it: "*And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit [unto] Galilee.*" (Luke 4:14) Why, it's obvious who has control of His life. Look, when He got to Galilee and He started to preach, at what He said in verse 18: "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, [for] he hath anointed me to preach.*" (Luke 4:18) Oh, Jesus overcame, because greater was He that was in Jesus than he that was in the world. (1 John 4:4)

Now listen, Jesus did not overcome the devil as God; Jesus overcame the devil as a man filled with the Holy Spirit. That's one of the greatest principles in all of the Bible. If Jesus overcame the devil as God, then He's no example to me. But, if Jesus overcame the devil as a man filled with the Holy Spirit, the same Holy Spirit that was available to Jesus is available to me, amen? You can say "amen"; it won't hurt. I've got to tell you, I preach 'til I think you understand. If you start saying "amen," I'll quit soon.

### **D. The Principle of Scriptural Knowledge**

Now listen, folks, Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit. Now, are you seeing this? First of all, the principle of sonship. Then, the principle of submission. Then, the principle of spiritual power. Now, what follows right on that? The principle of scriptural knowledge. Now, you see, when the devil came to Jesus, how did Jesus overcome the devil? Well, now remember, He's a Son. He submitted. He's Spirit-filled. And then, He begins to use

the Word.

Now, if you're just quoting the Bible, the devil is not going to back the devil up unless you're Spirit-filled. Whose sword is the Bible? Your sword? Whose sword is the Bible? It is the sword of what? Can't hear you. The sword of what? Spirit! It is the Spirit sword. It is the Spirit sword! When a man is Spirit-filled, then the Spirit uses His sword. Every time the devil would come to Jesus, Jesus would say, "It is written..." "It is written..." "It is written..." (Luke 4:4,8,10) And, three times Jesus ran the devil through with the Word of God. God has given you a book, dear friend, and there are truths in this book. When you know them, and learn them, and appropriate them, and the Holy Spirit of God uses this book, you're going to know power. I am telling you, there is dynamite in this book to overcome the devil. The devil hopes you will not learn the principles and the promises and the prerogatives that are yours through the Word of God.

### **E. The Principle of Satisfaction**

Now, the next principle—and I must hurry. I don't have time. I wish I had time to deal more with the principle of the Scripture—but there's another principle, and I want to call it "the principle of satisfaction." Do you know why the devil couldn't get to Jesus? I'll tell you why: Jesus was already satisfied. You see, Jesus didn't have an itch the devil could scratch. You know, He said, "The wicked one comes, and he finds nothing in me." (John 14:30)

Do you know what the devil does? The devil says, "Hey, you've got a need, and I can satisfy it." And, you say, "Well, help me, devil, because I want to be satisfied." Is there anybody here who doesn't want to be satisfied? If you lift your hand, you're lying. Everybody wants to be satisfied. We all want to be satisfied. Now, do you know what a temptation is? *A temptation is an inducement by the devil to satisfy a legitimate desire in an illegitimate way.* That's all it is—to take a God-given desire and satisfy it in a God-forbidden way. You see, the devil's a pervert. Did you know that? The devil has no raw material. All the devil can do is take what God has created, what God has made, and pervert it.

Now, God has given us desires. They are part of our human nature. To deny them would be to deny yourself. For example, hunger—is there anything wrong with being hungry? No. Jesus was hungry. Nothing wrong with being hungry. Is gluttony a sin? Nod your head. You'd be surprised how many times in the Bible, when the Bible talks about drunkenness, it talks about gluttony at the same time. Well, gluttony is a good Baptist sin, isn't it? Drunkenness—that's not a good Baptist sin. But gluttony—that's a good Baptist sin. Listen, folks. Let me tell you something. Do you know what gluttony is? Gluttony is a desire to satisfy a God-given appetite in an illegitimate way.

Now let me tell you how to overcome temptation. Find out the legitimate way and

satisfy that desire the legitimate way, and then you don't need the illegitimate way.

¶ I mean, if you want to take away a bone from a dog... Have you ever tried to take a bone from a dog? It's a good way to get bit. Let me tell you how to take a bone from a dog: just throw a steak down on the ground, and he'll drop that bone. Isn't that right?¶

You see, look, when you satisfy a desire the right way, then that ol' dog doesn't need that bone. When you have what God has for you... You see, all of these desires that we have, they're God-given desires. The sex drive—it's a God-given desire. Don't feel like you must be sinful because you feel sexual urges. You're not sinful. That's a God-given desire. The devil wants to take that and twist it. Peter Marshall said, "Sex will be the nicest or the nastiest thing in your physical life." He wants to twist it. But, you see, how do you handle that desire? Satisfy it the right way, then you won't satisfy it the wrong way. I have a preacher friend who says, "If you're eating steak at home, you won't need bologna at the office." Understand what I'm talking about? Listen, friend, a husband and wife ought to live together as sexual partners, happy in the Lord Jesus.

Now listen, folks, what I'm trying to say is this: that Jesus was satisfied. You see, everything is in Christ. What did I tell you the three great temptations were? Can you remember what's number one? The lust of the flesh. What does that deal with? Doing. The lust of the eyes. What does that deal with? Having. Pride of life. What does that deal with? Being. All right. Now look, can you think of anything more exciting than serving Jesus? That's doing. That's more exciting than the Super Bowl, folks. Can you think of anything better to have than to have Jesus? That's having. I mean, all things are yours. Can you think of anything better to be than to be a child of God? I mean, think about it, folks. Listen, in Christ we have everything. And, when your needs are being met in the Lord Jesus Christ, then you don't have an itch the devil can scratch. And, the reason that the devil could not get to Jesus is Jesus was having His needs met.

Now, I want you right now to think of where you're being tempted. Some of you are being tempted to get even with somebody. Did you know that's a God-given desire—revenge? You say, "Oh, it couldn't be." Yes, it is. And, let me tell you how to satisfy that desire: if you've got an enemy, kill him with kindness; love him to death. That's the way to satisfy the revenge drive. "*[Or,] if [your] enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him [to] drink.*" (Romans 12:20) "*Pray for [those that] spitefully use you.*" (Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:28) Do good to them, and you're going to find suddenly that that temptation is gone.

You say, "I want to be successful." How are you going to be successful? Well, let me tell you how to be successful, dear friend: if success is in the Lord Jesus Christ, just serve Him. If you want to be number one, there's nothing wrong with being number one. Jesus said, "Whosoever be the greatest among you, let him be your servant." (Matthew 23:11) Isn't that wonderful? You say, "I want security—stocks and bonds." No, no, no,

no. Find security in Jesus.

I want you just to think, “Where is it that I’m being tempted?” and then I want you to say, “Lord, show me the legitimate fulfillment of this desire,” and then, “God, satisfy this desire legitimately,” and you’re going to find out that a wonderful thing is going to happen to you—that you’re going to begin to have your needs met, and the things of this world will have no more allurements to you. For the things of this world “grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.” (Helen H. Lemmel)

#### **F. The Principle of Supplication**

Now, one last principle. I said six. I’m not even going to preach on it, but I’ll just give it to you because it wraps up all of the others. It is the principle of supplication. Remember that I said to you that Jesus was praying when the Holy Spirit came and descended upon Him? Look, if you will, again, in chapter 3. Just look at the verse. And, the Bible says in verse 21: *“Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened.”* (Luke 3:21) You see, Jesus overcame the devil. Do you know why? Do you know why? Do you know why? Folks, He had a prayer meeting before He got in that wilderness, hadn’t He? I mean, it says so right there. Do you know why we go out and fall flat on our face? We saunter forth to meet the world, the flesh, and the devil without praying, and we fail every time.

#### **Conclusion**

Let me give you those principles, and I’m finished. Number one: sonship. Are you saved? Number two: submission. Are you submitted? Number three: spiritual power. Are you filled with the Spirit? Number four: scriptural knowledge—the Spirit using His own sword. Do you have that—that Scriptural knowledge? Number five: satisfaction. Jesus had His needs met by God the Father, and the devil, therefore, had no allurements. Number six: supplication. Jesus had met the devil with a life that was filled with prayer. Now, that might seem just plain old-fashioned, but I promise you, if you’ll take those six principles and begin to apply them, you’re going to find out that God is going to give you unusual, marvelous, wonderful victory.†

# Overcoming the Evil One

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** January 29, 1984

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 6:9–13

*“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”*

MATTHEW 6:13

## Outline

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## Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles and look, if you will, at what we often call “The Lord’s Prayer.” Really, it’s “the disciples’ prayer” or “the model prayer.” We’re talking about “The Principles of Prayer.” We’ve been using this passage as a guide for our study. Remember what Jesus taught His disciples? *“After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”* (Matthew 6:9–13) Especially verse 13: *“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”* (Matthew 9:13) That may be translated this way—and I think rightly so: “deliver us from

the evil one.”

I’m talking to you today about “Overcoming the Evil One”: how to gain victory over the devil. And, the message today is an alarm, and it is a call to arms, because when you were saved, you were brought into a battle—not to a religious playground, not to a Sunday school picnic, but a fight to the finish with no holds barred against a sinister enemy. We are up against the demonized, mobilized hosts and forces of hell. Now, it has always been the devil’s plan to pull the veil of darkness across his kingdom so that we’ll not understand who he is, because the devil knows in any battle, you must understand your enemy. And, he knows that if we do not understand him, if we do not recognize our enemy, then we’re not going to be prepared for the battle. My prayer today is that God the Holy Spirit will so use me and that God the Holy Spirit will so use His Word today that we’ll pull away the mask, that we’ll pull down the veil, and your adversary, the devil, will be reflected for who he is.

## **I. The Devil Is a Decided Fact**

Now, first of all, I want you to think with me about this: that Satan is a decided fact. It was none less than the Lord Jesus who taught us to pray and deliver us from the evil one. When I’m talking about the devil, therefore, I am not talking about a figment of someone’s imagination; I’m not talking about the unlearned ravings of a backwoods preacher. And, I’m not putting down backwoods preachers, you understand, but I am saying that some people get the idea that that’s where the devil has come from. I’m not talking about some leftover mythology of medieval superstition. I am talking to you about Bible fact and present-day reality. Jesus said we are to pray every day, “Lord Father, deliver us from the evil one.” (Matthew 6:13)

### **A. The Devil and His Personality**

I want you to think about the devil and his personality. Now, when I say, “personality,” I mean the fact that he is a person with the attributes of a person. The Bible says in 1 Peter chapter 5, verse 8—and by the way, we’ll not turn to these scriptures this morning. I have so many, I’d like for you just merely to jot them down this morning—1 Peter chapter 5, verse 8: Peter warns, “*Be sober*”—that is, “be serious-minded”—“*be vigilant; [for] your adversary*”—you have an adversary—“*your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, [goeth] about, seeking whom he may devour.*” (1 Peter 5:8) Now, if you were walking through a jungle that was infested with ravenous lions, wouldn’t you look when you walked? Wouldn’t you be serious-minded? Wouldn’t you be looking around? Because the devil is there lurking, ready to pounce on you, ready to maul you, ready to devour you. That’s what Peter said. “*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.*” (1 Peter 5:8) He

is a person. He is the bitterest enemy of God and His people.

Now, if you want a blessing, think of the names of Jesus. If you want a warning, think of the names of the devil. Let me give you some of the names that have been given to him in the Bible. He is called “the deceiver.” He’s called a liar. He is called a murderer. He is called “*the accuser of [the] brethren.*” (Revelation 12:10) He is called “the tempter.” He’s called “*the prince of the power of the air.*” (Ephesians 2:2) He’s called “the destroyer.” He is called “the evil one.”

Now, if you do not understand how bitter your enemy is, you’re not going to make a preparation for defense. And so, therefore, the devil’s cleverest ruse is to make you believe he doesn’t exist. You know, today we laugh about the idea of a devil. We name football teams various kinds of devils, automobiles various kinds of demons and devils, cakes and food—“deviled ham,” “devil’s food cake.” We get the idea that the devil is some sort of a comical little character wearing long red underwear, with horns and a forked tail and a pitchfork, trying to catch somebody bending over. And, we just think all of that is funny. And, the devil’s behind all of that business to make us believe that he doesn’t exist, that he’s just some sort of a comical character like Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer. And, we laugh and mimic the idea of a devil. And, there are others who take the devil seriously, but they believe the devil exists but he is now in hell. The devil is not in hell. He will be in hell one day. Some people have the idea that the devil reigns over hell. He does not reign over hell. When he goes to hell, he will be incarcerated in hell; he will be tormented in hell. Hell was “*prepared for the devil and his angels,*” (Matthew 25:41) but the devil is not there yet. The devil is very real.

So many times we don’t understand who our enemy is. You see, we tend to want to fight flesh and blood. But, the Bible says in Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 12: “*we wrestle not against flesh and blood.*” (Ephesians 6:12) Your enemy is not the Communists. Your enemy is not the Republicans, not the Democrats, not the Internal Revenue Service—I don’t think I have to think about that one—not your wife or your wife’s family, not the pornographer, not the liquor baron, not the drug pusher. These are all flesh and blood. You see, the reason that, so many times, we don’t win the battle is we never show up for the war. We’re wrestling not against flesh and blood.

Now, the battle may be within man, but it’s never between men. The devil is a personality. He may have a thousand heads, but he has one heart. “An evil one,” the Bible calls him.

## **B. The Devil and His Position**

But, I want you to think not only of his personality, but I want you to think of his position, because Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 12 says, “*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but*”—listen to it—“*against principalities [and] powers, against the rulers of the*



*darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*” (Ephesians 6:12) You see, at one time the devil inhabited heaven. He served God as a mighty angel, but he rebelled against God, as I’ll show you later. He fell. And, when the devil fell, a host of angels fell with him—a third of the angels fell with him. They had become disembodied spirits. We call them today “demons.” They are the devil’s angels. And so, the devil is the lord of these angels. The Bible calls him *“the prince of the power of the air.”* (Ephesians 2:2) Jesus warned us about the devil and his angels. And, the devil, through his demon spirits, not only controls individuals, but he literally controls nations. Did you know that the devil has his influence in the UN and in the relationship between nations that the devil is often at negotiating table? Now, you may not believe that, but it is true.

Sometimes people have wondered, “How is the Battle of Armageddon going to come to pass?” John, on the Island of Patmos, had a vision. He saw one of the most horrible and grotesque things that a man has ever seen in the spirit. He said, *“I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet”*—John wondered what these frog-like spirits were, and God revealed to John in Revelation chapter 16, in verse 14—*“[These] are the spirits of [demons], working miracles”*—now, listen to this—*“which go forth unto the kings of the earth of the whole world”*—demon spirits. Are you listening? Demon spirits controlling world kings—*“to gather them to the battle of [the] great day of God Almighty.”* (Revelation 16:13–14) And, the Bible goes on to say, *“[They] gathered them [to] a place called...Armageddon.”* (Revelation 16:16) The demonized forces of this world are working in the hearts and minds of world rulers to bring them to the Battle of Armageddon. Ephesians chapter 6, verse 12 says, *“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against”*—listen to this—*“the rulers of the darkness of this world.”* (Ephesians 6:12) Now, that may be translated “world rulers of this darkness.” That is, these demon spirits are leaders all over the world.

You say, “That just seems so farfetched.” Well, let me read something to you that I collected from a newspaper just a few days ago. Listen to it, a news article: “The United States should begin work on the military uses of ESP.” Do you know what ESP is? Extrasensory perception. Now, let me go back: “The United States should begin work on the military uses of ESP and other psychic phenomenon before the Soviet Union pulls too far ahead, according to a United States Army study. The study claims that the Soviet Union is making significant progress in finding military applications of precognition, out-of-the-body experiences, extrasensory perception, and psychokinesis.” Do you know what psychokinesis is? That is the ability to move a material object without touching it, by the power of the mind. You say, “That’s all hocus pocus.” The Soviets have been studying it seriously for years, and now the United States Army is afraid we’re getting behind. Now, we don’t have room for God, but we’ve

got room for the devil. All of this is a part of the occult. And, the Soviets have been giving their minds over to the devil that they might learn more warfare.

When I read this scripture, or when I read this passage here just recently, I thought of the scripture there in Revelation chapter 16: “[*These*] are the spirits of [*demons*]...[*that*] go forth [*to*] the kings of the [*whole*] earth...to gather them to [*that*] battle of [*the*] great day of God Almighty.” (Revelation 16:14) The devil is called in 2 Corinthians chapter 4, in verse 4: “*the god of this [age].*” (2 Corinthians 4:4) He’s always desired to be worshipped; and so, he has built an exact counterfeit of true Christianity. He’s not against religion. One of the cruelest things around is religion without Christ, and the devil is behind religion all the way.

### **C. The Devil and His Power**

Now, I’ve spoken to you about his personality—he’s a person. I’ve spoken to you about his position—he is a prince, the god of this age. I want to speak to you now about his power. He has great, great power. It is sheer folly to underestimate the power of the devil or to sneer or laugh at his power. As a matter of fact, the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who loves us so much, when He taught us to pray, was so aware of the power of the devil that He warned every one of us, when we pray, that we should pray, “And Lord, deliver us from the evil one.” (Matthew 6:13) Why do we need deliverance? Because he is so powerful. Acts chapter 26, in verse 18, speaks of “*the power of Satan.*” (Acts 26:18) Ephesians chapter 6, in verse 12, speaks of principalities and powers. (Ephesians 6:12) Paul, warning us about the antichrist in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 and verse 9, says “[*And*] even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and...*lying wonders.*” (2 Thessalonians 2:9) The devil is a supernatural person. He has supernatural power, dark power, devilish power, unholy power, chilling power. The devil is a powerful individual.

Martin Luther knew this. Martin Luther wrote that song—and thank God for it—“A Mighty Fortress is our God.” But, there’s a somber strain in that song. He says:

*[And] still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;  
His [power] and [craft] are great, and, armed with cruel hate,  
On earth is not his equal.*

### **D. The Devil and His Purpose**

But, think not only of his power, but think about his purpose. What is the purpose of the devil? What is his unholy ambition? It has been to pull God from His throne, to overthrow God. The devil is a rebel in revolt against Almighty God. You say, “That’s foolish.” Yes, it’s foolish, but the devil has been deceived and twisted by the sin and the pride that’s in his heart. And, the Bible says, “Your wisdom is corrupted because of your pride.” (Ezekiel 28:17)

At one time the devil was Lucifer, the son of the morning, the most glorious angel that God had ever created. His heart was lifted up because of his pride, and he became the devil. Isaiah chapter 14, verses 12 and following: the Bible says, *“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will be like the most High [God].”* (Isaiah 14:12–14) “I will be like God,” he said. No sooner had that challenge been uttered than the thunders of God’s wrath rolled down the corridors of heaven and Satan fell. He was banished from heaven. No longer Lucifer, son of the morning, he became Satan, the father of the night. His angels fell with him. And now, he is in revolt against Almighty God, and his purpose is to literally overthrow God. And, believe it or not, he thinks he can do it. He can’t, but he thinks he can. He’s deceived, and he is a deceiver.

### **E. The Devil and His Plan**

Now, what is his plan? His purpose is to overthrow God. What is his plan? How does he do it? I want to tell you again that the devil’s chief weapon is deception. He deceives that he might deprave, that he might destroy. Jesus said of the devil in John chapter 8, in verse 44, when He was speaking to some unsaved Pharisees: *“[You] are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He”—the devil—“was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”* (John 8:44) And, in that salient verse, our Lord tells us two things about the devil: his motive is murder; his method is the lie. He deceives that he might deprave, that he might destroy, that he might damn.

#### **1. The Wiles of the Devil**

If you’ll think about the Bible verses concerning the devil that speak of his plan and his methods, think of Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 11, where the Bible says, *“Put on the whole armour of God, that [you] may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”* (Ephesians 6:11) That word *wiles* is the word we get our English word *methods* from. The devil is methodical. He’s willing to wait. He’ll let you succeed that you might further fall. He will let you get away with sin that sin might greatly entrap you and then snare you. He is quite content to be patient. He’s very methodical—*“the wiles of the devil.”* (Ephesians 6:11)

#### **2. The Devices of the Devil**

Then again, the Bible speaks in 2 Corinthians chapter 2 and verse 11 of the devices of the devil. The Apostle Paul said, *“We are not ignorant of his devices.”* (2 Corinthians 2:11) But, many today are ignorant of the devices of the devil.

### **3. The Snares of the Devil**

Again, Paul warned in 2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 26, of *“the [snares] of the devil.”* (2 Timothy 2:26)

Put those words together: the wiles of the devil, the devices of the devil, the snares of the devil, and you’ll understand what kind of an enemy we have. Now, ladies and gentlemen, my first point has been simply this: that Satan is a decided fact. We have talked about his personality. We have talked about his position. We’ve talked about his power. We’ve talked about his purpose. We’ve talked about his plan. He is a decided fact.

## **II. The Devil Is a Destructive Force**

Secondly, Satan is a destructive force. If Satan were not a destructive force, why then would Jesus have taught us to pray, “Lord, deliver us”? When you think of deliverance, you think of danger. And, would to God we could only understand just how dangerous our enemy is that we must pray, “Lord, deliver us from the evil one.” He is a destructive force.

Now, the Bible teaches that in the last days, there will be a resurgence of demonic power, and I’m going to zero in on the theme of this message tonight. Let me mention some forms of demonic power that are destroying civilization as we know it.

### **A. The Occult**

First of all, there’s the great revival of the occult. If you were to go into a bookstore today, you would find very few books on good old-fashioned Bible religion, but you would find several sections filled with books on the occult, especially astrology, and witchcraft, and demonism. These things have a great appeal to people. Why? Because they offer power—not service, but power; because they offer knowledge of the future (so-called); because they offer contact with the dead. And, our world is infested with these.

Now, let me tell you, dear friend, that when you read this material, when you dabble in the horoscope, when you flirt with the occult, when you go to a fortuneteller... You say, “Well, pastor, there’s nothing about those fortunetellers. They’re just a bunch of frauds.” Some of them are, but others of them have made contact with the devil, and they will tell you things that you’ll wonder how they know. They’ll tell you things about yourself personally. They will tell you things about your departed loved ones. And, you’ll say, “Hey, there’s reality there! Maybe I’d better go back!” There’s reality—maybe you’d better stay away! Because I want to tell you, it is not your loved one they brought up; it is a demon spirit who knows about your loved one and who is mimicking your loved one.

People ask about someone like Jeane Dixon. Where does Jeane Dixon get her knowledge? Jeane Dixon doesn't know enough to get it from God because she's frequently wrong and God never is wrong. She knows too much to get it from human knowledge. She has received her information from the devil. You say, "Pastor, that's strong!" Yes! I want it to be strong. Let me give you some scripture. The Bible says in 1 John chapter 4, verse 1: *"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but [test] the spirits whether they [be] of God."* (1 John 4:1) Jot this scripture down—and you teenagers who are tempted to have a séance at your next slumber party, to get a Ouija board out and play with it, listen to this scripture—Leviticus chapter 19, verse 31: *"Regard not them that have familiar spirits"—that is a medium—"neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God."* (Leviticus 19:31) In my ministry, I've dealt with people who were possessed with demons—defiled because they flirted with the occult.

Deuteronomy chapter 18, verse 9: *"When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter pass through the fire"—that is, at that time, they were sacrificing the children to demon spirits. Their little babies! Does it remind you of our generation?—"or that useth divination"—that is, a fortuneteller—"or an observer of times."* (Deuteronomy 19:9–10) Do you know what "an observer of times" is? That's astrology. Many of you read your horoscope every day. You turn the newspaper. You say, "What's today?" You say, "Well, that's just a little harmless thing." Listen to what God says: God says, *"There shall not be found [any one] among you...that [does that—]an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch. Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer"—that is, necromancy is contact with the dead—"For all"—all, all—"that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee."* (Deuteronomy 18:10–12) Many of you need to go through your homes and pick out the symbols of the occult and get them out of your house. They're an abomination to God. But, there's a generation today that's caught up in a satanic revival of the occult.

## **B. Drug Abuse**

You say, "Well, that won't get me. I'm not interested in that kind of thing." The devil has another way, and that's through drug abuse. Did you know that the great explosion of drug abuse that we have in our world today is a form of Satanism? Now, many of the drug users don't realize this, but the Bible specifically warns against drug abuse, and the Bible teaches it's going to be one of the chief sins in the Great Tribulation. I believe the world is about to enter into the Great Tribulation and will after the Rapture of the Church. But, the Bible speaks of the sins of the Great Tribulation in Revelation chapter

9, in verse 21, and the Bible says, *“Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.”* (Revelation 9:21) What are the big four in the Tribulation? Murder, sorcery, fornication, thievery—those are the big four.

Now, what is sorcery? The word *sorcery* here is a translation of a Greek word *pharmakeia*, and it means “an enchanter with drugs.” The devil opens people’s minds to mystical experiences and causes people to lose control of their rational faculties through the use of drugs. You know, the Bible says, *“Keep [your] heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.”* (Proverbs 4:23) But, the use of drugs destroys a man’s mind so that he can contact God and reduces his mind to rubble. It is instant heaven that leads to everlasting hell. It is a form of synthetic salvation. And, the Bible calls that “sorcery.”

Now, let me read what the four big sins of the Great Tribulation are going to be: *“Neither repented they of their murderers...their [drug abuse]...their fornication, [and] their thefts.”* (Revelation 9:21) Does that remind you of Memphis, Tennessee? Murder, drug abuse, fornication, and thievery—all of these things, ladies and gentlemen, are precursors of the Great Tribulation that’s going to come upon this earth. And, I’m going to tell you, when that happens—when God takes His Holy Spirit through His Church out of this world—to hold back evil will be like trying to damn up Niagara Falls with toothpicks. The antichrist is going to come. And, by the use of drugs and the use of computers, this whole race will become zombies who follow after the antichrist to take the mark of the beast and to do his will. I’m telling you that the devil is behind the drug culture, and the biggest pusher today is the devil himself.

### C. **False Doctrine**

And then, again, another way that Satan is a destructive force—and we need to be delivered—is through false doctrine. Listen to the scripture—1 Timothy chapter 4, verse 1: *“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons.”* (1 Timothy 4:1) Teachings of demons! When you look for the devil, never fail to look in the pulpit. The Bible says that *“Satan himself is transformed [as] an angel of light.”* (2 Corinthians 11:14) Satan has his ministers. They preach another christ than the Christ of the Bible. People receive another spirit than the Holy Spirit. Paul warned against making sacrifices to demons. He calls some churches “synagogues of Satan” (Revelation 2:9; 3:9)—at least, John the apostle did over there in the book of the Revelation. What I’m trying to say is this: that the devil has warped and twisted the minds of people. He has denied, and perverted, and twisted the Word of God.

### D. **The Media**

I’m going to tell you another way that the devil has become a dangerous foe, a

destructive force—and that is through the media, the entertainment, the airwaves, television, radio. He knows how to use these things. You see, he's called "*the prince of the power of the air.*" (Ephesians 2:2) Did you know that the devil, by his very nature, is a musical being? If you read the book of Ezekiel, you'll find out that when the devil would speak, it would be like an oratorio; it would be like great music. He had pipes and tabrets within him. He was like a huge pipe organ—a musical sound. Also, he was called Lucifer, the light-bearer. He's now an angel of light. All of these things tell me together that the devil is a master of media.

I believe that we've lost a whole generation of young people through the rock culture, through rock music, which so much of it is blatant devil worship and pushing of drugs, and fornication, and all of these things. There's such a thing now known as "backward masking," where phonograph records played backward have hidden messages of praise to the devil, encouraging young people to use drugs and all of this. And, that is not the figment of someone's imagination; that is a documented fact. And, your children today may have records in your home that have words of praise, and worship, and adoration to the devil himself.

You think of what's happening in the games that children are playing today, and many of our department stores in this city and across the land are selling games by America's most popular toymakers. Let me name some of those games: Dungeons and Dragons—have you ever heard of a game like that? You think, "Well, that's a little harmless game." Or, "Dark Tower" or "Sorcerer's Apprentices"—can you imagine a child learning to be an apprentice sorcerer?—"Sorcerer's Apprentices," "Chivalry and Sorcery," "Hellpits of Night Fang." Little children are taught to play games with the demonic. And, college people are playing these games, and they have now been made into electronic games and enhanced by computers to make them all the more interesting. And, in order to play these games, so many times people have to act out things like murder, and rape, and other things that are forbidden by the Word of God, and learn how to practice the dark, hidden occult powers of evil. These are the games that little children this past Christmas received for Christmas. The devil is in this thing of entertainment and media.

Don Wildmon—and I thank God for Don Wildmon; he's a Methodist minister from Tupelo who's founded the National Federation for Decency—Don and I correspond. Recently, Don wrote me a letter. He said, "Adrian, our most recent monitoring of network television, when compared with a similar period, during 1982 indicated"—are you ready for this?—"that profanity increased 140%." That's in one year. Profanity—140%. Violence was up twenty-two percent! Sex was up thirty-five percent! And, Don said eighty-five percent of all sex that is shown on television—eighty-five percent—is outside of marriage—illicit sex.

Now, what I'm trying to say, ladies and gentlemen, is that the devil is a destructive force. Do you know what Paul Harvey said? Paul Harvey said this is what he would do if he were the devil. While I'm reading this, I'm aware of the fact that some of you who are watching by television will be leaving us. Now, precious friend, if you don't know Christ, you can come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Personal Savior. There's a friend standing by who wants to pray with you and lead you to Jesus. If you'll call the number placed on the television screen, a friend will lead you to Jesus Christ.

Paul Harvey is a radio commentator. Paul Harvey said, "If I were the devil, I would want to engulf the world in darkness. I would have a third of its real estate and four-fifths of its population, but I would not be happy until I had seized the ripest apple on the tree. So, I should set about however necessary to take over the United States." Paul Harvey went on to say, "I would begin with a campaign of whispers. With the wisdom of a serpent, I would whisper that the Bible is a myth. I would convince them that man created God instead of the other way around. I would whisper, 'What is bad is good, and what is good is square.' In the ears of the young married, I would whisper that 'work is debasing, that cocktail parties are good for you.' I would caution them not to be extreme in religion, in patriotism, in moral conduct. And, to the old, I would teach them to pray, to say after me, 'Our father, which art in Washington.' Then, I would organize—I would educate authors how to make lurid literature exciting so that anything else would appear dull, uninteresting. I would threaten television with dirtier movies and vice versa. I would pedal narcotics to whom I could. I would sell alcohol to ladies and gentlemen of distinction, and then I would tranquilize the rest with pills. If I were the devil, I would encourage schools to refine young intellects but to neglect to discipline emotions—let those run wild. I would designate an atheist to front for me before the high courts, and I would get preachers to say, 'She's right.' I would infiltrate unions and urge more loafing, less work. Idle hands usually work for me. With flattery and promise of power, I would let the courts vote against God in favor of pornography. Then, I would evict God from the courthouse, from the schoolhouse, from the House of Congress. Then, in His own churches, I would substitute psychology for religion and deity science. If I were Satan, I would make the symbol of Easter an egg and the symbol of Christmas a bottle. If I were the devil, I would take from those who have and give to those who want until I had killed the incentive to be ambitious. Then, my police state would force everybody back to work. If I were Satan, I would just keep on doing what I am doing, and the whole world would go to hell as sure as the devil." That's what Paul Harvey said.

### **III. The Devil Is a Defeated Foe**

The devil is a destructive force. But, very briefly, the devil is a defeated foe. We need to understand this, ladies and gentlemen. You see, Jesus taught us to pray, "And deliver



us from the evil one.” (Matthew 6:13) And, do you know the basis of that? Listen to it; listen to the flow of it: “[And] deliver us from [the] evil [one]: For thine is the kingdom, and [thine is] the power, and [thine is] the glory, for ever.” (Matthew 6:13) The devil may be powerful, but God’s all-powerful. And, the kingdom does not belong to Satan ultimately; it belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. And, those who follow Satan are going to end up where Satan ends up, for hell is “*prepared for the devil and his angels.*” (Matthew 25:41)

Now friend, it is not mastery over the devil that you need; it is the master of the devil, the Lord Jesus Christ—to know Christ. And, you can know Him. There are three chords that run through the Bible. One is the dark, somber chord of Satan’s revolt. The other is the crimson red chord of blood redemption. The third is the golden chord of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Those are the great themes all through the Bible. And, there is that dark and somber chord of Satan’s revolt and Satan’s power, but thank God there’s the crimson chord. And, when Jesus Christ went to the cross, He said, “*Now [is] the prince of this world...cast out.*” (John 12:31) Revelation chapter 12, verse 11, speaking of the devil, says, “*And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.*” (Revelation 12:11)

Are your sins under the blood of Christ? Are you saved by the power of the blood?

*He breaks the power of cancelled sin,  
He sets the prisoner free;  
His blood can make the foulest clean,  
His blood availed for me.*

—CHARLES WESLEY

“*They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony*”—that is, they were not ashamed to confess Christ openly and publicly and to say, “I believe that Christ is the Son of God”—“*and they loved not their lives unto the death.*” (Revelation 12:11) That is, they said, “I’m going with God, and I’m going for God with every inch, every ounce, every nerve, every fiber! As much as in me is, I am going for God.”

I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, that the devil is a defeated foe to those of us who have received Christ as our personal Savior and Lord. The Bible says that we’re to “*[take] the whole armour of God, that [we] may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*” (Ephesians 6:11) Are you saved? You are! Then you need not fear! You need not falter! You need not faint! You need not fall! You need not flee! You can stand in the name of Jesus. Amen?

## Conclusion

But now, let me tell you something, folks: you’re not going to stand apart from prayer.

This message is not a message about the devil. This message is a message about prayer. It was Jesus Christ who taught us to pray. And, when Jesus taught us to pray, He said, “Our Father, deliver us from the evil one.” (Matthew 6:13) When Sidlow Baxter was here, Sidlow Baxter said, “Surely the devil must say to his demons, ‘Boys, keep them from prayer because if we can keep them from praying, we can beat them every time. But, if they pray, they’ll beat us every time.’”

Now people, you cannot pray, “Lord, deliver us from evil,” unless you can pray, “Our Father.” Is He your Father? I mean, is God your Father? Have you been born again? You see, when God becomes your Father, Christ becomes your Savior. But, when God is not your Father, Christ is not your Savior and Satan is your master. Do you know the Lord? Are you saved? Satan is a decided fact! “The evil one”—Jesus spoke of him. He is a destructive force. We need to be delivered. But, he is a defeated foe, *“for [God] is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.”* (Matthew 6:13) Do you know Him? Do you know Him? Is Jesus Christ real to you? If you were to die right now, are you absolutely certain you’d go to heaven? You can be.

I want every head bowed and every eye closed. While heads are bowed and eyes are closed—no one is stirring and looking around—I want you to forget that you’re in an auditorium with other people, and I want you to put everything else out of your mind for just this moment, and I want you to think of your soul and your relationship with God. And, if this were your last moment right now, if you had to face God right now—you’re ready to be certain that you’re saved—I want you to pray like this: “Dear God, I need you. I want you. Help me to trust you today and to confess you as my Lord and Savior. Lord Jesus, help me not to be ashamed of you”—just say that right now—“Lord Jesus, help me not to be ashamed of you.”

Lord, I pray that all over this building that people will come to Jesus, trusting Him as Lord and Savior. Thank you, Lord.†

# The Coming Kingdom of Christ

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** January 17, 1993

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 6:10

*“Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”*

MATTHEW 6:10

## Outline

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## Introduction

Be finding in God’s Word Matthew chapter 6, if you would, please. We’ve been speaking, teaching, and preaching through the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus Christ, after He gave this wonderful, wonderful sermon, said, “Whenever anyone hears these words of mine and does them, he is like a wise man that built his house upon a rock.” (Matthew 7:24) Therefore, we’re calling this series “Building upon the Rock.” Matthew chapter 6, verse 9: *“After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”* (Matthew 6:9–13)

I want to direct your attention this morning to verse 10: *“Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”* The title of the message: “The Coming Kingdom of Christ.” Now, is there anyone here who would daresay that today God’s will is being done on earth, and in earth, as it is in heaven? Do you think that the rape, the pillage, the arson, the murder, the blasphemy, the pornography, the debauchery that takes place on earth today is God’s will? No, it is not. But there is coming a day—and our Lord taught us to pray for it—that the will of God will be done in earth as it is in heaven. But

right now man has enshrined himself in his nuclear glory, and his effort has been to dethrone God and enthrone himself. It's almost as if you can hear them praying, "Our brothers which are upon the earth, Hallowed be our name. Our kingdom come, Our will be done, for there is no God in heaven."

But, friend, there is a God in heaven—and His kingdom is coming. And the title of the message is "The Coming Kingdom of Christ." Now that brings a question: What is the kingdom of God? What is the kingdom that we're praying for? May I tell you that it is four things.

## I. It Is the Kingdom of God's Government

Number one: The kingdom is the kingdom of God's government. Do you have it? It is the kingdom where God rules. It is the kingdom where God reigns. The kingdom of God is the place of God's sovereign authority. And therefore, what is the purpose of all prayer? What is the purpose of prayer? Well, you have it in verse 10: "*Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done.*" Would you like to be effective in your prayer life? Would you like to pray so as to get your prayers answered? Verse 10 is the absolute key: "*Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done.*"

What is effective prayer? Effective prayer is not talking God into doing something He doesn't want to do. Effective prayer is not bending God's will to fit our will. Effective prayer is finding the will of God and getting in on it. "*Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done.*" And so, friend, *there is nothing that lies outside the reach of prayer but that which lies outside the will of God.*

Now, put in your margin this verse—1 John 5, verses 14 and 15. And here is the key to answered prayer. Listen to it. The Apostle John picks up on what the Lord Jesus Christ said here in Matthew 6, verse 10. And here is what the Apostle John had to say—1 John chapter 5, verses 14 and 15: "*And this is the confidence that we have in him...*"—are you listening?—"this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his..."—what?—"his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions we desired of him." (1 John 5:14–15)

You say, "Do you mean, Pastor Rogers, that the only prayer that I can pray is the prayer that is in the will of God? Well, that leaves out so many things." No, friend, praying in the will of God does not mean fewer blessings for you. Praying in the will of God means more blessings for you. You see, *God wants for you what you would want for yourself if you had enough sense to want it.* God loves us, and so therefore the kingdom of God is the kingdom of God's government, where we pray, "*Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done.*"

Now that brings us to another question. The Apostle John said, "If we ask anything

according to His will, He hears us.” (1 John 5:14) And Jesus said we are to pray for His will to be done. How do we know His will? Do we just guess at it? Does God say, “Well, you may hit it lucky: maybe it’s my will, and maybe it’s not”? No. God has given us principles whereby we can know His will and know that we’re praying in His will. May I tell you what they are? Three. Here are the principles so you can know that you’re praying in the will of God.

### A. The Surrender Principle

Number one is the surrender principle. Now you’ll never know God’s will until you’re willing to know God’s will; until you’re willing to say, “*Thy will be done*”—“*Not my will, but thine, be done.*” (Luke 22:42) There is the surrender principle. Have you completely, totally, surrendered to Him? The Apostle James says, “*Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*” (James 4:3)

I told you some weeks ago about being in Romania and talking with Pastor Joseph Tson, a true intellectual. He was my translator. After a while, after I felt comfortable with him, and he with me, I said, “Joseph, would you just tell me something?” He said, “What, Adrian?” I said, “You’ve been to America many times. Tell me about American Christianity.” He said, “Well, you asked me to, and I’ll tell you.” He said, “Adrian, the key word in American Christianity is *commitment*.” I said, “Well, that’s good; isn’t it, Joseph?” He said, “No, that is not good.” He said, “*Commitment* is a relatively new word in the United States.” He said, “Oh, it can be found in some dictionaries, but it came into usage in the sixties, and American Christians have gotten stronger and stronger and stronger in using the word *commitment*.” I said, “Well, what’s wrong with commitment?” He said, “I’ll tell you what’s wrong. When a new word comes in, it always moves out an old word; it replaces an old word.” He said, “I searched to find out what was the old word that *commitment* has replaced, and the old word is *surrender*.” Pay attention. The new word: *commitment*; the old word: *surrender*. “Now when you commit, you are in control. The thing that you commit to may be good and fine and noble and wonderful. You may commit yourself to soul winning. You may commit yourself to prayer. You may commit yourself to sacrifice. That’s all well and good. But who decides? You do. ‘I am committing myself to this.’ You may commit yourself to lose weight. You may commit yourself to do many things. You decide to do something, and therefore you commit yourself to it. But in surrender, there’s a difference. In commitment, you decide what you’re going to do, and commit yourself to it. When you surrender, you lift both hands, and say, ‘I’m under your control.’”

Do you see the difference? Do you see the difference? In commitment, you’re in control. In surrender, He’s in control. He is the king, and He is supreme, and what we do is to say, “*Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done*”—“I am under your control.”

Why does anybody do anything? Why does anyone serve another? A son? Because he wants to. A servant? Because he needs to. But a subject? Because he must. God is sovereign. God is absolutely sovereign. Do you want to know the will of God? Do you? I mean, do you? Would you like to pray and know that you're in the will of God? Well, *God does not reveal His will to rebels*. Have you ever totally, honestly, sincerely, with all of your heart, with every inch, with every ounce, with every nerve, every fiber, as much as in you is, said, *"Thy will be done"*? Have you? Then, if you have not, don't complain that you don't know the will of God. Don't you think that it is an absurdity, and don't you think it's a contradiction, and really don't you think it's an insult, to say, "I want to know the will of God, but I'm not willing to do the will of God"?

### **B. The Scripture Principle**

You see, step number one, in knowing the will of God, is the surrender principle. Another principle: the Scripture principle. Now, let me give you another verse of Scripture. Here Jesus says in John chapter 15 and verse 7, *"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."* (John 15:7) *"Ye abide in me"*: that's surrender. *"My words abide in you"*: that's Scripture. You take the Word of God. This book contains the will of God. This book is the Word of God. This print is God's revelation to you. It is God's Word to you.

Do you want to know God's will? Do you? You say, "Oh, I'd like to know the will of God." Test: How much time do you spend in this book? Do you think God really believes you when you say, "I want to know the will of God," and yet you don't read the one book above all books that God has specifically written to show you His will, to reveal His will to you, to unfold His will to you? Don't you think that there's a little bit of hypocrisy in a person who says, "God, I want more than anything else to do your will," and yet he does not study the Word of God to know what the will of God is?

### **C. The Spirit Principle**

Third principle. First one: the surrender principle. Second one: the Scripture principle. The third one: the Spirit principle. Now, listen. Let me give you another verse of Scripture—Romans chapter 8, verses 26 and 27: *"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit [himself] maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit,"*—now here's the key, Romans 8:27—*"because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."* (Romans 8:26–27)

There it is: The surrender principle: "I want to know your will." The Scripture principle: it's found in the Word of God. The Spirit principle: the Holy Spirit of God helps you to understand the Word of God, and helps you to articulate your prayer in the will of

God. That's the way to pray: *"Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done."*

You see, *"This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us."* (1 John 5:14) *"Thy will be done."* Answered prayer is not for rebels. *The prayer that gets to heaven is the prayer that starts in heaven. We just close the circuit.* You see, you can be absolutely certain when you're praying in the Spirit, any prayer that the Holy Spirit lays upon your heart will be answered, because the prayer that originates in heaven certainly is not going to be rejected there. That's the reason it is so important. Over and over again the Bible tells us to pray in the Spirit. And to pray in the Spirit, you must be filled with the Spirit. And you're not going to be filled with the Spirit until you surrender. It is all linked together.

I heard a beautiful definition of prayer. I love it. It's my favorite definition of prayer. May I give it to you? "Prayer is the Holy Spirit finding a desire in the heart of the Father, and putting that desire into our hearts, and then sending it back to heaven in the power of the cross." Did you get it? "Prayer is the Holy Spirit finding the desire in the heart of the Father, putting that desire into our hearts, and then sending it back to heaven in the power of the cross."

## **II. It Is the Kingdom of God's Grace**

So, what is the kingdom of God? It is the kingdom of God's government: *"Thy will be done."* The second thing I want you to notice as we talk about the kingdom of God: Not only is it the kingdom of God's government, but it is the kingdom of God's grace. Look, if you will now, in Hebrews chapter 4. Take your Bibles and turn to Hebrews chapter 4. Let me show you a wonderful passage that I meditated on this morning and I think really just brought tears to my eyes as I thought about it as I prayed myself. Look in Hebrews chapter 4 and verse 16: *"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace,"*—don't you love that? A throne. It speaks of His kingdom. It's speaks of His rule. Where does He rule from? What kind of a kingdom is it? What kind of a throne is it? Is it a throne of law? Is it a throne of judgment? No. It is a throne of grace. Two more wonderful words could not be put together: a *throne* and *grace*. The kingdom of God is the kingdom of God's government. But it is also the kingdom of God's grace. Because if it were only the kingdom of God's government; if all we could think about is the awesome majesty and glory and splendor and unapproachableness of the thrice-holy God, how could we ever dare come? But the Bible says that we can come right on. We come right to the throne of grace—*"that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."* (Hebrews 4:16)

You say, do my faults keep me from coming to a throne of grace? No, my dear friend, it's your faults that bring you to throne of grace. It's your need that brings you. Don't stay away because you have faults. Come and find mercy. Don't stay away

because you're weak. Come and find help. When you're praying for His kingdom to come, not only is it a kingdom of God's government; it is the kingdom of God's grace. It's not a throne for receiving tribute. It is a throne for dispensing grace. And, you see, my friend, the grace of God does not do away with the sovereignty of God and God's government; it only magnifies it.

Years and years ago I read somewhere of a woman who lived in a foreign country where they had a monarchy. And this woman was a very poor woman, and she had a daughter, and the daughter had gotten sick. The daughter was at home, and this poor woman had to go out and do her work. But somehow the sick daughter had said to her mother, "Mother, do you know what I think would make me feel better? If I just had some fresh fruit to eat." Fruit was very expensive, almost unobtainable. "If I just had some sweet luscious grapes, Mama, I just think they would make me feel so much better."

That mother had that in her mind as she went down the cobblestone streets; and as she was passing a very impressive building, a mansion-like building, a palace, she looked, and there was an iron fence, and behind it was a garden, and in that garden was a trellis, and from that trellis there was suspended a gorgeous grape vine, and on that grape vine there were just coming down in big clusters beautiful grapes. And she thought, "Oh, I have a few shillings. Maybe they would sell me a cluster of grapes." And she noticed that the gate was open, and almost fearfully she pushed the gate open. And she went into this most gorgeous beautiful garden, and she was looking at those grapes, and someone said to her, "What are you doing in here?" She turned around, and there was the gardener. He said, "Did someone leave the gate open? You must get out of here in a hurry. You have no right; you have no business in this place. You must leave." She said, "I was not trying to steal anything. I just wanted to know if perhaps I could buy a bunch of grapes for my daughter who is sick." He said, "I'm sorry. These grapes are not for sale. You must leave. This is the king's garden."

And as she turned in her fear and started out to the gate, she heard another voice saying, "Wait a minute! Stop right there!" She turned around to look into the face of her king. He said, "Tell me again, what were you doing here?" She said, "Sovereign, I'm sorry. I did not mean to intrude. I did not know this was the palace. I am sorry. All I wanted was a bunch of grapes for my daughter who is sick. Please." And he said, "Wait a minute. Don't be afraid. It's all right. Come here." He said, "Gardener, hand me those shears." He said, "Hold out your apron." She held it out, and he began to flip off big clusters of grapes and load her down one cluster after another. She said, "Oh, no, that's more than I can pay for." "Oh," he said, "you cannot buy these grapes." "Oh," she said, "but I must pay for them." And he said, "If you must pay for them, you cannot have them. The only way that you can have them is to receive them as a gift from your king.



### The king's grapes are not for sale."

Friend, I want to tell you, when I heard that story, I thought how much like the grace of God that is! If you want God's grace, you may have it, but you'll never buy it. "Not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to His mercy, He saves us." (Titus 3:5) "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is*"—what?—"the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:8–9) The king's grapes, and the king's grace, and the king's goodness are not for sale. What is this kingdom? It's a kingdom of God's government: He is sovereign. But it is a kingdom of God's grace: we come to a throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

I was so blessed when precious Emily stood here and sang, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me," and that wonderful stanza that says, "When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun, we've no less days to sing God's praise than when we've first begun." The Bible says in Ephesians that in the ages to come He's going to show us the riches of His grace. (Ephesians 2:7) One of these days, folks, all of the vain toys of this world won't mean very much to you. When the setting sun of your life mingles with the purpling dawn of eternity, and you've laid down the toils and the toys of this world, and your loved ones stand around your casket, all that will really matter then is God's amazing grace.

### III. It Is the Kingdom of God's Goodness

"*Thy kingdom come.*" It is the kingdom of God's government. It is the kingdom of God's grace. I'll tell you what else it is: It is the kingdom of God's goodness. When you're praying for the kingdom to come, for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven, what kind of a kingdom is it? Let me give you another verse to put in your margin. Are you ready for it? Romans chapter 14 and verse 17. I meditated on this this morning, and I can tell you what a blessing it is: "*For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*" (Romans 14:17) That's what the kingdom of God is. It is a kingdom of God's government. It is the kingdom of God's grace. And it is the kingdom of God's goodness—"righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

Are you in the kingdom? Are you? Well, if you're in the kingdom, these are three marks that you're in the kingdom. Number one: righteousness. Do you want to know whether a man is saved or not? Just see if he's righteous. Is he righteous? I don't care how loud you shout, or how high you jump: I want to know how straight you walk when you come back down. Has this thing called Christianity changed your life? *If your religion hasn't changed your life, you had better change your religion;* you don't have the New Testament religion. The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; it is

righteousness. But not only righteousness, peace—peace with God, and the peace of God, and peace that passes understanding: that’s the kingdom that you’re praying for to come. And it’s the kingdom of joy.

Let me go back to Joseph Tson for a moment. When I was preparing the sermon, I thought of what he told me also. He said, “Adrian, back in the seventies, I was in my studies; I was pastoring a church near Bucharest, and I was in my home when suddenly at my door there came seven secret police, the *Securitate*, the communist soldiers. They came into my house and said, ‘We’re going to search your house.’ And,” he said, “they turned my house upside down. They were looking for any kind of literature, for anything that I might have in my house that they could interpret as being against the government, so they could put me in prison, or maybe put me to death. And they went through our house, just looking, turning everything over.” You know, they don’t have the kind of a constitution we have to keep soldiers just from breaking into your house and searching.

“And then,” he said, “they went into my study and began to go through every book that I had.” Now, you know, a pastor’s books are very precious to him. They’re like friends to him. “They went into my study and they began to go through my books, looking for something that could be interpreted as being against the government, perhaps some kind of anti-communist literature that might be there. And they wanted to use it all for evidence against me, so they took every book and made me sign on a flyleaf that this was found in my study. One book after another they were taking down: I had to sign them.” He said, “It was miserable.” He said, “I had not signed many books when they laid a book before me. You know what the title of the book was? *Joy Unspeakable and Full of Glory*. And,” he said, “you cannot believe what a miserable day this was—and there was the title of that book: *Joy Unspeakable and Full of Glory*. And the subtitle was this: *Are You Experiencing It Now? Joy Unspeakable and Full of Glory: Are You Experiencing It Now?*”

And he said, “O God, your joy, yes, I am experiencing it now. Greater than all of this is your joy.” He said, “I knew that the joy of the Lord was to be my strength, and I said to Elizabeth,”—Elizabeth, that’s his wife—“‘These men are guests in our home. Make some coffee for them, would you, please, and serve them coffee.’ And,” he said, “from that moment on, I was in control. What else was happening? I was in control, and my King was on His throne, and the mark that my King was on His throne was joy. And it was my strength.”

#### **IV. It Is the Kingdom of God’s Glory**

The kingdom of God: “*The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*” (Romans 14:17) That’s what you’re praying for

when you pray, *“Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come”*: the kingdom of God’s government—He is sovereign; the kingdom of God’s grace—He is merciful; the kingdom of God’s goodness—He is so good. *“The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”* But there’s one last thing I want to mention that you’re praying for when you’re praying, *“Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done”*—where?—*“in earth, as it is in heaven.”* That prayer has not yet been answered. But, friend, it will be answered, because the kingdom of God is the kingdom of God’s government; it is the kingdom of God’s grace; it is the kingdom of God’s goodness; and it is the kingdom of God’s glory.

Let me tell you something, friend. God is going to be glorified here upon this earth. He is going to rule here on earth. The babe of Bethlehem is going to be the sovereign King of the whole earth. When Jesus Christ came into this world, the angel made this birth announcement. Put this verse down in your margin—Luke 1, verses 32 and 33. I want you to listen to it. Here’s what the angel said about the baby that was born: *“He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him”*—listen—*“the throne of his father David:”*—the throne of David— *“and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”* (Luke 1:32–33)

Now when he says *“the house of Jacob,”* he’s talking there not about spiritual Israel, but literal Israel—*“the house of Jacob.”* *Jacob* is never a term that is used for spiritual Israel, always for natural Israel. We’re talking here about the earthly reign of the Lord Jesus Christ. Did you know that Jesus Christ is going to rule one more time here on earth? Did you know that? I mean, literally rule here on earth where He was born, here on earth where He ministered, here on earth where He was crucified, here on earth where He was buried, here on earth where He rose, here on earth where He ascended; to this earth Jesus Christ is literally, actually, visibly, bodily coming back to this earth. Do you believe that? I hope you do.

Friend, He is going to reign on earth. *“For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”* (Habakkuk 2:14) That’s what the prophet said. Do you think that Jesus Christ would have taught us to pray this prayer if it would not have been answered? His kingdom has not come yet on earth. His will is not being done on earth. But it shall be, and it will be, because our Lord taught us to pray that. Today Jesus Christ is an outcast in the world of government, in the world of education, and in society.

May I show you my favorite psalm? At least it is this morning. Turn to Psalm 2. If this does not set your heart on fire, your wood is very wet. Psalm 2: *“Why do the heathen rage...”*—I’ll tell you why. *Rage* is what you do when you don’t know what else to do—

*“Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?” Vain means “foolish.” “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed...”—that means “against His Christ”; that’s the Hebrew word in the Old Testament for the New Testament word *Christ*—“The kings of the earth”—the high muckety-mucks—“set themselves,”—I see them as they square their jaws in rebellion—“and the rulers take counsel together,”—they pool their ignorance—“against the LORD, and against His [Christ], saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.” We can’t even post the Ten Commandments in our schoolrooms. You can give out condoms. I’ll tell you one thing, dear friend: This condom nation is headed for condemnation. “Let us break their bands asunder.” “We don’t want the Lord, and we don’t want His Christ.” Well, continue to read verse 4: “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh:”—it’s not the laugh of humor; it’s the laugh of irony—“the LORD shall have them in derision...”—they’ve laughed at Him. He is the butt of the late night jokes. They are laughing their way into hell, but they won’t laugh their way out once they get there—“the LORD shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.” There is coming a day of wrath. But here’s the beautiful part. In my Bible I’ve got one little word circled in red. It’s verse 6: “Yet...”—boy, that’s a great word—“Yet...”—in spite of the ravings and the ramblings and the mouthings of the agnostics, the atheists, the humanists, the ungodly, the perverts—“Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.” (Psalm 2:1–6)*

Don’t you love that? God has set His heart on this, my dear friend. Yet when God gets ready to enthrone the Lord Jesus, like people playing checkers, He’s going to move His Son into king’s row, and say, “Crown Him.” “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.” I love that. Do you know what the “holy hill of Zion” is? That’s where they crucified Him. Friend, that’s where He’s going to reign. The Lord Jesus in Zion is going to reign. God has set His heart on it. How exciting is this! When we’re praying, “Thy kingdom come,” it is the kingdom of God’s glory.

Since I gave you my favorite psalm for this morning, let me give you my favorite verse for this morning—1 Timothy chapter 6 and verse 15: “Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.” (1 Timothy 6:15) When Jesus was carrying His cross, the women were standing there weeping and lamenting, and Jesus, carrying that cross, stopped and looked up, and said, “Don’t weep for me; weep for yourselves.” (Luke 23:28) “This is your hour.” (Luke 22:53) “My hour has not yet come.” (John 7:6, 8) “This is your hour.” “My hour has not yet come.” His time is coming. “Which in His time, in His hour, He shall show who is the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, the blessed and only Potentate.”

His kingdom, my friend, is a kingdom of glory. And I love what Brother Jim sang this morning about the Lamb enthroned in Revelation chapter 11 and verse 15: “And the

*seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.*” (Revelation 11:15) Friend, He is not going to a four-year inauguration. He is going to an eternal coronation. Hallelujah! He shall reign! He shall reign! He shall reign! He shall reign! He shall reign forever and ever and ever and ever!

*Jesus shall reign where'er the sun  
Does his successive journeys run;  
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,  
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.*

—ISAAC WATTS

## **Conclusion**

He has a kingdom that is a kingdom of God’s government. It is a kingdom of God’s grace. It is the kingdom of God’s goodness. And it is the kingdom of God’s glory. I can hardly wait for the King to come—*“Even so, come, Lord Jesus”* (Revelation 22:20)—when we’ll do what we sang about in that first hymn: “Crown Him with many crowns, the Lamb upon His throne.”

Let’s pray. Lord, we want to join the saints of the ages to pray, as you’ve taught us to pray: *“Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”* In the name of Jesus. Amen.

# The Freedom of Forgiveness

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: February 7, 1993**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 6:9-13**

## Outline

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Conclusion

## Introduction

There was an evangelist of yesteryear who was the counterpart of Billy Graham today, a greatly used and anointed man of God. And this is what he said. He said, "There's one sin that Christians have more difficulty with than any other, and there's one sin that is holding back the power of God more than any other sin in the life of Christians." Now he was a wise and intelligent man, and a man gifted of God. Would you like to know what that sin is? He said, "It is the sin of an unforgiving spirit."

Look in Matthew chapter 6 and verse 9: *"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread."* And now we come to our text. Look at it: *"And forgive us our debts, as"—in the same manner, like—"we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the*

*glory, for ever.*" (Matthew 6:9–13) And now, notice verse 14: *"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."* (Matthew 6:14–15) When you forgive, you set a prisoner free. And then you discover that prisoner is you. "The Freedom of Forgiveness."

There are two great enemies that come against the human soul—the human spirit, our psyche. One enemy is guilt, and the other is bitterness. Do you have it? Guilt and bitterness. So many people in this world are absolutely driven into the ground spiritually, psychologically, and physically by guilt and bitterness. They're kept in a prison: a prison called guilt, and a prison called bitterness. Now the verse of Scripture that we're dealing with today deals with those two things. It deals with guilt: *"And forgive us our debts."* And it deals with bitterness: *"as we forgive our debtors."* Both of those problems are dealt with right here. When we're forgiven, we're set free from the prison of guilt. He breaks the power of canceled sin. He sets the prisoner free. And when we forgive others, then we're free from the prison of bitterness.

There are few forms of dissipation that will do more damage to the human soul and the human body than the deception of guilt and bitterness, and so we're dealing today with those things under the title "The Freedom of Forgiveness." One of God's greatest gifts to you and to me is forgiveness, because, you see, the Bible calls our sins a debt—a debt. Look at this verse of Scripture, and see how it delineates our sins. Verse 12: *"And forgive us our debts."* Our sins have put us in debt to God our Creator. We've been created to serve Him, to love Him—and we've not done it. We've been brought into heaven's court, and we have been sued for damages, and we cannot pay, and we're cast into a debtors' prison. And the only way we'll be set free is to be forgiven.

And then, not only that; but, friend, we must also then forgive. Now, when you forgive anybody, you cancel the debt. That's what forgiveness is. Sin is a debt. Forgiveness is the canceling of the debt. Actually the word *forgive* here means "to bear the burden." Now, if you owed me a thousand dollars, and you had nothing to pay, and could not pay, and I said, "Very well, then, I forgive the debt," that cost me a thousand dollars. It costs to forgive. Sin is a debt. When the debt is forgiven, the forger pays.

Now salvation may be free to you, but it costs the Lord Jesus. I want you to just jot in your margin this text—Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 7. The Bible speaks of Jesus, *"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins,"*—now, listen—*"according to the riches of his grace."* (Ephesians 1:7) Our Lord paid through grace—out of His riches—for my forgiveness. That's the reason we say grace is what? *God's Riches At Christ's Expense.* That's how I'm forgiven. God doesn't overlook my sin. God Himself pays

the debt of my sin, and on the cross the Lord Jesus with His blood paid the debt of my sin. God never overlooks. Somebody must pay. Forgiveness is the paying of the debt that another cannot pay. *“Forgive us our debts.”* Now, when God forgives me, then God says I must forgive others as I have been forgiven. And, according to this verse, if I withhold forgiveness to someone else after having been forgiven, then I dam up the stream of God’s forgiveness, and that stream stops until I am willing to forgive those who have sinned against me.

## **I. The Compelling Reasons for Forgiving**

Now, with all of that as an introduction, let me talk to you, first of all, about the compelling reasons for forgiving—the compelling reasons for forgiving. I’m not talking about being forgiven now, but if you have been forgiven, look again at our verse of Scripture. The Bible says this: *“After this manner we’re to pray,”*—verse 9 says that; and then, verse 12: *“Forgive us our debts as”—in the same manner—“we forgive other people.”*

May I give you four reasons why you ought to forgive? Now, if there’s somebody who’s done you wrong—perhaps it’s your parents, perhaps your husband, perhaps your wife, perhaps your employer, perhaps some employee, perhaps a brother or sister, perhaps a neighbor: somebody who has done you wrong—and our Lord has taught you to pray, *“God forgive me as I forgive them,”* you ask yourself this question: Why should I forgive? Four reasons. Here they are.

### **A. The Grace Factor**

The first is what I want to call the grace factor—the grace factor. You should forgive because you have been forgiven. You should forgive because God has so willingly forgiven you. Here’s our verse—Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 32: *“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”* (Ephesians 4:32) God has forgiven you. God has shown grace to you. And therefore you must show grace to one another. Sam Jones, another evangelist of yesteryear said—and I quote—*“I had a hard time forgiving people until I made up my mind I wasn’t going to fall out with anyone until he treated me worse than I treated Jesus. We crucified the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

And so, reason number one that we need to be forgiving is that we have been forgiven. We have experienced the grace of God. And we’re to be kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven us.



## **B. The Guilt Factor**

Reason number two: not only the grace factor, but the guilt factor. And the guilt factor means this: that, if we do not forgive, then no longer can we be forgiven. We should be forgiving, because unforgiveness shuts out the forgiveness of God. Verse 12 teaches us that an unforgiving spirit is unforgivable. And the person who will not forgive destroys the bridge over which he himself must travel.

Have you ever thought of this prayer, how dangerous it is? Have you ever thought that this is a dangerous prayer? It is. What you have said is, “God, treat me like I treat other people. Forgive me, as I forgive others.” Do you forgive others? If you don’t, you’ve asked God to deal with you the same way: “Forgive me the way I forgive others.” “Well,” you say, “I’ll forgive her, but I’ll never have any more to do with her.” God says, “All right, I’ll forgive you, and never have any more to do with you.” You say, “Well, I’ll forgive, but I can’t forget.” God says, “All right. But I won’t forget.” You see what you’re praying? You’re saying to God, “God, I want you to deal with me the way that I deal with other people.”

## **C. The Grief Factor**

Why should you forgive? The grace factor: you’ve received grace. Why should you forgive? The guilt factor: if you don’t, your guilt will remain. Then, there’s a third reason that you ought to forgive friend—and that’s the grief factor—the grief factor. You see, you should forgive others, because, if you do not, you will have personal harm and grief that will come to you. An unforgiving spirit keeps you in prison. You say, “Well, I’m not going to let them off the hook.” Our sense of justice cries out, and says we dare not forgive: “I will not let them get by with this. I’ll keep them on the hook.” They’re not the only one kept on the hook. You yourself, by an unforgiving spirit, are hooked with them.

Why should you forgive them? Well, number one: for Jesus’ sake. God, for Christ’s sake, forgave you. Can you not for Christ’s sake, forgive them? God forgave them. Can you not, for Christ’s sake, forgive them? Our God, for Christ’s sake, forgave you. Can you not, for Christ’s sake, forgive them? But not only for Christ’ sake; but for their sake. You see, forgiveness is not giving to a person what they deserve; forgiveness is giving to a person what they need—but not only to do it for Christ’s sake, and for their sake; do it for your sake. Did you hear that? For your sake. An unforgiving spirit, bitterness, will keep you in a prison of your own making. And when you refuse to let them off the hook, I remind you that you stay on the hook with them.

You say, “Well, I’ll just get even.” Will you get even? Here you are up here. Here’s somebody wicked down here. And they have done you wrong. You’re going to get even, are you? You see where you are? When you get even, you come down to where they are. When

you forgive, you bring them to where you are. “Well,” you say, “then I’ll not just get even; I’ll continue to hate. I won’t take revenge; I’ll just continue to hate.” Do you know what you do? You take an acid into your system when you continue to hate. And bitterness is an acid that destroys its container. Again, there are few forms of dissipation that will do more harm to you than resentment and bitterness. Resentment is slow suicide.

#### **D. The Gain Factor**

Why should you forgive? The grace factor: you’ve been forgiven. Why should you forgive? The guilt factor: if you don’t forgive, you dam up the stream of continuing forgiveness. And if you don’t forgive, the grief factor: you will continue to have grief, and that hurt you will continue to hurt you until you release it and let it go. The fourth reason you ought to forgive: the gain factor. Not only do you lose those things that have wounded you—you let them go, you release them; but you gain your brother. The person who has wounded you is either a brother, or a potential brother—a sister, or a potential sister. Matthew chapter 18 and verse 15: *“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.”* (Matthew 18:15)

A brother is a precious thing. You’re in Matthew chapter 5—look in verse 24: *“Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother.”* Matthew 5:24: *“Be reconciled to thy brother.”* When you forgive another, then you gain a brother. How sad it is when brothers and sisters fail to forgive!

##### **1. Unforgiveness Disgraces the Father**

Do you know what that does? It disgraces the Father. When my children do not love one another, it is a disgrace to me.

##### **2. Unforgiveness Discourages the Saints**

Not only does it disgrace the Father; it discourages the saints. There are few things that hurt a church worse than an unforgiving spirit.

##### **3. Unforgiveness Disgusts the Lost**

It also disgusts the lost. Unsaved people are quick to see when there is a rift in a family, when there’s a rift in the church, when there is a tear in the fellowship; they’re quick to point it out. And many of them are not saved because of the sin in our hearts and in our lives. And that sin is so often the sin of an unforgiving spirit.

##### **4. Unforgiveness Delights the Devil**

What does it do? It disgraces the Father. It discourages the saints. It disgusts the lost. It delights the devil. The devil, more than anybody else, loves to see brethren with an unforgiving spirit.

The Bible says, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Psalm 133:1) The Bible says that God hates that one that sows discord among brethren. (Proverbs 6:16–19) You say, “Well, pastor, he’s not a brother. He’s not a sister. The person who has sinned against me is an unbeliever.” Well then, he’s all the more the object of your pity, because, if he’s an unbeliever, not only has he done wrong, but he’s blind, and he does not have the grace and the power that you have. If he is a brother, you’re in the same body. And when you harm him, you harm you. And he’s to be the object of your love. If he’s not a brother, he’s lost, and on his way to hell. And you don’t need to drive him further that way. He needs more of your love.

What I’m saying is there’s the gain factor. We have everything to gain, nothing to lose, by forgiving someone else. And I have given you four reasons why you ought to forgive. You see, the person that you forgive is more than a person who has hurt you. He is a person who needs you. And grace is not giving to people what they deserve; it is giving to people what they need. Those are the compelling reasons.

## **II. The Costly Requirements for Forgiving**

Secondly, I want to talk to you, not only about the compelling reasons, but I want to talk to you about the costly requirements for forgiving. When I talk to you about forgiving someone else, I’m talking to you about something that is extremely costly. Remember what we said: somebody pays—somebody pays. Forgiveness is the canceling of a debt. And when you forgive your debtor, then you pay up.

What are the costly requirements for forgiving? Well, the model for forgiving is Jesus. Remember again Ephesians 4:32: “*And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ’s sake, hath forgiven you.*” That’s the model. Now, take that as a model: how you got forgiven, and that’s the way that you are to forgive. The kind of price that heaven paid is the kind of price that you’re to pay.

### **A. Forgive Freely**

Therefore, number one, as we talk about the costly requirements: You are to forgive freely—freely. The Bible says, “*Freely ye have received, freely give.*” (Matthew 10:8) Now some people forgive after they’ve collected their revenge. They’re wronged. They want the individual to know that they’ve been wronged. They want the individual to know how badly he has hurt them. Therefore they criticize, they castigate, they scold, they freeze out; they do everything that they can do to cause that individual to squirm like a worm in hot ashes. They roast them. They pummel them. They excoriate them. They do all they can do, and then, finally, after they’ve had their pound of flesh, they say, “Well, I forgive”—“I forgive.” And the *forgivee* feels like saying, “Never mind. I’ve already paid.” You are to

forgive freely, not after you extract your pound of flesh. And because you forgive freely, you are to be quick to do it.

The Bible says, *“Let all bitterness...be put away from you.”* (Ephesians 4:31) Be in a hurry to forgive. If you’re not in a hurry to forgive, that bitterness will become an infection, and will become much more difficult to heal. When Jesus Christ was on the cross, while they were crucifying Him, He was praying, *“Father, forgive them”*—while they were nailing Him to the cross. (Luke 23:34) The Bible teaches that we’re to be so anxious to forgive a brother, a sister, that we are to seek them out to forgive them; we’re to run them down to forgive them. Matthew chapter 18 and verse 15—the Lord Jesus said, *“Moreover if thy brother trespass against thee...”* (Matthew 18:15) You say, “He’s the one who did wrong. Let him come to me. If he wants forgiveness, let him come and ask for it.” But Jesus said, “No, you go to him.” Again, He said the same thing: “When you bring your gift to the altar, and remember there that a brother hath ought against thee, you go to him.” (Matthew 5:23–24) Whether you’re in the right, or whether you’re in the wrong; whether you have ought against your brother, or whether you know that your brother has ought against you, you are to take the offensive; you are to go to that individual. Isn’t that what God did in the Garden of Eden? Adam and Eve sinned against God, and the Bible says that God came in the midst of the garden, and God cried out, “Adam, where art thou?” (Genesis 3:9) And that was not the voice of a detective. That was the voice of brokenhearted God.

## **B. Forgive Fully**

What are the costly requirements for forgiveness? Number one: You’re to forgive freely: *“Freely you have received, freely give.”* Secondly: not only are you to forgive freely, but you are to forgive fully—fully. Now, you know what our pride does many times when a person ask us for forgiveness? We say, “Oh, don’t worry about it. It’s all right. Don’t worry about it. It doesn’t matter.” That is not forgiveness. You know what causes you to say that: “Forget it; it doesn’t matter”? Do you know what causes you to say that? Your pride. It did matter. You were hurt. But you don’t want them to know you’ve been hurt. You want to rise. And so, when you say, “It’s all right; forget it; it doesn’t matter,” no, friend, you have not forgiven that individual fully as you ought.

Forgiveness is not politeness. It is not acting magnanimous about it. It is not acting big. It is not taking it light and making out like it really didn’t matter. When you come to God for forgiveness, God says, “Oh, don’t worry about it”—do you think that’s what God does? Oh, no. Forgiveness is not politeness. Forgiveness is not merely accepting an apology. Or, forgiveness is not forgetting. “Adrian, I have wronged you. I’m sorry.” “Oh, forget it. Forget it.” That’s not forgiveness. As a matter of fact, he can’t forget it, in the true sense of the

word, until it is forgiven. And forgetting is never the means of forgiveness; it is the result of forgiveness. Now God remembers our trespasses against us no more only because they have been forgiven.

And, incidentally, if you are going to an individual, and asking that individual to forgive you, make certain that it is forgiveness that you get. Many times we're too proud to ask for forgiveness, and so we go and say, "You know, if I'm wrong, if I did you wrong, I'm sorry." Well, in the first place, that's not a confession: "If I did." If you know you did, say you did. And then they say, on the other hand, "Well, don't worry about it. Forget it." You're both wrong. You're wrong for the way you came to that brother, and he's wrong for the way he dealt with you. You come to him and say, "I was wrong. I did you wrong. Will you forgive me?" And he'll say, "Don't worry about it." No. Say, "I am worried about it. I am concerned. Will you look at me and tell me that you forgive me?" Make certain that it is forgiveness that you get, not merely a glossing over.

### **C. Forgive Finally**

When you forgive, forgive freely: not after that individual has paid his price. Seek them out to forgive them. When you forgive, forgive fully. And don't just say it didn't matter, or accept an apology rather than forgiveness. Thirdly, when you forgive, forgive finally. That is, what you forgive is buried in the grave of God's forgetfulness, never to be brought up again. When God forgives, God forgets. Now that doesn't mean that God forgets intellectually. God can never learn anything, or forget anything, in that realm. He knows everything. And He always knows everything. And if He ever forgot, in the sense that He couldn't remember, then He would have changed. He cannot change. He would no longer be omniscient.

When the Bible says God forgets our sins, what does it mean? It means, as He says in the Bible, He remembers them against us no more—He remembers them against us no more. (Psalm 79:8) That doesn't mean that intellectually He cannot remember. It just means there's no grudge there. He does not remember that, in the sense of remembering it against it, holding any hostility. And somebody has done you wrong, and you say, "When I forgive, I forget": does that mean that your mind goes blank? Oh, no. It just means that you remember it against them no more. And it costs to forgive freely. It costs to forgive fully. It costs to forgive finally. That's probably the biggest test as to whether or not you truly did forgive: whether or not you keep bringing it up again.

I may have told you about the businessman who had everything filed in his office. He was meticulous for keeping records of everything. His secretary came in and said, "Sir, we need to clean out these files. These files are so loaded. We've got to get this stuff out of our

files. There's a lot of stuff in here we need to take out and shred. How about letting us clean the files?" "Well," he said, "I guess you're right. "We've got all this stuff. We can't just keeping saving it. All right, go through it. Clean out the files, shred and burn. But," he said, "before you do, make a copy of everything." That's the way we do. We say, "Well, we're going to clean the files," mentally, but somehow we do not truly forget, in the sense that God wants us to forget.

Now, when God forgives me, first of all, God does something for me: He forgives me. And then He does something through me: He teaches me to forgive others. And that costs. It costs Jesus. When God forgave you, do you think God just forgave you? Do you think God was just acting magnanimous, and God said, "Oh, that's all right"? Go to Calvary, and see if you think God was just acting magnanimous. See the Lord Jesus writhing in agony and blood.

*Blessed Redeemer! Precious Redeemer!  
Seems now I see Him on Calvary's tree;  
Wounded and bleeding, for sinners pleading...*

—AVIS B. CHRISTIANSEN

It cost Jesus. But He paid the price. And why did He pay the price? The Bible says, "*For the joy that was set before him.*" (Hebrews 12:2) He said, "It's worth it! It is worth it! I will shed my blood for the joy of seeing Adrian Rogers saved"—for that joy, the joy that was set before Him. Forgiveness costs, but it is worth the price.

You say, "All right, pastor. That was Jesus. I don't have what it takes. If you knew that man who raped my daughter; if you knew the way my husband has squandered everything that we have, and is now running around with another woman; if you knew what my boss did to me; you wouldn't stand up there and say, 'Forgive, forgive.' I can't do it." And you're right. You really can't.

But you really can. Let me show you how. Turn, if you will, to Philippians chapter 2—just turn to it. Look with me in verse 12: "*Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed,*"—and that's what we need, is obedience—"not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." (Philippians 2:12) He doesn't say, "Work for your salvation." You cannot work for your salvation. Salvation is the gift of God.

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

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

*“Work out your...salvation with fear and trembling.”*

Well, how do I do it? Look in verse 13: *“For it is God which worketh in you”*—to do what?—*“both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”* (Philippians 2:13) So, don’t say you can’t. Don’t say you can’t. It is God that does two things in you. Number one: God gives you the desire. And number two: God gives you the dynamic. It is God who works in you, first of all, to will; and then, to do. When you say, *“There’s somebody, and I cannot forgive them: my sense of justice cries out,”* well, friend, God is just also. *“Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”* (Romans 12:19) God will do a better job on them than you will, to begin with. Turn it over to God. And don’t take that which is God’s. And begin to work out your salvation, and say, *“God, help me to love, and love that person through me.”* And God’s love will begin to flow. And that love is supernatural. And it is God that works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

Have you ever heard this proverb: *“To err is human; to forgive is divine”*? That’s exactly it: *“To err is human; to forgive is divine.”* We’re to forgive one another, even as God, for Christ’s sake, hath forgiven us.

Corrie Ten Boom, the beautiful Dutch girl, in World War II, her family hid some Jews, in Holland, hid the Jews from the Nazis. Finally, the Ten Boom family was arrested. Corrie and her sister were carried away to a concentration camp. They were brutalized by the Nazi prison guards at Ravensbrück. They were treated to all kinds of indignities. One of the indignities was, every so often they were stripped down naked—young girls—put in the showers, to be deloused. The German guards would stand there and make obscene remarks, and leer at them, and, as it were, to rape them with their eyes—absolutely, totally humiliated; all modesty gone.

Later, Corrie Ten Boom survived. Her sister died. But she survived. She became a radiant Christian, was lecturing on forgiveness, and at the close of that service, a person came forward with a smile on his face. And she looked at him, and it was a face that had been chiseled into her memory, a face that had been indelibly stamped upon her soul. It was the face of the most cruel and wicked and obscene of those guards. And he was now at a Christian meeting. And he came up to her with a smile on his face, and he said, *“Corrie, I want you to forgive me,”* and put out his hand.

She said, *“I froze.”* She said, *“A chill went over me. And when I saw that man that I knew to be the very mirror of evil, I knew that I did not have the power to forgive him. And I did not want to forgive him. And,”* she said, *“I breathed a prayer, and said, ‘O God, help me to forgive.’ And,”* she said, *“as an act of obedience, I put out my hand. And when his hand touched mine, liquid love began to flow through me. And I found out that God’s grace is sufficient. And I forgave.”*

How did she do that? Was that Corrie? No. No. It was God working in her both to will and to do of His good pleasure. Well, that brings up a real question. You say, “Pastor Rogers, that prison guard evidently had repented of his sin; he’d given his heart to Christ. What about those who continue to sin against us? What about people who are still living in sin? Are we just to forgive them? While they’re stabbing us, are we to be forgiving them? While they’re kicking us, are we to be forgiving them? While they are stealing from us, are we to be forgiving them?” No. No.

What is forgiveness? You see, there are times when people refuse forgiveness. And in order for there to be forgiveness, there must be repentance. God does not forgive you without repentance. Neither can you forgive someone else without repentance. There’s a lot of soft thinking here, so let me just give you a verse of Scripture to make it very clear. Luke 17, verses 3 and 4—Jesus said—and He was talking to me; He was talking to you—*“Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him;”*—now the word *rebuke* doesn’t mean “scold him”; it means “tell him you’ve done wrong”—*“and if he repent, forgive him.”* Do you see it? *“And if he repent, forgive him.”* Verse 4: *“And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.”* (Luke 17:3–4)

Now it’s very important that you understand that repentance is necessary for forgiveness. God does not forgive unless you repent. You cannot forgive unless another repents. So, what if they refuse repentance? What if they see no need for forgiveness? What do you do? You do exactly the same thing that God has done. You forgive them in your heart. You store up forgiveness for them.

When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He died for every man: those who would repent, and those who would not. And Christ died for all. *“And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”* (1 John 2:2) And on Calvary, potentially, was that forgiveness. In the heart of God is that forgiveness. It is already there. And so for the brother who will not repent, the sister who sees no need of forgiveness, still in your heart, it must be there. Store it up, already there for them to receive. You cannot forgive them without their repentance, but your forgiveness is already given. All they need to do is receive it. You understand what I’m saying? You must make very certain that you have this forgiveness in your heart.

### **III. The Certain Results of Forgiving**

Quickly now, and I’m finished. I’ve talked to you about the compelling reasons, and the costly requirements. What are the certain results? When you forgive, what are they? There will be three I’ll only mention.



### **A. Release**

First of all, there will be release. Friend, you will set a prisoner free, and find out that prisoner is you. There will be a release. You will unhook yourself from the past, and God will free you up. And no longer will you bear this burden of an unforgiving spirit in this corrosive acid that is destroying your soul. There will be release.

### **B. Reconciliation**

And if he will receive that forgiveness, there will be reconciliation. A brother is a precious thing.

### **C. Revival**

And then there will be—and I thank God for this—there will be revival. You know how we began this service today? We began this service today with a song. And you know what that song was? “Revive Us Again.” You remember singing it: “Revive Us Again.” Do you know what revival is? May I tell you what revival is? Revival is not just getting the roof off, getting right with God; revival is getting the walls down, getting right with one another. That, my friend, is revival. “Forgive us”: get the roof off; “as we forgive one another”: get the walls down. And when we began to do that, there will be release; there will be reconciliation; there will be revival.

## **Conclusion**

It all begins with your getting saved. Do you know the Lord Jesus?

# The Kingdom of Evil and the Kingdom of God

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** February 5, 1984

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 6:9–13

*“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”*

MATTHEW 6:13

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Did God Create the Devil?
- II. What Corrupted the Devil?
  - A. Pride
  - B. Beauty
  - C. Wisdom
- III. Why Does God Let the Devil Continue?
- IV. What Is Going to Happen to the Devil?

Conclusion

## Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles now, as the lights come up, and turn to Matthew chapter 6 and verse 9. Today, we’re continuing our series on “The Principles of Prayer.” And, we have learned last week—and we’re going to underscore it again today—that the only possible way to have victory over the devil is through prayer—no other way. The Lord Jesus clearly taught us that, and we are going to see it today, as we’re thinking today about “The Kingdom of Evil and the Kingdom of God.”

Now, we’re reading Matthew chapter 6 and verse 9. This is the “model prayer,” sometimes called “the Lord’s Prayer,” more aptly called the “disciples’ prayer,” which is a guide to prayer—not primarily a prayer to be rattled off by rote memory, but as a guide to lead us in all of our prayer life. Now, let’s read it again, and then we’re going to note specially verse 13: *“After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”*—now remember, I told you last

week that that phrase “deliver us from evil” is literally maybe translated “deliver us from the evil one.” And, some translations give it “the kingdom of evil”—“*For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.*” (Matthew 6:9–13) Now, we are in a battle—a fight to the death—with the kingdom of evil. And, there is set over against that kingdom of evil the kingdom of God. There’s a kingdom of darkness, a kingdom of light. There is a reign of terror, and there is a rule of love. There is the kingdom of death and the kingdom of life. There is the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ, the Lord Jesus Christ. And, you need to choose sides carefully.

Now, I want you, having read that passage of Scripture, I want you to turn with me to the Old Testament, to the book of Ezekiel—Ezekiel chapter 28—and I want you to notice one of the most amazing passages in all of the Bible. And, it is important for you to have a Bible in your hand this morning, so, therefore, I want you to keep the Bible open in your hand. If you don’t have a Bible, look there in the pew rack before you. There should be one there for you to use. Take it out, and find Ezekiel chapter 28. Now, we’re going to begin reading here in verse 12—Ezekiel 28, verse 12: “*Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus*”—now, that is what we would call today “Tyre” there in Lebanon—“*upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in [all] thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee. Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee. All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more.*” (Ezekiel 28:12–19) Ladies and gentlemen, in warfare it is absolutely necessary that we do not underestimate our enemy. We must know our enemy. And, therefore, this passage in the book of Ezekiel is one of the most important passages in all of the Bible. If we would pull the mask away from Satan, if we would see

him for what he is and yes, praise God, for what he one day will be...

Now, I want to tell you, you cannot afford to be ignorant because there are two kingdoms: the devil is the prince of this world, but we are citizens of the kingdom of heaven. But, as citizens of the kingdom of heaven, we are living in hostile territory; we are living in enemy territory. Remember what Jesus said to the church there at Thyatira in the book of the Revelation? He said, *"I know...where [you dwell], even where Satan's [throne] is."* (Revelation 2:13) That is, "You're having to live in hell's headquarters," and so are we. So, we're citizens of another kingdom, but we're living in hostile territory; we're living in enemy territory. And, we need to be forewarned because *to be forewarned is to be forearmed.*

Now, there is a kingdom of evil, and that kingdom of evil has a king. Jesus called him in John 14, verse 30: *"the prince of this world."* (John 14:30) He is the dark prince. Now, why, therefore, is a message addressed to the king of Tyre? In verse 12, we're told to *"take up a lamentation [against] the king of [Tyre]."* (Ezekiel 28:12) "The king of Tyre" is a cryptic name, a symbolic name, for Satan. The king of Tyre has become a type, a picture, of the devil himself. Now, what I mean is this: there was a literal king of Tyre. And, if you were to read the first eleven verses, you would read a message to that literal king. That literal king that lived there in Lebanon was an egomaniac. He had the idea that he himself was God. And, God spoke a word of judgment to that king, and then God went beyond that king and began to talk about the power behind his throne. You see, there was someone who was making that king behave that way. There was someone who was putting suggestions into that wicked king's mind, and it was the devil himself. And so, now the devil is being addressed through the king of Tyre.

You're going to find out that God, in the Scriptures, spoke to the devil through others. For example, there, in the Garden of Eden, God addressed the devil through the serpent. He spoke to the serpent because it was the serpent that spoke for the devil and was the emissary of the devil, and, therefore, God spoke to the serpent and pronounced doom upon the devil.

You'll find the same thing there in Caesarea Philippi when Peter had just confessed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. And then, however, Peter began to rebuke Jesus and to remonstrate with Jesus about going to the cross. And, Jesus turned to Peter, and Jesus said to Peter, *"Get thee behind me, Satan: [for] thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but [the things] that [are of another world]."* (Matthew 16:23) Now, I want to ask you a question: Was Jesus talking to Peter or to the devil? He was talking to the devil through Peter when He looked at Peter and said, *"Get thee behind me, Satan."* (Matthew 16:23) You're going to find out that the same case is here. God is not primarily talking to the king of Tyre; He's talking to the power behind the throne, the one that motivated and manipulated that

ancient, wicked king.

So, we're going to learn some things about the devil today, and I hope you'll learn them well, because Paul said, "*We are not ignorant of his devices.*" (2 Corinthians 2:11) Paul said, "That is, those of us are not ignorant." But, I believe those who live in this day are saturated with ignorance concerning the devil.

Now today, in the message, I'm going to attempt to answer four questions, and these are very vital questions. The first question deals with the origin of the devil, what we're going to call "his creation," as I said a few moments ago. Did God create a devil? Did God create the devil? And, if not, then where did the devil come from if God didn't create him? For before God there was nothing. All right, the second question: What corrupted the devil? The first question deals with creation. The second question deals with corruption: How did the devil become the devil? Now, the third question deals not only with his creation and his corruption but his continuation: Why doesn't God do something about the devil? Have you ever said, "Well, if I were God, I'd kill the devil"? Why doesn't God snuff him out? Why doesn't God eradicate the devil? Why doesn't God do something about the devil? Why does God allow him to continue? Now, the fourth question deals with the condemnation of the devil: What is going to happen to the devil? What is the devil's destiny? How will the devil's career be consummated? Where is the devil going to end up? It's necessary that you understand all of those things in order to have the total picture. And, I believe that God here, through the prophet Ezekiel, has given us a glimpse into the dark kingdom. And, I'm praying that God not only will pull the curtain from the devil's kingdom, but He will also pull the veil away from your mind and your eyes and that God the Holy Spirit will give you a spiritual insight into the dark kingdom, and ultimately, O dear God, ultimately help you to see today the victory we have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **I. Did God Create the Devil?**

Now, first of all, let's answer that first question: Did God create the devil? The devil and his creation. Was the devil created? The question of his creation. Well, let's begin reading again in verse 12: "*Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum*"—now, what does that mean: "*Thou sealest up the sum*"? The kids would say today, "He was a perfect ten." He sealed up the sum! That is, you couldn't add anything to him—"full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty"—have you ever seen anything perfect in beauty? Not in your life, but the devil was perfect in beauty—"Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, [the] topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: [and] the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that

*thou wast created*”—just underscore that phrase *“thou wast created”*—*“Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast [in] the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire”*—verse 15. Look at it clearly; mark it—*“Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.”* (Ezekiel 28:12–15)

God created a creature; Isaiah tells us what his name was. It was Lucifer, which means “son of the morning.” And, this creature that God created was surpassing in beauty, and he was superlative in wisdom. He filled up the sun. As I said before, he was a perfect creature. As a matter of fact, he had a musical quality about him. The Bible, here in verse 13, speaks of his tabrets and his pipes. (Ezekiel 28:13) That is, his being was like a great pipe organ. When he would speak, it was like music rolling forth—like a grand, glorious musical instrument. You say, “Literally, did he have pipes in him?” Oh, no, friend. This is God’s way of speaking of the melodious quality of his nature.

And then, the Bible speaks of all of these precious gems: rubies, and diamonds, and emeralds. (Ezekiel 28:13) He lived in the kingdom of exquisite mineral beauty, very much like the kingdom that we’re going to live in one day. We’re looking forward to going to a place that has walls of jasper, gates of pearl, streets of gold. It’s a place that speaks of the glory of God and the paradise of God. If you’ll read the early chapters of Ezekiel, these stones of fire round about the throne of God there in the early chapter—what an environment this creature lived in!

And then, again, I want you to look. It speaks of the holy mountain of God in verse 14: *“Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God.”* (Ezekiel 28:14) Now, in the Bible—in the Old Testament, especially—a mountain, in this sense, speaks of the government of God. We speak of that prophecy where the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the last days. (Micah 4:1) That literally means “the government of God.” “The holy mountain” means “the government of God.” And, here was a creature who was associated with the government of God. He was in charge of the affairs of heaven. I believe that this creature was the prime minister of heaven and that he ran, under the authority of God, God’s vast domain and mighty universe. He was there in the holy mountain. What authority he had!

Also, look, if you will, please, in verse 14: he is called *“the anointed cherub.”* (Ezekiel 28:14) *Anointed* means a “special, set aside” cherub, selected from all of the other cherubs. Now, when you think of a cherub, don’t think of a fat little baby angel. That’s not what a cherub is. That may be the cherub you’ll get on your valentine, but that’s not what a cherub is. The cherubim were the highest rank in order of angels. Angels were ranked by powers, and there are different ranks and degrees of angels. For example,

we read of archangels, who are over other angels. This angel, this cherub, was of the highest rank, and he—the highest of the high—not merely a cherub, but *“the anointed cherub.”* (Ezekiel 28:14)

And, the Bible says he’s the *“cherub that covereth.”* (Ezekiel 28:14) Now, the idea of covering here has the idea of protection. And, the literal Hebrew word, the scholars say, means “to spread out the wings.” Have you seen the pictures of the Ark of the Covenant with the cherubim with their wings spread out over that? It has to do with the holiness of God, the worship of God. You see, this angel, as we look, this cherub had to do not only with the government of God, but he had to do with the worship of God and the holiness of God. It seems to be as though he is receiving authority from God, and administrating the universe, and receiving worship from the universe and giving it to God. Look, if you will, for example, down in verse 18: *“Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries.”* (Ezekiel 28:18) A sanctuary is a place of worship. He had sort of a priesthood. He had a means of receiving worship and giving that worship on to the Lord. What a person this was! He was in the highest class of all things that are created.

Now, let’s get to the question: Did God create the devil? No, God created a cherub. God created a perfect being, not a malevolent devil, not a hideous creature. I like what Ethel Waters has to say: “God don’t make no junk.” Now, God didn’t make the devil. Friend, God did not make a devil. Look at it! Clearly, you don’t have to guess—verse 15: *“Thou wast perfect in thy ways”*—God, being perfect, did not create imperfection—*“Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.”* (Ezekiel 28:15) Now, that’s the first question. It deals with the devil’s creation. God did not create the devil. God created a surpassingly beautiful creature, the anointed cherub.

## **II. What Corrupted the Devil?**

Now, how did the devil become the devil? We’re going to deal now not only with his creation but with his corruption. Now, let’s look again in verse 15: *“Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till”*—just underscore *till*—*“iniquity was found in thee. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence.”* (Ezekiel 28:15–16)

### **A. Pride**

Now, look at that word *merchandise*: *“By the multitude of thy merchandise.”* (Ezekiel 28:16) Do you know what *merchandise* means? The word literally means “that which passes through the hands.” You see, a person who merchandises things—he takes it from this person, and he sells it or transplants it to another person. So, he’s a merchandiser. Things are going through his hands. What was going through the hands of this cherub—through Lucifer’s hands? Well, the authority of God, as he was in the

holy mount of God as the vice-regent of heaven, as he is the prime minister of heaven, the authority of God was passing through his hands. What else was passing through his hands? As he was the anointed cherub that covers, as he was there in the sanctuary of God, the worship of God was being received by him and being passed on to the Father. And, what he did was to make merchandise of his office.

‡ Have you ever heard of a politician who makes merchandise of his office? That is, he finds himself in a place of authority and he also finds himself handling things that are not his own. And, if he's not careful, that can go to his head. And, he can think he has certain prerogatives, and he begins to skim off the top. And, he begins to take things to himself that don't belong to himself.‡

And, that's exactly what the devil did—the devil became the devil by making merchandise of his office. He began to think, "I'm too beautiful! I'm too wise! I'm too important! I have too much authority not to have some of this authority for myself and to receive some of this praise for myself!" And so, the essence of his sin literally was pride.

There's a very interesting passage of Scripture. You might want to jot it down somewhere so you can refer to it later. But, the Apostle Paul was telling Timothy the requirements for a pastor, and among those requirements, we read in 1 Timothy chapter 3, verse 6 that a new pastor is "*not [to be] a novice.*" (1 Timothy 3:6) Do you know what *novice* means? Somebody who has no experience, a ninety-day wonder. He is "*not [to be] a novice*"—now, here is the reason for that—"*lest, being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.*" (1 Timothy 3:6) That's a very clear passage to tell us what happened to the devil, how the devil became a devil. He was lifted up with pride.

You see, we need to be careful. Every now and then, some young man will come forward and say, "God has called me to preach." And, how we rejoice in that! I'm glad God called me to preach. But, sometimes well-meaning church members dote upon a young man if that young man has particular ability, he has particular skills—maybe he has a sense of having arrived, and he can speak or whatever. Or, he doesn't have to be a young man—he can be an older man, a businessman who's been very successful in business. He says, "God has called me." Well, they say, "We want you to preach." And, he gets up there and preaches. Now, he's handling holy things—that is, he's in the government of God. He now becomes an authority. He is not just a preacher; he's now a pastor, a bishop. And so, he is administrating the affairs of God, and people are praising God through him. He is eliciting praise, and that praise is supposed to be going right on to God. But, if he's not careful, he'll start to skim a little bit. He'll start to take a little of that to himself. He'll go to the door after he preaches his second sermon, and some little lady will say, "Brother Billy, that was the best sermon I ever heard in my life!" And, he'll believe it. He'll get it in his head, "Wow! Wow! I've done good!" And, he'll get



to thinking, you know, really believing that. Now, this dear little lady—she means well. And, first thing you know, he begins to swell up with pride. I have seen it happen. They go up like a rocket and come down like a rock. They fall into the condemnation of the devil. And so, Paul is telling Timothy, “Be careful.”

But, all of that is incidental—just to tell you what really happened and how the devil became the devil. It’s clear. Paul tells us he was lifted with pride. He began to take that to himself that was not his own.

Now, I want you to see something. Look in verse 17—and oh, how important it is that you see this: *“Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty”*—underscore the word *beauty*—*“thou hast corrupted thy wisdom.”* (Ezekiel 28:17) Underscore the word *wisdom*. Beauty and wisdom. Now, don’t get the idea today that the devil doesn’t have wisdom. Friend, he does! Don’t get the idea today that the devil doesn’t have beauty. Friend, he does! He has both wisdom and beauty. But, I want you to learn this—that his beauty is a blemished beauty and his wisdom is a corrupted wisdom.

## **B. Beauty**

Now, he’s beautiful. Don’t get the idea that the devil today appears as a scaly red monster with horns, breathing fire and having cloven hoofs. That’s not any idea of the devil that you get from the Bible. How does the Bible describe the devil? Listen: as an angel of light. You see, his name, Lucifer, means “light-bearer.” Oh listen, the devil knows how to use beauty. As a matter of fact, Hollywood is the prime example of how the devil knows how to use beauty. The Playboy empire is built upon the use of beauty for the devil’s methods. The devil is a lover of beauty.

## **C. Wisdom**

And, he’s also wise. Now, don’t get the idea that the devil doesn’t have wisdom, because Paul said, *“[We’re] not ignorant of his devices.”* (2 Corinthians 2:11) He said, *“[Take] on the whole armour of God, that [you] may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”* (Ephesians 6:11) And then, again, he warned against the snares of the devil. (1 Timothy 3:7; 2 Timothy 2:26) Why, he has so much wisdom—do you know what Jesus said? Jesus said, *“If it were possible, [he would] deceive the very elect.”* (Matthew 24:24) Did you know that the reason the devil hasn’t deceived you is not because you’re smart but because God won’t let him? Hmm? You’d better thank God for that. He’s not... You say, “Well, he’d never fool me.” Oh, yes, he would! He’d have you just like that! Jesus said, *“If it were possible, [he’d] deceive the very elect.”* (Matthew 24:24)

I’m telling you, ladies and gentlemen, that there is... Now listen, his beauty remains, but it is a blemished beauty. His wisdom remains, but it is a corrupted wisdom. Now, if you don’t remember anything else that I tell you today, I want you to remember this about the devil: the devil is brilliantly stupid and hideously beautiful. Okay? He is

brilliantly stupid; he is hideously beautiful. When I say he's brilliantly stupid, he's really a knucklehead. I mean, can you imagine trying to overthrow God? I mean, can you imagine how stupid that is? But yet, can you imagine the brilliance and the cunning of the devil? Put those things together, and you'll have a picture of this person. You say, "Does the devil literally believe he can do it?" Yes! He believes he can do it, and he still believes he can do it, see, because his wisdom is corrupted, his beauty is blemished.

And now, you're going to see that it was pride that did that. And, ladies and gentlemen, how that needs to warn us today! Let's go into this idea of pride and think for just a moment how terrible pride is. How do you think that the devil got the king of Tyre to act like such a fool, to say, "I'm like God"? It was pride! How do you think the devil got Eve to disobey God and eat the forbidden fruit? Do you think Eve did what she did for a piece of fruit? Well, she was in a garden filled with fruit. It was pride. He said, "You'll be like God." (Genesis 3:5) He knew what a powerful motivation pride is. And, there are so many people today who have been caught by the devil by pride. I want to say, dear friend, that pride is a terrible, horrible thing.

Let me ask you a question: Do you ever argue with your wife? Do you ever argue with your husband? Let me ask you a question: You kids ever argue with your parents? Let me ask you a question: Have you ever been in a church fuss or a church fight somewhere? Do you know what the Bible says? "*Only by pride cometh contention*" (Proverbs 13:10)—only by pride! There has never been an argument that was not caused by pride. Only by pride—only by pride! "*Only by pride cometh contention.*" (Proverbs 13:10) What a terrible thing pride is!

Had there been no pride, there'd have been no devil. Had there been no pride, Adam and Eve would not have fallen in the Garden of Eden. Had there been no pride in your heart, dear friend, you would never have needed to be saved. And, we're all filled with pride. The Bible says it just comes out of our heart. And God, there in the book of Proverbs, lists the things that He hates, and this is what the scripture says: "*These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him*"—number one on the list—"A proud look." (Proverbs 6:16–17) Number one: a proud look.

And, pride is such a devastating sin and such a deceptive sin. Do you know how a proud man talks? Let me tell you how a proud man talks. He says, "Boy, I'm so humble." Boy, he's proud of his humility! You see, that's the way a proud man talks. You know how a humble man talks? "Lord, I just don't know what you're going to do with me. I fail you so." But, a proud man: "I'm proud of my humility! I'm a humble person!"

Now, humility is not going around all slumped over. Humility is not thinking badly of yourself because you're made in the image of God. That's not what humility is. Humility is not thinking poorly of yourself. It is not thinking of yourself; it is thinking of Him. Humility is accepting what God says about you. The grace of God will exalt a man

without inflating a man. The grace of God will humble a man without debasing a man so that man can say, "I am what I am by the grace of God!" Humility is believing what God says about you and accepting what God says about you. And, how wonderful that is! And, the old preachers used to say—are you listening?—"There is nothing that will put you further out of the reach of the devil than genuine humility." *There is nothing that will make you more like the devil than pride, nothing that will make you more like Jesus than genuine humility.* The Bible says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But [He] made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant... And being found in [the] fashion as a [servant], he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Philippians 2:5–8) Now, the devil was created in perfection. The devil was corrupted by pride.

### III. Why Does God Let the Devil Continue?

Now, let's get to the third question. The first question deals with his creation. The second question deals with his corruption. The third question deals with his continuation: Why does God let the devil continue? Why doesn't God bump him off? Why doesn't God snuff him out? Why doesn't God eradicate him? Why doesn't God do something with the devil? Why does God let the devil continue all his devilish work? Well, let's read here from the Word of God, and I want us to continue to read in verse 16: "By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God." (Ezekiel 28:16) Step number one in God's dealing with the devil is that he's cast out of his place of authority in heaven. Remember, Jesus said, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." (Luke 10:18) And then, God says, "I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire." (Ezekiel 28:16) "The midst of the stones of fire" (Ezekiel 28:16) here is the area around the throne of God. "You're not going to stay there any more." "[And] thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom because of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground." (Ezekiel 28:17) Now God, in His plan, has cast Satan out of heaven. He's now the prince of the power of the air; he's now the god of this age.

Now, why doesn't God just destroy him? Because God has a higher plan, a better plan, and it deals, ladies and gentlemen, with our redemption and our salvation. God is not going to destroy the devil with power that is inherently His as God, but God is going to destroy the devil by the power that He's put into you and to me. You see, the devil hates us. The devil sees us as usurpers. The devil sees us as the kingdom of priests unto God, worshipping God and glorifying God. And, the devil hates us. And God, in His infinite wisdom, ladies and gentlemen, is going to give to His children the power to

overcome the devil through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. And so, God does not kill the devil, but, to the contrary, God puts His own Son upon the cross.

The key scripture here is Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 14, and it says, “*Forasmuch...as the children are partakers of flesh and blood*”—now, by “children” he means “human beings.” We are flesh and blood—“*he also himself likewise took part of the same*”—because we’re human, because we have flesh and blood, Jesus took flesh and blood. Why did Jesus take flesh and blood? Well, continue to read—“*that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death*” (Hebrews 2:14)—that is, the devil. By death, Jesus destroyed the devil. Now, when Jesus was going to the cross, Jesus said, “*Now [is] the prince of this world...cast out.*” (John 12:31) And, the devil is destroyed by the death of Jesus Christ. But, the word *destroy* here in the Greek language does not mean “annihilate”; it means, literally, “to render helpless.” And, Satan now has been rendered helpless by the death of Christ.

Now, he doesn’t want you to know that. He does not want you to know that his authority has been taken away by the death of Christ, that he has been cast out. And so, the devil, now, by deception—that’s the only way he can do it, because he has no more authority. That authority has been taken from him. But, by deception, he’ll oppress his people. (Acts 10:38) He binds people—Luke 13, verse 16. (Luke 13:6) He blinds people. (2 Corinthians 4:4) He buffets people—2 Corinthians 12, verse 7. (2 Corinthians 12:7) And, he continues his reign of terror: subversion, perversion, diversion. He wants to divide, depress, destroy—depression, oppression, possession. Satan’s sin and suffering are an inseparable trinity of terrors. And, he moves to those who do not know the truth or those who refuse the truth to do his dirty work.

God allows him to continue that God might work out His ultimate plan to redeem us and to give us power, and life, and victory greater than the devil himself ever knew. I say, greater. You say, “Brother Rogers, it can’t be greater.” Yes, friend, I want to tell you something: we are going to become “*heirs of God, and joint-heirs with [Jesus] Christ.*” (Romans 8:17) That means share and share alike. And God, that He loves us so much, allows the devil to continue. And, Jesus became flesh that He might die upon the cross, bring into creation a race of redeemed people, that we might rule and reign with Him forever. You say, “That’s deep.” It really is, but friend, it’s glorious!

#### **IV. What Is Going to Happen to the Devil?**

Let me just get to the last point because time is running away and you’re not listening fast enough. Let me talk to you not only about his creation, and not only about his corruption, and not only about his continuation, but let me talk to you about his condemnation. What’s going to happen to him? And, I’m going to skip some scriptures, but I want you to look, if you will, at verse 19: “*All they that know thee among the people*

*shall be astonished at thee*—now, just look at that phrase “astonished” and underscore it. “*Astonished at thee*”—that is, “They’re going to be amazed at thee”—“*thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more.*” (Ezekiel 28:19) That is, “You’re a terror right now, but there’s coming a time when you won’t be.” That is, “There’s coming a time when you’ll no longer terrorize people. There is coming a time when even your false power, and your authority, and your blemished beauty—it’s going to be snatched from you, stripped from you. You’re going to be chained. You’re going to be ridiculed.”

I want you to turn to Isaiah chapter 14 in the closing moments that we have, and this is even going to make it clearer. Isaiah chapter 14 tells the time when the devil said in verse 14: “*I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High*”—he said, “I’m going to be like God!” And yet, in verse 15, I want you to see what’s going to happen—“*Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit*”—the devil’s not yet in hell. He shall be in hell. Hell is “*prepared for the devil and his angels.*” (Matthew 25:41) But, the best part is yet to come. Look in verse 16—“*They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee.*” (Isaiah 14:14–16) That means they’re going to scrutinize him. They’re going to study him. They’re going to walk up and down, and they’re going to say, “Would you look there?” He’s going to be like a caged animal in the zoo. And, people are going to look at him, and they’re going to study him with amazement. Remember that Ezekiel said, “They’re going to be astonished.” (Ezekiel 28:19) And, what are they going to say? “They’re going to consider thee. They’re going to stroke their chin, and they’re going to say, ‘*Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; That made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners?*’” (Isaiah 14:16–17) “You mean, that’s him? That worm? That weakling? That insignificant, pitiful, ruined creature, who has been stripped, who has been subdued, who has been shamed—you mean, that’s him?” And, at that moment, people will see the utter folly, the sheer stupidity, of following the devil.

## **Conclusion**

Now, ladies and gentlemen, listen to me. I’ve got to come to the end here, but listen to me. I hope you’re learning what I want to say. Listen to me well. There’s a kingdom of evil, and there’s the kingdom of God. You’d better make certain which one you’re in, because when you see where the devil ends up—and all of those who follow him are going to end up there, also, folks—it doesn’t make sense to follow a loser.

It takes a new birth. Jesus says, “*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*” (John 3:3) Have you been born again? I say, have you been born again? Are you saved by faith in the crucified Son of God? Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who died on the cross to pay for our sins? Are you willing at

this time to repent of your sin, and, by faith, receive Him as your Lord and Master and to say, “Here, Lord, I give my life away to you. Save me, Lord, by your love and by your grace. Give me strength, and I’ll follow you to the ends of the earth. I receive you. I’ll follow you, Lord, to the ends of the earth as my Lord, as my Savior”?

I want to tell you, my precious friend, that Jesus Christ is knocking at your heart’s door today. The devil lies, is whispering into your ears, saying you can’t be saved, you’re not good enough, or you’re too good and don’t need to be saved. But, Jesus Christ is knocking at your heart’s door. He wants to save you. Maybe you did not even dream that today would be the day you’d be saved, and maybe you’re thinking thoughts right now that you didn’t even believe you’d think when you came in here. But, God has used the message today to tell you that—you understand what I’m saying—I am telling you as surely as my name is Adrian Rogers and I stand here, *sin can’t win, and faith can’t fail*. That’s the reason Jesus Christ taught us to pray, “[And] deliver us from [the] evil [one]: For thine is the kingdom, and [thine is] the power, and [thine is] the glory, for ever.” (Matthew 6:13) And, God’s people said, “Thine is the kingdom, and thine is the power, and thine is the glory!” And, God’s people said, “Amen! Amen!”

Friend, you’d better believe it. This is my Father’s world. He’s in charge. *Sin can’t win; faith can’t fail*.

*It pays to serve Jesus, it pays every day,  
It pays every step of the way,  
Though the pathway to Glory may sometimes seem drear,  
It pays to serve Jesus each day.*

—FRANK C. HUSTON

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed; eyes are closed. Are you saved? Friend, you see, Christ... You’re with the devil’s crowd—just sit on the fence. Jesus said, “*He that is not with me is against me; and he that [does not gather] with me [is scattering] abroad.*” (Matthew 12:30; Luke 11:23) You see, dear friend, there are two kingdoms. And, everybody here is in the kingdom of evil or the kingdom of God. To step out of the kingdom of evil and to step into need...to step out of the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of death into the kingdom of light and love.†

# Victorious Prayer

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** February 14, 1997

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 6:9–13

*“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”*

MATTHEW 6:13

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Sinister Person of Evil

- A. His Person
- B. His Position
- C. His Power
- D. His Purpose
  - 1. Spiritualism
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  - 3. False Doctrine
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III. Rely on Sovereign Protection from Evil

- A. His Is the Kingdom
- B. His Is the Power
- C. His Is the Glory

Conclusion

## Introduction

Be finding Matthew chapter 6, and we're going to begin reading in a moment at verse 9 and read right on through verse 13—that prayer that we call “the model prayer,” “the disciples’ prayer,” sometimes called “the Lord’s Prayer.” You can do nothing better than to learn how to pray. So many times, however, when we pray, we really don’t expect God to answer the prayer.

✠ Somewhere I have read about some children in a Sunday school class who were going to write a missionary and let the missionary know that they were praying for the missionary. And, the teacher of the class said, “Now, the missionary’s a very busy person, and he may not have time to write each one of you back. So, don’t expect him to write you a letter back.” And, one girl wrote the missionary a letter. It said something

like this: “Dear Brother Brown, we’re praying for you. We don’t expect an answer.”<sup>f</sup>

I think so many times that is true. That’s the way we pray. We pray, but we really don’t expect an answer. But, God has said, “*Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.*” (Jeremiah 33:3) And, our Lord taught us how to pray here. Notice, beginning in verse 9: “*After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors*”—and then, we come to our text for this morning’s message—“*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever. Amen.*” (Matthew 6:9–13) I thank God for the note of victory that this prayer ends in. And, I am speaking today on this subject: “Victorious Prayer.”

We’ve been having a family life emphasis in our church. This afternoon we’re going to have a great conference here—and you dare not miss it—with Josh McDowell. But, we’ve been talking about how we, as dads and moms, can protect our families. I know no better way than to learn to pray as Jesus taught us to pray: “*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*” (Matthew 6:13)

These are treacherous and dangerous days in which we live and try to bring up our children. We used to think of the old-time days on the frontier as dangerous days, but it is far more dangerous for a child on the streets of Memphis, Tennessee, than it ever was on the frontier. I’m far less afraid of a coiled rattlesnake than I am a drug pusher who interjects poison into the veins of our young people and makes them an army of the walking dead with hollow chests and sunken eyes. I’m far less afraid of a wild bear, a wolf, than I am the muggers, the rapists, that stalk the streets of America. Worse than wind, and snow, and ice, and sun, and drought is the all-prevailing humanistic philosophy that would invade the minds, and freeze the heart, and drive the spirit of our young people. And, we need today, in these dangerous days, to learn how to pray, to get hold of God, because we have an enemy and he is the evil one. When our Lord Jesus Christ taught us to pray, “*Deliver us from evil,*” (Matthew 6:13) actually that may be translated “deliver us from the evil one.” We’re up against the organized, mobilized, demonized forces of hell. We have a deadly enemy.

The message today is an alarm. It is a call to arms. I told a congregation of men yesterday that God’s alarm clock has gone off in America. If you can’t hear it, you’re deaf. God’s alarm clock has gone off in America, and we dare not push the snooze button and roll over for a few more winks. It is time to wake up, get up, dress up, and begin to go to war. And, we must learn to pray. The warfare is prayer. Three things, as we look at this verse, I want you to see.



## I. The Sinister Person of Evil

First of all, I want you to see the sinister person of evil. Now, look at the verse again—verse 13: *“Deliver us from evil.”* (Matthew 6:13) Weymouth translates that *“Deliver us from the evil one.”* It speaks of Satan.

Now, Satan doesn't want me to preach this message this morning, and he will try to keep you from listening to it. He doesn't want you to understand what I'm about to tell you. It has always been Satan's method to pull the veil of darkness over his kingdom, to hide behind a veil of lies, or to masquerade in some disguise. But, by the aid of the Holy Spirit today, I want to rip away that mask and expose him for what he is.

### A. His Person

Now, I say, we must recognize the person of evil. He is a person. I'm going to give you many scriptures. I don't want you to turn to them because we will not have time. I will share them with you. You jot them down. The first is 1 Peter chapter 5 and verse 8. Here's the warning: *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary”—“your adversary”—“the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”* (1 Peter 5:8) Now, if you knew that somewhere on this property this morning is a ravenous, hungry lion, when you walked out these doors, wouldn't you be a little careful? I mean, if you knew that behind some bush somewhere on this property this morning there is walking about a roaring lion, would you be just a little careful? Would you walk a little soberly? That is what God is saying. *“Be sober, be vigilant...your adversary”—not somebody else's; your adversary—“walketh about [as a roaring lion], seeking whom he may devour.”* (1 Peter 5:8) The bitterest enemy of God and His people is someone called the devil, the evil one. Have you ever thought about the names that are given to him in the Bible? He's called “the deceiver.” He's called “the liar.” He's called “the murderer.” He's called “the accuser.” He's called “the tempter.” He's called “the destroyer.” He is called “the evil one.”

Now, he's not the figment of someone's imagination. When we talk about the devil, that's not a figure of speech. He is personal. He is aggressive. He is intelligent. He is cunning. He is destructive. And, his cleverest method is to make people think that he does not exist at all, that he's just some sort of a whimsy. And, we make jokes about someone in a long red suit, trying to catch somebody bending over, and we laugh because that is a comic presentation and illustration of this one that the Bible tells us that we are to be aware of. Some people say, “Oh, well yes, he exists,” but they talk about “the devil in hell.” The devil is not in hell. He is not in hell. He will be, but he is not. He *“walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”* (1 Peter 5:8) He is not there yet.

Many of us don't understand who our enemy is. Here's another verse—Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 12: *“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against*

*principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritually wickedness in high places.*” (Ephesians 6:12) *“We wrestle not against flesh and blood.”* (Ephesians 6:12) The battle is not between human beings. Your enemy is not the communist, not the humanist, not the Republican, not the Democrat, not your wife, not your husband, not your mother-in-law, not your boss. *“We wrestle not against flesh and blood.”* (Ephesians 6:12) Now, he may use all of these. He has a thousand heads, but he only has one heart. We wrestle against a person.

## **B. His Position**

Now, I want you to think not only that he is a person, but I want you to think about the position of this person. That verse that I read to you in Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 12 says that he is a ruler of the darkness of this age. (Ephesians 6:12) He is a ruler. Have you ever thought of Satan as a ruler? He rules over a kingdom of fallen spirits. When Satan rebelled against God and fell from heaven, myriads of angels fell with him in rebellion. And so, in Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 2, he’s called *“the prince of the power of the air.”* (Ephesians 2:2) Matthew 25 and verse 41 speaks of *“the devil and his angels.”* (Matthew 25:41) Just as God has angels, Satan has angels, and as a prince he rules over the kingdom of this world. As a matter of fact, he offered to give those kingdoms to Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ never disputed his power or his authority to give those kingdoms. He offered those kingdoms to Christ. Christ refused because the Lord Jesus knew that one day the kingdoms of this world would become—they are not yet, but they will become—the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ. (Revelation 11:15)

Do you know what the devil is doing now? He is moving the nations of this world like checkers on a checkerboard toward Armageddon. Put this scripture down: Revelation chapter 16 and verse 14. The Apostle John had a vision. He saw something happening; he wanted to know what it was. And, here’s what God said: *“For they are the spirits of [demons], working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.”* (Revelation 16:14) Demon spirits are working in the hearts and minds of world leaders to bring them to Armageddon. That’s the reason the Bible calls Satan “the god of this age”—little “g”—2 Corinthians 4:4: *“In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.”* (2 Corinthians 4:4) We have a generation that walks in darkness because they have been blinded by the dark prince. His great desire is to be worshipped as the god of this age, and, therefore, he has developed a system that is an exact counterfeit of Christianity. The devil is not against religion. It is his chief tool. He is in religion up to his ears.

## **C. His Power**

Think not only of his person; think not only of his position, but think of his power. Only

ignorance scoffs at the power of the devil. It is sheer folly to underestimate his power. That's the reason the Lord Jesus Christ taught us to pray, "*Deliver us*"—"Deliver us from [the] evil [one]." (Matthew 6:13) Acts chapter 26, verse 18 speaks of "*the power of Satan.*" (Acts 26:18) Ephesians chapter 6, verse 12 says, "*We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, [and] powers.*" (Ephesians 6:12) Satan is a supernatural person. He has supernatural power. He is the supreme dictator in the evil empire. And, well did Martin Luther write that monumental song, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." And, he has in there some dark lines about Satan, and this is what he says:

*For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;  
His craft and power are great, and armed with cruel hate,  
On earth is not his equal.*

—MARTIN LUTHER

#### **D. His Purpose**

Now, what is his purpose? Let's talk for a moment about his purpose. Satan is a traitor. He is in open revolt against Almighty God. He was lifted up with pride and decided that he wanted to be most like the Most High. His original name was Lucifer. That's an ugly name to us today, but it was once a beautiful name, like the word *gay* was once a beautiful word. It was once a beautiful name. It means "light-bearer." But, Isaiah chapter 14, verse 12 says, "*How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north...I will be like the most High.*" (Isaiah 14:12–14) No sooner had he unleashed his sordid rebellion against Almighty God than the judgment of Jehovah fell on him and he fell from heaven like lightning. When he fell, myriads of angels fell with him; and Lucifer, the son of the morning, became Satan, the father of the night. But, he is still in rebellion against God.

What is his plan? How does he work? His chief method is deception—his chief method. Jesus said to the unsaved of His day in John chapter 8 and verse 44: "*Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth*"—his motive is murder; his method is the lie—"He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." (John 8:44) That's John 8, verse 44. And so, he rules over a kingdom of darkness and a kingdom of deception.

I want you to notice the way he is described, for example, in Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 11. We're told to "*put on the whole armour of God, that [we] may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*" (Ephesians 6:11) That word *wiles* is the Greek

word *methodia*. It means the “methods” of the devil. He’s very methodological. He has a scheme. He already has a plan. He has a plan. Your adversary has a plan to ruin your life and your family. The wiles. Second Corinthians chapter 2 and verse 11 speaks of the “devices” of the devil. (2 Corinthians 2:11) In 2 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 26, the Bible speaks of “*the snare of the devil.*” (2 Timothy 2:26) Put those words together: *wiles, devices, snares, lies.* The Bible prophesies that in the last days, there will be a great resurgence of demonic activity. That’s one of the reasons that I believe that we’re living in the last days. And, what are some of these things that are demonic resurgence that we will see in the last days?

## 1. Spiritualism

For example, spiritualism, New Ageism. I watched on local television this past week some woman there with tarot cards telling somebody’s fortune. They thought that was quite humorous. It is of the devil. All forms of fortunetelling, contact with the dead, astrology—it is all of the devil. But how tantalizing that is to some people! They say, “Well, I’m learning the future.” No, you’re not; the devil doesn’t know the future. You say, “Well, I’m contacting my departed love one.” No, you’re not; you’re contacting a demonic spirit.

Some lady—bless her heart—was on television. She said, “Well, I really do believe there’s something to it.” I thought to myself, “There really is, lady. There is something to it.” First John chapter 4, verse 1: “*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.*” (1 John 4:1) Leviticus chapter 19, verse 31: “*Regard not them that have familiar spirits*”—even if her name is Shirley MacLaine— “*Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them*”—“*to be defiled by them*”—“*I am the LORD your God.*” (Leviticus 19:31) Deuteronomy chapter 18, verses 9 and following: “*When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire*”—they were sacrificing the children to demonic gods. We’re sacrificing today on the altar of abortion—“*or that useth divination*”—that’s a fortuneteller—“*or an observer of times*”—that’s astrology—“*or an enchanter, or a witch. Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer*”—listen to this—“*For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD*”—now, if that makes you angry, come up and apologize to me, and I’ll forgive you—“*For all that do these things are an abomination to the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee*”—that is, it’s the end of a nation; it’s the ruin of a nation when these things come—“*Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God. For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the*

*LORD thy God hath not suffered thee to do so.” (Deuteronomy 18:9–14)*

## **2. Drug Abuse**

What’s his plan? To deceive you—number one: through spiritualism; number two: through drug abuse. Why do you think that we have an epidemic of drug abuse? Because we have an epidemic of demonic activity. And, the Bible teaches that in the last days, there will be a plethora of drug abuse. Revelation chapter 9 and verse 21: *“Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.”* (Revelation 9:21) Those are the big four in Memphis today—these four. Murder and sorcery... “Well,” you say, “how many sorcerers are there?” The word *sorcery* comes from a Greek word, *pharmakeia*. It’s the word we get *pharmacist* from. Now, there’s nothing wrong with being in pharmacy, but this word means “an enchanter with drugs.” You see, the devil uses drugs to destroy people’s minds. It is demonic activity. So sorcery, from time immemorial, has been linked with potions that steal away men’s minds. What is sorcery? What is drug abuse? It is instant heaven that leads to everlasting hell. It is form of synthetic salvation.

## **3. False Doctrine**

Another form of demonic activity that we see in the last days is false doctrine, apostasy. Where is the true faith today? The Bible says in 1 Timothy chapter 4 and verse 1: *“Now the Spirit”—speaking of the Holy Spirit—“speaketh expressly”—that means “pay attention”—“the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith”—the faith, not a faith; the faith. There’s only one. How do they do that? He says—“giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons.”* (1 Timothy 4:1) *When you look for the devil, never fail to look in the pulpit.* Satan uses religion. The Bible speaks of the ministers of Satan, (2 Corinthians 11:14–15) the sacrifices to demons, (Leviticus 17:7) doctrines of demons, (1 Timothy 4:1) *“the synagogue of Satan.”* (Revelation 2:9; Revelation 3:9) Again, I want to say that religion is one of his chief tools.

## **4. The Media**

Another way that Satan has invaded this day, this age, and will want to capture the hearts and minds of your children, my children, our grandchildren, is through the entertainment and the media system. He is an angel of light. He is an angel of music. And, he is hideously beautiful; he is brilliantly stupid. And, it seems that in the media today we have reached the very bottom of the garbage pail. It is absolutely sickening—the entertainment and media system.

## **II. Realize the Seductive Power of Evil**

Now, first of all, therefore, if you would have victory, you must recognize the sinister

person of evil. There is a devil. He is your adversary. And, if you don't recognize that you have an enemy, you're not going to prepare yourself for defense. Jesus taught us to pray, *"Deliver us from [the] evil [one]."* (Matthew 6:13) Second thing: Not only should you recognize the sinister person of evil, but you should realize the seductive power of evil. Our Lord taught His own to pray, "Deliver us, Lord; keep us; lead us."

You say, "Well, pastor, I don't have any problems with the devil." Well, don't brag about it. Jesus did. Jesus met him. Jesus had to deal with him. And, *if you've never met the devil, it's because you and the devil are going in the same direction. You're in collusion with the devil. You turn around and get right with God, you'll be in collision with him.* And, you will learn how to pray this prayer: "O my God, deliver me."

And, when do you pray this? When is this prayer to be prayed? In the morning. He's also taught us in this passage to pray what? *"Give us this day our daily bread."* (Matthew 6:11) Can you imagine a person just about to go to sleep at night, puts his head on his pillow and he says, "Lord, it's been a great day. Give me today my daily bread"? It's all over. Why pray for your daily bread at the end of the day? And, in the same prayer where we're taught to pray for our daily bread, we're taught to pray, "God, deliver us from the evil one." (Matthew 6:13)

What is wrong with so many of us is that we wake up in the morning, everything's going fine: we jump out of bed, and we go in and get dressed, and we go in and have our breakfast, we catch a few pages of the newspaper, gulp down some hot coffee, get in the car and go to work—everything is just fine. We think we've got it made—and then, here comes the enemy. Then we fail; we fall. And, we come to the end of the day, and we say, "O God, forgive me my debts as I forgive my debtors. O God, forgive me, forgive me, forgive me." And, every time you pray that in sincerity and in truth, He does forgive you—He does. And, thank God for that. But, why do we keep on asking Him to forgive us for the same thing? You ask God to forgive you, and He does. Then you fall again and say, "God, forgive me." And, He does. And then, you fall again, and you say, "God, forgive me." And, He does. There are those in this building who've asked God to forgive them for the same thing thousands of times. And, you know it is true. Thousands of times—and you know it is true. Why? Why? Why? Thank God He forgives. I'll tell you why we keep asking God to forgive us for the same thing: because we've only learned part of this prayer. We've learned to pray, "God, forgive us," but we've not learned to pray, "Lord lead us, lest we fall into temptation. Deliver us from evil."

You see, the best way to deal with your sin is not at the end of the day to clean it up, but at the beginning of the day to prevent it. As you go out, this prayer is not the lock that closes the night; it is the key that opens the morning. As we come to God in prayer and as we pray to God in the morning for daily bread, we should pray for daily deliverance—that God will deliver us.

“Well,” you say, “it’s not so bad around here, pastor. We live in the buckle on the Bible belt.” A Romanian pastor came to this country. He lived here for a while. And, do you know what he said? He said, “Satan is revealed in the Bible as a roaring lion and as an angel of light.” He said, “In Romania, we knew Satan as roaring lion, and his chief power was persecution and fear. But,” he said, “in America, I have known Satan as an angel of light, and his chief power is compromise and complacency. And,” he said, “it has been more difficult for me to deal with him as an angel of light than as a roaring lion.” It was easier to stay right with God with persecution and fear than with compromise and complacency. And, most of the people in this congregation this morning are compromising with the enemy, and you are losing—you’re losing your family, and you’re losing your children, you’re losing your testimony, you’re losing your reward, and you don’t even know it—complacency. A roaring lion; an angel of light.

And, Jesus Christ taught us to pray. When the great Dr. Sidlow Baxter was here, he said many wonderful things, but one thing he said that has stuck in my mind. He said that he can just imagine Lucifer himself gathering all of the other demons, and they’re saying, “What can we do to destroy Adrian? What can we do to destroy Dale? What can we do to destroy Bob? What can we do to render that man powerless?” And, Lucifer says, “Keep him from praying. Keep him from praying because no matter what else he does, if he doesn’t pray, we can beat him every time. But, if he prays, if he learns how to pray, he’ll beat us every time. Keep him from praying.”

*There’s not a failure in my life, in your life, but what somehow it is a prayer failure.* We have not prayed. Our Lord Jesus taught us to pray, “[Our God,] lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from [the] evil [one].” (Matthew 6:13) He would never have taught you to pray that if He did not intend to deliver you. Matthew chapter 26, verses 30 and following. It’s dark Gethsemane. Jesus is praying. The disciples are sleeping. Verse 40: “And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?”—now, listen to this. Matthew 26:41—“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.” (Matthew 26:40–41) “Watch and pray”—“Watch and pray.” (Matthew 26:41) You say, “I don’t know why I fail so much.” What is your prayer life like? What is your prayer life like? Our Lord taught us to pray, “[Father,] lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” (Matthew 6:13)

### **III. Rely on Sovereign Protection from Evil**

Now listen, you must recognize the sinister person of evil. You must realize the seductive power of evil. Thirdly and finally, you must rely on sovereign protection from evil. Look in verse 13 again. Look at it—Matthew 6, verse 13: “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”—and then, notice the little word *for*—“for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.” (Matthew 6:13) That is the sovereign

protection from evil.

Now, what I've spoken about Satan this morning, I do not want to keep your focus on the evil empire but on the glorious kingdom of God. Thank God for the note this prayer ends on: *"For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory."* (Matthew 6:13) There are three cords that run throughout the Bible. One is the dark and somber cord of Satan's revolt. The other is the crimson cord of the blood redemption, and the third is the golden cord of our Lord and His Christ. And, you need to see all three of those and need to learn, as we sang this morning, that the battle is the Lord's; there is victory in Jesus. And, the Bible tells us in Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 11 to *"put on the whole armour of God, that [we] may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil"* (Ephesians 6:11)—and the whole armor of God is Jesus Christ. I've got wonderful news for you—wonderful news! You don't have to fear. You don't have to fall. You don't have to faint. You don't have to flee. But, you can stand if you'll learn how to pray.

### **A. His Is the Kingdom**

What is the ground of our victory? First of all, we need to see that the ground of our victory is God Himself. *"[His] is the kingdom."* (Matthew 6:13) That means absolute authority. Listen to these words: His kingdom cannot fail. He rules over earth and heaven. The keys of death and hell are to our Jesus. Do you believe that? Listen; learn this: Satan is powerful, but he is not all-powerful. Satan rules, but he rules a doomed domain. Satan sails a sinking ship. *"[God's] is the kingdom."* (Matthew 6:13)

### **B. His Is the Power**

And, *"[God's] is...the power."* (Matthew 6:13) Some verses—Genesis 18, verse 14: *"Is any thing too hard for the LORD?"* (Genesis 18:14) Jeremiah 32, verse 17: *"Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee."* (Jeremiah 32:17) Jeremiah 33:3: *"Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things."* (Jeremiah 33:3) *"Thine is...the power."* (Matthew 6:13) Oh, what a mighty God we serve! All power resides in Him. And, *"greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."* (1 John 4:4)

† A man went to an atomic power plant to see how they produced power. You know what he found out? He found out they don't produce power at all; all they do is release power that's in those elements. Friend, you don't produce power; all you do is release the power of God that is in you. *"[God's] is...the power."* (Matthew 6:13) You have a dynamic power plant in you: God Himself.†

### **C. His Is the Glory**

And, *"[His] is...the glory."* (Matthew 6:13) You want to get your prayer answered? Do



you know what the secret of all answered prayer is? Right here: *“Thine is...the glory.”* (Matthew 6:13) Listen. Put this verse down—John 14, verse 13: *“And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”* (John 14:13) When your reason for asking and His reason for answering are the same, your prayer will be the same; your prayer will be answered. When you want Him glorified and He wants to be glorified, your prayer will be answered. *“Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory.”* (Matthew 6:13)

## Conclusion

I’m telling you—I’m telling you out of my heart—that these are dangerous days in which we live. And, if you think that God just brought you here this morning for a Sunday morning exercise just to hear some preacher give a little three-point outline, you’ve missed it. God loves you so much—God loves you so much. You’re so privileged, not because I’m the preacher, but you’re so privileged to be able to hear today God’s plan for you in these evil days to protect your children, your family, your very life, your future—to learn how to pray. Pray in the power of the Holy Spirit, and pray like this: “O God, lead me, lest I fall into temptation. Deliver me from the evil one: for yours is the kingdom, power, and the glory, forever. Hallelujah!” It starts with the Father. It ends with Him again: *“Our Father...thine is the kingdom.”* (Matthew 6:9–13) A Father who can hear me, a King who can answer me—sympathy. *“Our Father”* (Matthew 6:9) —sovereignty. *“Thine is the kingdom”* (Matthew 6:13) —what a mighty God we serve! Folks, it’s not that complicated. Let’s learn to pray.†

# When We Say Father

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: January 3, 1983**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 6:9–13**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. When We Say Father, We Express God's Nature
- II. When We Say Father, We Expect God's Nurture
  - A. We Have the Father's Care
  - B. We Have the Father's Correction
  - C. We Have the Father's Compassion
  - D. We Have the Father's Companionship
- III. When You Say Father, You Exalt His Name

Conclusion

## Introduction

**I**t has well been said, there is nothing—nothing—that lies outside the reach of prayer but that which lies outside the will of God. Our greatest need is to learn how to pray. And let's listen to the Master Prayer, the Lord Jesus, as He tells us about prayer—Matthew chapter 6 and verse 5: *“And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”* (Matthew 6:5–13)

Now, here is a prayer that our Lord Jesus Christ gave us. He didn't give us this prayer simply to rattle off. As a matter of fact, He warned us about vain repetition. This is not a prayer necessarily to be memorized, though I hope you will memorize it—but not necessarily a prayer to be memorized and repeated. Often we get in a convocation of saved

and unsaved alike, and someone will say, “Now, let’s all stand and say the Lord’s Prayer.’ Well, you don’t say prayers; you pray prayers. There’s a difference. Suppose you and I are sitting in your living room, and you say to me, “Say a conversation.” Prayer is talking with God. It is not rattling off some phrases, even if they have come out of the Bible. Now, if this prayer meets the need of your heart, and it is expressing the exact desire that you feel, then you may pray those exact words. But Jesus did not say, “Pray this prayer.” Jesus said, “Pray in this manner; pray in this way.”

This is a prayer that is to be a guide—a lesson in prayer. Look in verse 9. Jesus said this: “*After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name.*” And that’s all we’re going to talk about today, is verse 9: “*Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.*” The title of the message today: “When We Say Father.”

What does that mean: that you and I can come to God and pray and call Him our Father? Three things.

## **I. When We Say Father, We Express God’s Nature**

Number one: when we say Father, we express His nature, because it is the nature of God to be a Father. Who is this God to whom we pray? Well, different people have called Him by different things. Aristotle, the philosopher, called Him “the Unmoved Mover.” Huxley, in our day, called Him “the Eternal Unknown.” Arnold called Him “the Absolute Unknown.” In Star Wars, He’s “the Force.” To the irreverent, He’s “the Man Upstairs.” But do you know what Jesus called Him? One hundred and sixty-seven times in the Gospels alone, Jesus called Him Father—Father.

Now, what does that mean that we can address the One to whom we pray as Father? Did you know today in America there are people who do not want us to pray to God as Father, and many of them call themselves Christians? Did you know there is a great move in churches today to remove the idea of God as Father from the Bible, from our hymnal, from the prayer life of the church.

Here’s an article that was in *The Wall Street Journal* recently—Monday, April 27, 1992. This was the article. I clipped it, and I want to read a part of it to you. The title is “The Lord’s Name: Images of God as ‘He’ Loses Its Sovereignty in America’s Churches. More Worshipers Challenge Language That Describes Supreme Being as a Male.” “Long Beach, California. The First Congregational Church here looks every inch a bastion of religious tradition inside the imposing Italian renaissance structure graced with delicate rose windows, mahogany pews, and a grand old pipe organ. Then the Sunday service starts. ‘May the God who mothers us all bear us on the breath of dawn, and make us to shine like the sun, and hold us in the palm of Her hand,’ intones Mary Ellen Kilsby, the pastor.

Unorthodox? Some would say so. But no longer unique. The ancient Western image of God the Father is coming under assault. Although still relatively unusual, in most of America's 350,000 Christian churches, gospel like this is making inroads among church leaders who have begun purging hymnals and liturgies of references to God as male. 'I don't think our conception of God will ever stand again,' says Joseph Hough, Dean of Vanderbilt University's Divinity School in Nashville, Tennessee. In his public utterances, Dr. Hough alternately refers to the Deity as She, then He. 'I don't think anyone would want to defend a view that God values males more than females. But that's exactly what traditional language does,' he says.

"The roots of the debate over what to call God are often traced to a book by Mary Daly called *Beyond God the Father*, a critique of patriarchal religion, that bluntly states, 'If God is male, then male is God.' A number of theologians warned that language shapes reality, and unless the church changes its imagery, it will effectively endorse gender and race bias. And, by insisting on God as Father, they say"—listen to this one—"traditionalists risk deifying a mere word, committing the sin of idolatry." So now, if you call God Father, they say, "Why, that's idolatry." There is a Greek word for that. It's *baloney*.

"As society becomes aware of the issue of injustice, the society's language has to change to mirror that,' says Letty M. Russell, Professor of Theology at Yale Divinity School." And listen to this statement: "The way to respect the original words is to retranslate them as our understanding of their meaning changes." Now, that's the way you respect the original: just retranslate it. I've never heard such double-speak as that. "The Reverend Kilsby's preaching has encouraged the congregation toward eclecticism. As they gather over coffee after the Sunday service, members talk about how they picture God as a cloud, a formless spirit, Mother Earth." And on and on it goes, and gets more nauseating as it goes.

Jesus our Lord said, "When you pray, you begin, 'Our Father'—'Our Father.'" Now we're not just ascribing human attributes to God. We don't first look at ourselves, and say God is like us. That's not the idea. No, no, no, no! Divine fatherhood is not a reflection of human fatherhood, but vice versa. Human fatherhood is a reflection of divine fatherhood. And it's very, very important that you understand this, because some people have had cruel fathers. Some people have had harsh fathers. Some people have had weak-willed, feminine fathers. So we don't get our idea of God from human fatherhood. To the contrary. We set the standard for human fatherhood by understanding what God is like. It is what God is like that every human father should understand and endeavor to be; not that we make God in our image, but that we might, my dear friend, conform more and more to the image of God.

This is not an analogy, when the Bible says that God is a father. He doesn't mean that God is like a father. God is a father. It's not merely analogous. This is not what God is like. It is what God is. When we say, "Our Father," we express His nature.

## **II. When We Say Father, We Expect God's Nurture**

Number two: not only do we express His nature, but we expect His nurture—we expect His nurture. "What do you mean by that?" I mean that He is going to take care of us like a father takes care of his children. You see, we are His children. Now we always talk about our duty to God, and indeed we have a duty to God, but have you ever thought about it? God has a duty to you. We're His children. I mean, God is honor-bound to take care of His children. God has a responsibility to take care of His children. He's not going to take a vacation to Acapulco and leave us alone. He, my dear friend, has a responsibility to take care of His children. We are His children.

Now I want to say this: that God is not the Father of all people. There's this wrong doctrine that many people sentimentally believe. They call it the universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of men. But God, in a spiritual sense, is only the Father of those who've been born into God's family. You say, "No, God is the Creator of all, and therefore God is the Father of all." Well, God created rats, roaches, buzzards, and rattlesnakes. He's not their Father. He is their Creator. God is the Father of those who are born into the family of God.

Remember what the Bible says, in John 1:11–12, "*He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.*" As many as received the Lord Jesus, they have the authority, the right, to become the sons of God. And then, John chapter 8 and verse 44—you remember that, don't you? Jesus was speaking to the unsaved religious leaders of his day, and Jesus said, "*Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.*" (John 8:44) You become a child of God by faith in Jesus Christ, the Apostle Paul tells us, in Galatians chapter 3. It is very clear and very plain—Galatians 3, verse 26: "*For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.*" (Galatians 3:26)

### **A. We Have the Father's Care**

God becomes your Father, not by creation, but by conception. When you're conceived of the Holy Spirit of God, when you are twice born, you're born into the family of God. And because you're His children, you have His care. Now, look, if you will, in Matthew chapter 6 and verse 26. Look at it—Matthew chapter 6 and verse 26: "*Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth*

them”—not “their heavenly Father”; “*your heavenly Father feedeth them.*” “*Are ye not much better than they?*” (Matthew 6:26)

Now, here’s the logic of our Lord. He’s saying, “What farmer would feed his chickens and neglect his children?” That’s what He’s saying. He’s saying, “Look, you’re my children. You’re better than animals.” There’s a difference between animals and human beings. The animal rightists don’t seem to understand this. But there is a distinct intrinsic difference. You are a child of God. You’re not a beggar. God has a responsibility to you. You have the Father’s care.

### **B. We Have the Father’s Correction**

But not only do you have the Father’s care; because you’re His child, you have the Father’s correction. Look in Matthew chapter 6, and look in verse 14: “*For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*” (Matthew 6:14)

Now this is one of many examples where we find out that, not only do we have the Father’s care; we have the Father’s correction. God is not a doting Father. He is a Father that demands and commands respect of His children, and tells us that, when we’re wrong, He’s going to correct us. The fact that the Father chastises me doesn’t mean that He doesn’t love me. It means that He does love me. God loves me too much to let me live in sin. When I say Father—when I say Father—because I’m His child, I have His care. He wouldn’t feed His chickens and neglect His children. Because I say Father, I have His correction. He loves me, and He deals with me lovingly. When He scolds me, or when He whips me, that doesn’t mean He doesn’t love me.

Here’s a little boy out in the yard. He’s playing in the mud, and he’s covered with mud. And his father sees him. His father may go out in the yard, and take a hose, and hose him off, before he lets him come in the house. It’s not the little boy the father’s rejecting. It’s the dirt. And when God corrects us, God is not rejecting us. It is the sin in our life that God is rejecting.

### **C. We Have the Father’s Compassion**

And when we say Father, not only do we have His care, and not only do we have His correction; we have His compassion. Look in chapter 6 and verse 8. He says, “*Be not ye therefore like unto them:*”—that is, like the heathen—“*for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.*” (Matthew 6:8) Now, what does this mean? It means when you say Father, He is a Father that compassionately wants to meet your needs. The

Bible says, in Psalm 103, verse 13, “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.” (Psalm 103:13)

#### **D. We Have the Father’s Companionship**

When we say, “Our Father,” we’re talking about one whose compassions—whose compassions—fail not. When we say, “Our Father,” we express His nurture: we have His care. When we say, “Our Father,” we express His nurture: we have His compassion. When we say, “Our Father,” we have, dear friend, His companionship.

Have you ever thought about how fathers and sons are supposed to get along? I heard long ago about a man who was a bookkeeper. And this was back before the days of computers, and this man took special pride in his ledgers. I mean, he had every entry just right; it was just so. And he had his office at his home. And the children were told not to come in the office, and not to disturb Daddy while Daddy worked. And this man was in there making an entry in this journal, when his little four-year-old boy threw open the door and just ran full-speed into the room, and took a leap, and jumped up into his daddy’s arms, while his daddy was in that swivel chair. When he did, he hit his daddy’s arm, and the pen went right across the page and ruined the whole page.

When the father realized what happened, he threw the pen down, and he said, “Son, haven’t I told you not to come in here when I’m working? Look, son, what you’ve done. You’ve ruined the whole page. I’ve told you to stay out of this office when I’m working.” The little boy’s chin started to quiver, and tears just welled up in his eyes, and he said, “I’m sorry, Daddy.” He said, “I just wanted to sit in your lap. I just wanted to rub your beard.”

And when he said that, it just broke the father’s heart, and he realized what a mistake he’d made to throw off the love of that little child and to reject the love of that child. He said, “Son, I’m sorry. Daddy’s sorry. These books are not that important.” And closed the book, and he put his pen aside, and took that little fellow up, and hugged him, and just smelled his neck as a little scent that boys have, and just hugged him up close. And then they went out and walked a while, and talked about things that fathers and sons are supposed to talk about.

When I heard that, I said, “You know, I’m so glad that my heavenly Father is not so busy flinging out the sun, the moon, and the stars, and running this mighty universe, that He does not have time to speak to me.” There’s not a time but, when I say “Our Father,” He’s ready to listen.

I stay busy like most of you. And sometimes I dread the telephone. The telephone rings sometimes. I’m right in the middle of something that I must get done. I’m facing a deadline. The telephone rings, and I really don’t want to pick it up, but I know I must—and I pick it

up. And I'm called by a lot of things. I have a lot of names. One of them is Adrian. One of them is Pastor. But one of them is Daddy. And when I pick up that phone, and on the other end it says Daddy or Papa, I tell you, right away then, I'm ready to talk—ready to talk. It's because, you see, a child or a grandchild has an entrée that nobody else has.

And that's what our Lord is saying: that when we say Father, we're not coming to Him in some other relationship. We have His companionship. There's a relationship between a child and the parent. Corrie Ten Boom put it in a beautiful way. She said, "When you pray, don't wrestle; nestle." Don't you love that? "Don't wrestle; nestle." Just come to God as a Father.

### **III. When You Say Father, You Exalt His Name**

Now, here's the third thing—and I want to be very quick about this. When you pray to God, and you say Father, first of all, you express His nature. He is a father. He is Father. You express His nature. Number two: You expect His nurture. He has a responsibility to you. And, number three: You exalt His name. That's the third thing. "*Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.*"

Now the word *hallowed* means "to speak with reverence." You must recognize His name. You must reverence His name. And you must rely on His name.

What is His name? When Jesus said, "*Hallowed be thy name,*" what name was He talking about? Now this may surprise you, but do you know what the greatest name of the ages is? Do you know the one name above all names that is supreme? It's Jesus. Let me give you this. Listen to this. This will bless you. John 17, verse 6—Jesus said, "*I have manifested thy name*"—"I have manifested thy name." (John 17:6) And put that with Philippians 2:9: "God has given Him a name which is above every name." There's no name above His name.

And when Jesus said, "*Hallowed be thy name,*" Jesus was interjecting Himself here into this thing. And so, when you pray, you come in the name of Jesus. You come through the Lord Jesus Christ. We are to recognize the name. We're to reverence the name. We are to rely upon the name. John 14, verses 13 and 14—Jesus said, "*And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*" "*Our Father...Hallowed be thy name*"—"Hallowed be thy name." "*If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.*" (John 14:13-14)

### **Conclusion**

When we say, "Our Father," we express His nature. When we say, "Our Father," we expect His nurture. When we say, "Our Father," we exalt His name. That's the way our prayer begins: just talking to God as a Father.



# When We Say, “Father”

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** January 3, 1993

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 6:9–13

*“After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.”*

MATTHEW 6:9

## Outline

Introduction

- I. When We Say, “Father,” We Express His Nature
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  - C. We Have the Father’s Companionship
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- III. When We Say, “Father,” We Exalt His Name
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Conclusion

## Introduction

Matthew chapter 6. Progressing through the Sermon on the Mount, today, we come to a wonderful section on prayer, a subsection that we’re calling “Learning to Pray.” How important it is that we learn to pray! Listen to me: my friend, the time will come, if it is not already here, that, when for God to answer your prayer will be the most important thing to you on this earth. You can learn many things, but you can learn nothing better than to learn how to pray. Nothing can stand against the man who can pray because prayer can do anything that God can do—and God can do anything. It has well been said that “nothing lies outside the reach of prayer but that which lies outside the will of God.” You do not have a need but what proper prayer would help you to attain that which you need. You do not have a failure in your life but what proper prayer would have avoided that failure. You do not have a burden, a heartache, a tear or a fear that proper prayer cannot help to remove, to soothe, to bless, to help, to heal. I’m telling you, my dear friend, that prayer—prayer—is the order of the day.

The disciples asked the Lord Jesus, “*Teach us to pray.*” (Luke 11:1) Here’s what the

Lord Jesus taught. Look in Matthew chapter 6 and verse 9: *“After this manner therefore pray ye.”* (Matthew 6:9) Before we even read the prayer, let me say that this is not primarily a prayer to be recited. Our Lord has already warned about vain repetitions. (Matthew 6:7) Sometimes we’ll be in a public assembly, and someone will say, “Let’s all stand and say the Lord’s Prayer.” Well, friend, you don’t say prayers; you *pray* prayers. Suppose I come and sit down in your living room; you look at me and say, “Say a conversation.” You see, that just doesn’t fit, does it? Prayer is not talking *at* God; it is talking *with* God. It is not rattling off beautiful thoughts—even verses of Scripture. Jesus is giving us a model prayer. Jesus is saying, “Pray like this.”

Now, let’s look at it and see: *“After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”* (Matthew 6:9–13) What a mighty prayer this is! And, it is a model prayer for my prayer and your prayer.

And so, we’re going to be spending a number of Sundays discovering what these verses teach because, friend, there is a world of truth packed in this model prayer that the Lord Jesus Christ gave that has endured throughout the ages. And so, today, we’re going to spend our time on one verse primarily, and that is verse 9—the way the prayer begins: *“Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.”* (Matthew 6:9) The title of the message: “When We Say, ‘Father.’” Now, what happens when we come to God and say, “Father”? Well, basically, three things.

## **I. When We Say, “Father,” We Express His Nature**

And, number one: We express His nature. He is a father. What do we call God when we pray? Do you know what Aristotle called God? If this doesn’t leave you cold, nothing will. Aristotle the philosopher called Him “the Unmoved Mover.” That is, there’s nothing we can do to affect Him. He changes everything, but nothing changes Him. He’s unmoved. Thank God, He is not unmoved. He is touched with the feeling of our infirmity. Huxley, a more modern philosopher, called Him “the Eternal Unknown”—you’ll never know Him; you can’t know Him. Arnold called Him “the Absolute Unknown.” That just leaves me cold. Then our kids have been going to the movies. They want to call Him “the Force” because they’re watching *Star Wars*—“the Force.” But, 167 times in the Gospels, Jesus called Him “Father.” And, when you say, “Father,” you express His nature. God’s nature is the nature of a father.

Now, we don’t call Him “Father” because we know fathers and so what we’re trying to say is that our prayer is the reflection of our fatherhood. Oh, no. Our concept of father, and the very fact that we are human fathers, is that we are made in His image.

His fatherhood is not a reflection of our fatherhood but vice versa. Now, God is not like a father. This is not an analogy. God is a Father. We're not talking about what God is like when we say, "Father"; we're talking about what God is.

"Well," you say, "big deal. Everybody knows that." Did you know, my dear friend, in modern theology today, there's a move to remove the idea of God as Father? Did you know that? As a matter of fact, they even speak of God as female. In churches across America today, you can hear God referred to as "She." And, people would not want to pray, "*Our Father which art in heaven*" (Matthew 6:9); they'd pray now, "Our Parent in heaven." You say, "That's ridiculous." I say, "Amen."

Let me read to you from *The Wall Street Journal*—the prestigious *Wall Street Journal*, Monday, April 27, 1992. Here's an article; I have it clipped: "The Lord's Name: Images of God as 'He' Loses Its Sovereignty in America's Churches. More Worshipers Challenge Language That Describes Supreme Being as a Male": "Long Beach, California. The First Congregational Church here looks every inch a bastion of religious tradition. Inside the imposing Italian Renaissance structure, graced with delicate rose windows, are mahogany pews and a grand old pipe organ. Then the Sunday service starts. 'May the God who mothers us all bear us on the breath of dawn, and make us to shine like the sun, and hold us in the palm of Her hand,' intones Mary Ellen Kilsby, the pastor."

A more local theologian said this—and I quote: "'I don't think our conception of God will ever stand again,' said Joseph Hough, Dean of Vanderbilt University's Divinity School in Nashville, Tennessee. In his public utterances, Dr. Hough alternately refers to the Deity as 'She,' then 'He.' 'I don't think anyone would want to defend a view that God values males more than females. But that's exactly what traditional language does,' he says"—so he's talking about calling God "Father," just simply "traditional language"—"The roots of the debate over what to call God are often traced to a book by Mary Daly called *Beyond God the Father*"—that is, we've moved past that. Friend, Jesus was too old-fashioned for us—"*Beyond God the Father*, a critique of patriarchal religion, that bluntly states, 'If God is male, then male is God.' A number of theologians warned that language shapes reality, and unless the Church changes its imagery, it will effectively endorse gender and race bias"—now, do you see what you have done? Friend, when you say that God is Father, you're gender-biased and racially biased. Shame on you, and shame on Jesus!—"And, by insisting on God as Father, they say"—listen to this one; this will bless your heart—"traditionalists risk deifying a mere word, committing the sin of idolatry." So now, when you say, "God is Father," and you say, "That's the only way we should pray," you've made a god of the word, and, therefore, that's idolatry. Well, there's a Greek word for all of this. It's *baloney*.

And then, listen to this: "As society becomes aware of the issue of injustice, the

society's language has to change to mirror that,' says Letty M. Russell, Professor of Theology at Yale Divinity School"—and here's another classic example of double-speak. I want you to listen to this—"The way to respect the original words is to retranslate them as our understanding of their meaning changes." Listen to it again: "The way to respect the original words is to retranslate them as our understanding of their meaning changes." That's the most classic piece of double-speak I've ever heard: "God says something. I don't like it. I understand it differently. I'll change it, and that's the way I respect it." It is Jesus who taught us to pray, "Our Father." It is the basic intrinsic nature of God—not what God is like; what God is.

Put these verses in your margin. First Corinthians chapter 8, verse 6: "*But...there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him.*" (1 Corinthians 8:6) Or, perhaps this one—1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 24: "*Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father*" (1 Corinthians 15:24)—not talking about what God is like; it's what God is: the Everlasting Father. As a matter of fact, we'll bring a whole message on this subject here on the feminists, who now have tried to change the very nature of deity to fit in with their schemes. This is not anti-female or pro-male; it's just simple Bible doctrine, my dear friend.

## **II. When We Say, "Father," We Expect His Nurture**

And, when we say, "Our Father," number one, we express His nature. Number two: When we say, "Our Father," as we express His nature, then we expect His nurture—His nature and His nurture. You see, when we say, "Our Father," that infers that we are His children, that we have been sired by Him, that we have been spiritually begotten of Him.

You see, God is not universally the Father of all people. So often, in glowing words, we hear this phrase: "the universal fatherhood of God"—now I suppose it will have to be "the universal motherhood of God"—"the universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of men"—well, we'd say, "the universal fellowship of people" today—"the universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of men." But friend, God is not the Father of all people. God is the Father of those whom He has sired and who are born into His family.

The Bible says, concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, in John 1:11–12, that Jesus "*came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.*" (John 1:11–12) Jesus said to the unsaved religious leaders of His day in John chapter 8 and verse 44: "*Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.*" (John 8:44) Like father, like son. You see, the Bible teaches in Galatians chapter 3 that we have become "*the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.*" (Galatians 3:26) That's the way we become children of God. That's the way God becomes our

Father. We are supernaturally born again. When God becomes our Father, His very life comes into us.

Now, I know how some of you are thinking right now. You're racing your theological motors, and your logic is running away. And, you're saying, "But wait a minute, pastor. Didn't God create all human beings? And, if God created all human beings, wouldn't that make God the Father of all human beings?" No, that makes God the Creator of all human beings. There's a difference between fatherhood and creation. You see, God created many things. God created rats, roaches, buzzards, and rattlesnakes. He is their Creator. He's not their Father. God becomes our Father, not by creation, but by conception, when we're born into His family. And, the Bible says it is then we become "*partakers of the divine nature.*" (2 Peter 1:4)

### **A. We Have the Father's Care**

So, if He is our Father, then He has a certain responsibility to us. Now, we often talk about our responsibility to Him—and we do have a responsibility to whom? All children have a responsibility to their parents. But, you know, there are two sides to that coin. Parents have a responsibility their children. And, no one will ever have to level the charge of child neglect to our Heavenly Father. He is a Father who will take care of His own. God will fulfill His duties to you, and that ought to give you great, great comfort as you think of God as a Father. Because we're His children, we have His care.

Let me show you what the Lord Jesus Christ taught about this, for example, here in Matthew chapter 6 and verse 26: "*Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?*" (Matthew 6:26) And, for all the animal rightist people, again, the Lord Jesus Christ makes an intrinsic difference between men and animals, and especially between the children of God and animals. What's He saying? He's saying, "Look. You see these birds? Your Heavenly Father"—not *their* Heavenly Father; *your* Heavenly Father—"feeds them. Aren't you better than they are?" Do you see the logic of our Lord? What farmer would feed his chickens and starve his children? The God who takes care of the fowls of the air is the God who cares for you because you are His. You're the object of His care. You're a child of God. You're not a beggar. Children don't beg for their food. God is going to take care of you.

### **B. We Have the Father's Correction**

You see, because of the Father's nature—we express His nature; we expect His nurture—we can say, "God, you are going to care for me." But, not only do we have the Father's care; along with that, we're going to have the Father's correction. Look in chapter 6 and verses 14 and following: "*For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father*"—do you see it? Your Father—"will also forgive you: but if ye forgive

*not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”* (Matthew 6:14–15)

Now, we’re speaking, not of the Father’s care, but of the Father’s correction. He’s not a doting Father. He’s not a Father who says to His children, “Live any way you like, and I’ll not correct you”—“Because I care, I will correct you.” And, the classic passage that goes along with this—I would like for you to put it in your margin—is Hebrews chapter 12, verses 5 through 7, and that speaks of the Father’s correction in a very plain way. Whoever the writer of Hebrews was, he says this: *“And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him”*—now, to be rebuked means to be “scolded”; to be chastened means to be “whipped.” Verse 6—*“for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth”*—and listen to verse 7. This is Hebrews 12:7. Listen to it clearly—*“If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?”* (Hebrews 12:5–7) If you’re a child of God, God loves you too much to let you get by with sin.

Sometimes people join a church like Bellevue Baptist Church, they get baptized, they continue to live in sin, and nothing ever happens. And, they say, “Well, God must surely love me. God lets me get by with sin.” God doesn’t love you like He loves His own children, *“for whom the Lord [loves] he [chastens].”* (Hebrews 12:6) Had you been His child, God would have carried you to the woodshed.

You say, “Why doesn’t God chastise me when I live in sin?” Because you’ve never been saved. This passage in Hebrews 12 goes on to say, *“But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.”* (Hebrews 12:8) You say, “Pastor, that’s strong language.” What does that mean? It just simply means this: God is saying, “If you were my child, I would have chastened you. But, since I didn’t chasten you, you’re not truly my child. You may appear as my child, but I did not legitimately father you. You were not truly born into my family. I’m not your Father. Somebody else is your father. If I were your Father, I would have carried you to the woodshed. If you were without chastisement, it’s just simply a sign that I never really fathered you.”

¶ Now, if a mother goes to the front yard, and there are some children out there fussing, and a squabble, that mother calls her own children in, and she chastens them—or the father chastens them—but you don’t whip and punish the neighbors’ children. You’d better not in this day and age—you’ll get in trouble. They’re not yours. You chastise your own. And so it is with God the Father.¶

Do you know the difference between how God deals with a child of God and a child of the devil? You see, God deals with His own children on a cash basis, and God deals

with the devil's children on a credit basis. God deals with us as a father; God deals with them as a judge. God deals with us now; God deals with them at the Judgment. Romans chapter 2, verse 5 speaks of the unsaved, and it says this: *"But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath"—that is, you're putting judgment in the bank; you're just treasuring it up against the day of wrath—"and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."* (Romans 2:5) God says, "I am going to deal with you, not as a father; I'm going to deal with you as a judge at the Final Judgment." But now, He deals with His children. He deals with them on credit: they're just putting it in the bank. But, He deals with us day by day. As soon as you sin, as a child of God, the Father steps in to chastise. I've said many times from this pulpit, *when God saves you, He doesn't fix you up where you can't sin any more, but He sure does fix you up where you can't sin and enjoy it any more.*

¶ You know the difference between cash and credit? I learned that as a youngster. I guess I was about five. I went with my dad in West Palm Beach, Florida, to the community grocery store on Georgia Avenue up on the hill. My brother and I were in the store that day, and I saw something that day that astounded me. My dad went into that store and bought some groceries, and as he walked out, he said to the man behind the counter, "Charge it." I'd never heard that word: "Charge it." And, that man wrote something down in a book, and my dad just waved and walked out. I thought, "That's the most amazing thing I've ever heard." I'd never heard that word before: "Charge it."

I went again, and I watched. My dad walked in there, bought some groceries, and said to that man who knew my dad very well, "Charge it." My dad didn't even sign his name. That's the kind of business they had in those days. That man wrote something down in the book, and my dad walked out. I said, "Aha!" I told my brother, "I think we have something wonderful here. We have discovered a very special word." So, we thought we'd give it a trial run. We put some money in our pocket, just in case it did not work, and bought some soft drinks, stayed around the store for a while, and on our way out, we looked to the man, and we said, "Charge it." He nodded his head. And, we walked out. We thought we'd found the key to Fort Knox. And, for about two weeks we would visit the community grocery store and buy what we wanted, walk out, and say the old magic word: "Charge it."

But, one day my dad called us in, and he had some things in front of him. And, right there, in a very special way, I learned two things: I learned, number one, the difference between cash and credit. And, I learned this: whom the father loves, he chastens. I learned that right then.¶

### **C. We Have the Father's Companionship**

Now friend, God loves us too much to let us get by with sin. *"Whom the [Father loves],*

*he [chastens].*” (Hebrews 12:6) And so, when we say, “Our Father,” friend, we can expect His care. Indeed, we can, because what father would feed his chickens and starve his children? And, we can expect His correction. *“If [you] forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your [Heavenly] Father forgive [you],”* (Matthew 6:15) and so forth. *“Whom the Lord [loves], he [chastens].”* (Hebrews 12:6) There’s a third thing that we can expect because He is Father: not only can we expect that, but we can expect His companionship. Did you know He loves to be with us? What kind of a relationship is a father-and-son relationship? It is a wonderful relationship. Father-and-daughter relationship? It is a wonderful relationship.

† I’m called by many things. I have many names. I’m called “Pastor.” I am called “Adrian.” There’s someone who calls me “Honey” and those who call me “Daddy.” And, some call me “Papa.” And, I can just tell you, folks, that there are days when I get very, very busy, and I’m pressed, and I have certain deadlines. For example, I preach about six times a week, at least. And, I’ve got to be ready to preach. It’s like taking off an airplane. Pine trees are at the end of that runway: you’d better get up off the ground—and it’s time to preach. I face a lot of deadlines. Sometimes the phone will ring and I don’t want to answer the phone, but I know I must. And, I pick it up, not knowing what I will face on the other end. And, when I hear somebody say something like, “Hello, Daddy,” friend, it makes all the difference in the world. Man, I want to answer that phone. If they say “Papa,” it makes a double difference. I just want to talk because these are mine; they’re my children.†

And, our Lord is saying that when we come to Him, we’re not talking about the Unmoved Mover, we’re not talking about the Unknown Absolute—we’re talking about our dear Father. And, the Bible says, “God hath sent [His] Spirit...into [our] hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” (Galatians 4:6) Do you know what that means? Romans 8: “*Abba, Father.*” (Romans 8:15) That’s an Aramaic diminutive. It means “Daddy, Father.” Have you ever thought about God as a daddy? You say, “That’s irreverent.” No, as a matter of fact, when Jesus taught us to pray, “Our Father,” in Matthew chapter 6 and verse 9, Jesus spoke, scholars tell us, in the Aramaic. And so, the word that Jesus would have used that is translated “Father” here is the word *Abba*—“Father.”

Now today, our children say, “Dada,” but in the Middle East, they say, “Abba.” That’s just the most basic syllables that a child can lisp. And, Jesus says that we can call the great God of the universe “Abba, Father”—“Daddy, Father.”

† A father had his office at home. He was a bookkeeper. He was so proud of his ledger, so proud of his journals, that every entry was just right. He told the children, “Stay out of the office while Daddy is working.” He was sitting there at his desk making an entry in his journal when his little four-year-old boy burst in the room, ran across the



room, gave a leap, jumped up into his daddy's arms while his dad was in that swivel chair. That pen went *shooooop* right across the page and made a black mark all the way across the page. The father threw his pen down, slammed the journals shut, and said, "Son! Son, look what you've done! Didn't Daddy tell you to stay out of the office? Son, look what you've done! You've messed up everything!" The little boy just started to cry. He said, "Daddy, I'm sorry! I'm sorry!" He said, "I just wanted to sit in your lap, and hug you, and rub your beard." That broke the daddy's heart. He put the pen down, picked the little boy up, and said, "No, son, Daddy's sorry. I'm sorry I fussed at you. I'm so glad you wanted to see me," and gave that little boy a hug, and left the office, and they went around to walk and to talk about things that boys and daddies ought to talk about.†

Friend, listen, I'm so glad that our Heavenly Father never gets so busy putting out the sun, the moon, and the stars, and running this universe, and commanding the angels that He doesn't have time just to close his ledger and talk to you like there's no one else on earth and nothing else for Him to do. You can come to Him anytime, any day and talk to Him and call Him "Daddy." And, I don't mean to be irreverent, but friend, you can jump up in His lap and put your spiritual arms around His neck. You know what Corrie ten Boom said? She said, "Don't wrestle; nestle."

#### **D. We Have the Father's Compassion**

He is a Father—He is a Father. And, because of that, you have His companionship. But, not only do you have His care, and not only His correction, and not only His companionship, but friend, you have His compassion. The psalmist said, "*Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.*" (Psalms 103:13) "*His compassions fail not.*" (Lamentations 3:22)

When our first child was born, I talked to my pastor at that time, and he said something to me that I have never forgotten—and it is so true. He said, "Adrian, before you have children, you always think of the love that Jesus, the Son, had when He died for our sins. But, after you have children of your own, you think of the great love that the Father had when He gave His Son. Isn't that true? Isn't that true? Fathers are compassionate. A true father would die for his children, gladly fling down his life for his children. And, that's exactly what God the Father did in His great compassion.

† Recently I read a story, and I don't mind telling you that the tears popped out of my eyes as I read this story, it so deeply moved me. A man had a massive heart attack, was taken to the hospital, the emergency room. They came in and saw that the man was in critical condition. A nurse was there. He said, "Nurse, would you please do something for me?" He said, "I have no family, except one daughter. She lives in this city." He said, "I have not seen her for a year. Would you please call this number and tell her that I am here in this hospital and I really want to see her?"

The nurse said, "I'll do it," and she called the daughter. When the daughter heard what happened, she began to cry. She said, "No, no, you cannot let him die! I have not seen my dad for almost a year. The last time I saw my daddy, we had a terrible argument, and I told my daddy I hated him. I don't really hate him. I didn't hate him then, but I was so full of pride; I was so hurt. Please don't let my daddy die! I'll be there in thirty minutes. I want to see my daddy alive. Please don't let him die! I'll be there in thirty minutes."

But then, code 99 was sounded, and that man's heart began to give its dying gasps. And, all of the personnel came in and began to frantically work over him, and to pound on him, and to shock him, and to do all of those things to get that heart beating again. But, they were just pulling the sheet over him when the girl burst through the door. She was too late. And, the nurse stood aside, and she'd been praying, "God, don't let him die 'til she gets here." And, the nurse watched as the daughter put her face in her hands and began to weep. The last words she had said to her daddy on this earth were, "I hate you"; and now, he was dead.

And, the nurse, not knowing what to do, said, "Maybe God can use me." So, the nurse went and put her arms around this girl and let her cry for a while and said, "Would you like to go in where he is?" The girl said, "I never really hated him. I never really hated him. I was so full of pride. I loved him. I loved him." They went into the room. This girl just buried her face in the sheet and wept. And, the nurse looked over there on the nightstand, and there was a note there on the nightstand. And, the note said this: "Dear Susie, I want you to know that I love you, and I forgive you. And, I want you to forgive me. And Susie, I know you love me—Daddy."

When I read that, I was so blessed, because I thought, "You know, no matter what happens, even an earthly father, even an earthly mother, they have a love that is stronger than any other love." And yet, the Bible says, "*When my father and my mother [cast me off], then [will] the Lord...take me.*" (Psalms 27:10)<sup>¶</sup>

Oh friend, "*His compassions [they] fail not.*" (Lamentations 3:22) What a loving Heavenly Father! And, if an earthly father loves his daughter that way, how much more does God your Father love you!

And, what do we do when we pray to God and say, "Our Father"? Well, we express His nature: He is a Father. We expect His nurture: He is a Father who cares. He is a compassionate Father. He, my dear friend, is a correcting Father. Think of your great God as a Father.

### **III. When We Say, "Father," We Exalt His Name**

But then, there's a third thing, and we must close: not only do we express His nature, and not only do we expect His nurture, but oh, friend, we exalt His name. Listen to what

it says: *“Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name”*—*“Hallowed be thy name.”* (Matthew 6:9) When you pray this way, you exalt His name.

### A. Recognize His Name

Now, in order to do that—listen—first of all, you must know what the name is. You must recognize the name. *“Hallowed be thy name.”* (Matthew 6:9) Well, what name is that? What name is the name above all names that we hallow when we pray this way? Did you know that Jesus Christ, when He was here on earth, said this to the Father: *“[Father,] I have manifested [your] name?”* (John 17:6) Did you know that in Isaiah chapter 9, verse 6, concerning Jesus, His name is Wonderful? (Isaiah 9:6) Did you know that in Philippians chapter 2, verse 9, the Bible says that God has given Jesus Christ—are you ready for this?—*“a name which is above every name?”* (Philippians 2:9)

Do you remember when the banners came in here, and all of the banners were displayed—and all of the names of deity and all of the names of Christ? There is one name that is above every name. You know what it is? Jesus. Would you like to say it? Jesus. Say it again. Jesus. That, my friend, is the name above all names. *“God [has] given him a name which is above every name.”* (Philippians 2:9) Jesus said, *“[Father,] I have manifested [your] name.”* (John 17:6)

### B. Reverence His Name

Now, you recognize the name, and then you reverence the name. *“Hallowed be thy name.”* (Matthew 6:9) You see, when we say that God is our Father, intimacy does not mean irreverence. Oh, we’re to give Him praise and honor and glory and majesty, as we’ve done this morning. Never speak disrespectfully just because you can sit in His lap and put your arms around His neck, spiritually.

### C. Rely upon His Name

But, not only do you recognize the name and reverence the name; oh friend, rely upon the name. Jesus said in John chapter 16: *“Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive.”* (John 16:24) *“If you ask anything in my name”—“in my name”—“I will do it.”* (John 14:13) So wonderful! When we pray, right on the front door of this prayer, we’re to come in the name that is above every name, in the name of Jesus. And, when we pray in the name of Jesus, the name that is above every name, when we hallow that name, when we recognize that name, when we worship that name, we have great power in prayer.

† Two boys graduated from high school. They’d not seen each other for a long, long time, and they met on the street. One of the boys was a respected lawyer in that city who had made a lot of money. The other boy had become a beggar, a tramp. They met unexpectedly. They recognized one another. The beggar, the tramp, looked at the

successful lawyer and said, “It’s wonderful what has happened to you. You went one way. I went another way. Look at me. I have nothing.” They talked for a while, and the lawyer said to his friend, “I hope I’ll not embarrass you, and I hope you’ll not think that I’m trying to patronize you—but I’d like to write you a check. I can do it. We’re old friends. I would like to make a gift to you. Here’s a check. I want you to take it and buy some things that you might need.” And, the man took the check and looked at it. “Oh,” he said, “that’s a generous gift. You’re a wonderful friend. I don’t know what to do with it.” He said, “Well, carry it to the bank and cash it.” “Oh,” he said, “will I go into the bank looking like this, dressed in these rags? Do you think they would give me any money?” And, the lawyer said, “My friend, it’s not the way you look that counts; it’s my name on the check.”<sup>f</sup>

And, that’s the way our Lord has taught us to pray. We don’t bring our shabbiness to God. Friend, when we pray, we pray in the name of Jesus. “Ask anything in my name, and in my name I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.” (John 14:13)  
*“Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.”* (Matthew 6:9)

## Conclusion

Isn’t it a wonderful prayer that we can just begin with these words: “Our Father”? We express His nature, expect His nurture—we exalt His name—when we pray that way.<sup>f</sup>

# Dangerous Prayer

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** January 15, 1984

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 6:9–15

*“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.”*

MATTHEW 6:12

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Compelling Reasons for Forgiving One Another
  - A. The Grace That We Share
  - B. The Guilt That We Bear
- II. The Costly Requirements for Forgiving One Another
  - A. We Ought to Forgive Freely
  - B. We Ought to Forgive Fully
  - C. We Ought to Forgive Finally
- III. The Contagious Results of Forgiveness
  - A. Reconciliation
  - B. Revival
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Conclusion

## Introduction

Take your Bibles, please, and turn, if you will, to Matthew 6. We’re continuing our series today on the principles of prayer, and we’re studying that model prayer, the disciples’ prayer, the prayer that Jesus gave as a specimen prayer to teach us how to pray.

Matthew 6:9: *“After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”* (Matthew 6:9–13)

Dwight L. Moody was a great evangelist. He was the Billy Graham of his day. He had a penetrating insight into human nature and into the Word of God. Dwight L. Moody said, “There is one sin that is giving Christians more difficulty than any other sin, and there’s one sin that is perhaps doing more than anything else to hold back the power of God and revival in the Church.” Now, what do you think that sin was and is? An unforgiving spirit.

I want to speak to you today about prayer, but I want to talk to you when prayer is dangerous. I want to talk to you today about “Dangerous Prayers.” And it’s wonderful to pray.

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

A. —JOHN NEWTON

Oh, He’s a King. “*For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.*” (Matthew 6:13) And, what a privilege it is to come to Him in prayer and to have our needs met! And, one of the greatest needs that we can have met is the need of forgiveness. Look in verse 12: “*And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*” (Matthew 6:12) How wonderful that our debts can be forgiven!

Now, why does God call sin “debt”? Well, because we owe God something because of our sin. Now, in the affairs of men, when one man will injure another man or harm another man, those two often come into a court of law. And, a jury and a judge decide how much is to be paid to the one who’s been injured: “How much do I owe that person that I’ve injured?” And, in a lawsuit, an assessment is made against the guilty person, and there is a fine, a penalty that must be paid; there are damages that are awarded. And, the person who has injured the other person is in debt to that person and must pay that person. We’ve sinned against a holy God. We’ve come into heaven’s court. We have been found guilty, and there are damages that have been assessed against us. And, we’re guilty for what we’ve done, but we’re also guilty for what we have not done. God is Earth’s landlord, and we live here. And, is there one of us who can say we’ve done as we ought? You see, not only are there sins of what we do, but there are sins of what we fail to do. And, the Bible teaches that the sins of omission are greater than the sins of commission. That is, we’re behind in our rent.

For example, when Jesus placed a curse upon that fig tree, why did He place a curse upon that fig tree? Did it have poison fruit on it? No, it had no fruit. When that man buried his talent in the ground and Jesus said he went away into outer darkness, why did he go away into outer darkness? Had he confiscated the money? Had he misappropriated the money? Had he abused and misused it? No, he didn’t do anything with it. He just simply buried it in the ground. When Jesus gave the parable of the Good Samaritan—you remember that man was going from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves—and the priest passed him by, and the Levite passed him by, why did Jesus point out that they were guilty? Did they go over and finish that poor critter off? No, they just passed him by; they failed to do what they ought to do.

† A man was walking through a factory that he owned, and he said to one worker

there, “You’re fired!” He said, “Why? I didn’t do anything.” He said, “That’s why you’re fired.”<sup>f</sup>

Now listen, the Bible says, “*To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.*” (James 4:17) God is the landlord. We’re behind in the rent. Is there anybody here who would stand up and say, “Pastor, I’ve always done for my Lord what I ought to have done”? No. What I’m trying to say is, friend, that sin is a debt; it is a debt that we owe God for things that we’ve done and things that we have failed to do—a great debt, a grand debt, an immeasurable debt, and, from our point of view, a debt we cannot pay.

Now, what does it mean to forgive? Do you know what the word *forgive* literally means? It means “to bear the burden.” When you forgive somebody, you bear the burden of that person’s debt.

<sup>f</sup>Now, suppose I owed you a thousand dollars, and you say, “Pastor, I’m going to forgive the debt.” Well, when you forgive the debt, it costs you a thousand dollars. Do you understand? You see, when you forgive, then you bear the burden. Every time somebody is forgiven somebody else pays. Every time somebody is forgiven someone pays. There are no free forgivings; there are no bargain pardons. It costs—and it costs dearly—to forgive.<sup>f</sup>

Now, God paid the price when He forgave us, and that’s the reason we call grace “God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense”—G-R-A-C-E—“God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense.” You see, God just doesn’t forgive us. When God forgave us, He paid a price. It took the silver of Christ’s tears and the gold of His blood upon Calvary’s cross that God might forgive us. He took our sins into Himself, and He “*bare our sins in his own body on the tree.*” (1 Peter 2:24) It costs to forgive. But, as we’re going to see in a moment, it’s worth it.

Now, there are many Christians, however, who need to be forgiven. And, God is willing to bear the burden, and God is willing to pay the price—indeed, has already paid the price—but those Christians are not forgiven because there’s another condition: that in order for us to be forgiven, we must be willing to forgive others. Now, Jesus taught us to pray, “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive those that are indebted to us.” (Matthew 6:12) Now, let me talk to you a little bit, therefore, about forgiving one another, okay?

## **I. The Compelling Reasons for Forgiving One Another**

Now, first of all, I want to talk to you about the compelling reasons for forgiving one another. What are the compelling reasons for forgiving one another? And, right now, perhaps God the Holy Spirit is bringing into your heart and in your mind somebody that you’re holding a grudge against, somebody that you dislike, somebody that you’re

saying, “Hey, I owe him one.” You’ve got your little IOU book out there, and you’ve got an IOU; and you say, “I’ll get you.” All right, listen. What are the compelling reasons for forgiving one another?

### **A. The Grace That We Share**

Number one: the grace that we share. You see, God has forgiven us, and because God has forgiven us, then we are to forgive one another. We share such a marvelous grace. Listen to Ephesians 4:32; many of you know it by heart: *“Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”* (Ephesians 4:32) God has been so good to us. God has forgiven us. God has given us such grace. Then, we ought to forgive one another. That’s what Ephesians 4:32 says. Sam Jones, who was a Methodist evangelist, said this: “I had a hard time forgiving people until I made up my mind I wasn’t going to fall out with anybody until they treated me worse than I treated the Lord Jesus Christ.” I mean, we crucified Christ; we nailed Him to the cross. And yet, He forgave us.

### **B. The Guilt That We Bear**

So, that’s the first compelling reason: the grace we share. But, secondly, the guilt we bear. Now, you see, all of us, from time to time—I don’t care who we are—we still fail every day. And, just as we need to pray for daily bread, we need to pray for daily pardon, don’t we? Sure we do! Is there anybody here who lives perfectly? You know, some churches teach sinless perfection.

† I remember hearing about a man giving a testimony, talking about the fact that he was sinlessly perfect. And, it sounded pretty good until his wife stood up in the back and she said, “Remember, John, I’m here.” He sat down.†

Now, listen. Let me tell you something, folks. Daily, every one of us has to come and say, “Lord, I failed, and Lord, I want you to pardon me. Lord, I want you to forgive me, and forgive me my debts. I haven’t been, I haven’t done, I haven’t said, I haven’t given, I haven’t acted like I ought to have been, and said, and done, and given, and acted. Lord, I want you to forgive me.” But friend, if we don’t forgive others, He just simply is not going to forgive us.

Look, if you will, in verse 14. Jesus explains it: *“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”* (Matthew 6:14–15) Now, why is this such a dangerous prayer: *“Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors?”* (Matthew 6:12) Do you know what you’re praying? Pay attention. You’re praying, “Lord, I want you to treat me like I treat other people.” That’s a dangerous prayer, isn’t it? I mean, for some folks, that’s dangerous. You’re saying, “Lord, I want you to treat me like I treat others. Forgive me my debts in the same way as—in the same manner—I forgive



others.”

You say, “Well, I just can’t forgive her.” God says, “Okay, I can’t forgive you. That’s what you prayed.” You say, “Well, I’ll forgive her, but I can’t forget.” God says, “Okay, I’ll forgive you, but I’ll never forget. That’s what you prayed.” You say, “Well, well, I’ll forgive her, but I’ll never have any more to do with her.” God says, “Okay, I’ll forgive you and never have any more to do with you. I mean, that’s what you’re praying.” That’s a dangerous prayer. You’re saying, “Lord, I want you to treat me like I treat other people.” “Forgive us our debts, as”—in the same manner—“we forgive other people.”

John Wesley and Oglethorpe, who was the Governor of Georgia back when Georgia was a colony, were having a discussion. And, Oglethorpe said to Wesley, “I never forgive,” and John Wesley said to General Oglethorpe, “Then, I hope, sir, you never sin.” Now listen, friend. Are you paying attention? *An unforgiving spirit is unforgivable. The man who will not forgive another person destroys the bridge over which he himself must travel.*

Take your Bibles—you’re in Matthew 6—turn to Matthew 18 and look, beginning in verse 21 here for a moment—Matthew 18. This is a story about Simon Peter. You know, Simon Peter often opened his mouth just to exchange feet. “*Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?*”—now remember, seven, being the perfect number, Simon Peter thought, “Well, if I forgive my brother seven times, I’ve gone far beyond the call of duty.” But, he wasn’t prepared for Jesus’s answer—“*Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.*” (Matthew 18:21–22) How many is that? Four hundred and ninety. Now, did Jesus mean on the four hundred and ninety-first time we beat his brains out? No, no, He didn’t mean that at all. What Jesus meant here—Jesus is just using a hyperbole, or just a figure of speech, to say, in essence, “As many times as he sins and he requests forgiveness, he comes in a repentant spirit, you just forgive him that many times.”

And then, Jesus gave a parable, and what a stinging parable it is! Look at it, beginning in verse 23: “*Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants*”—that is, he was doing an inventory—“*And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.*” (Matthew 18:23–24) Now, how much is that? Well, I tried to do some research, and one Bible I found said it was 52,800 dollars, if it was a talent of silver. If it was a talent of gold, it would probably be like our national debt—I mean 52,000,000 dollars. When Jesus told the story, He must have told it with a twinkle in His eye because that was more than the accumulated taxes of the whole land in that day. And, here’s a man who owes this king 52,000,000 dollars.

All right, and verse 25: “*But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded*

him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made”—what the king said: “Well, I’ll get something out of him. I’ll sell him as a slave, and whatever I get by selling him and his family and liquidating all of his assets, I’ll apply that against the debt”—“*The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all*”—of course, he couldn’t. How was he going to pay? He couldn’t begin to pay. How was he going to pay it? But, he was asking for more time. The king, realizing the man can’t pay it, never could pay it, the king just has compassion on him. Look in verse 27—“*Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt*”—now, I want to tell you, at that moment, it cost the king 52,000,000 dollars. The king said, “I’ll just take it all in. I will absorb the debt. I am out 52,000,000 dollars. I forgive you.” But wait—“*But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow servants, which owed him an hundred pence*”—I looked this up: forty-four dollars; less than fifty dollars—“*and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellow servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth*”—that is, he was angry—“*and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him*”—and now, notice the stinging conclusion in verse 35—“*So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.*” (Matthew 18:25–35)

Now, it’s very clear, friend, that there are some people here and in other churches who are letting a fifty-dollar grudge shut out the love of God in their hearts and in their lives. I’m telling you again, *an unforgiving spirit is unforgivable*. When you refuse to forgive me, when I refuse to forgive you, when we refuse to forgive one another, then God just closes the curtain and says, “That’s it! You’ve shut yourselves away from the grace of God. You’ve destroyed the bridge over which you must travel.” *An unforgiving spirit is unforgivable*.

† A father came home and walked into the living room of the house, and the little brother and the little sister were having a fight. Did you ever fight with your little sister, your little brother? Did you? They were having a fight. Now, the little daughter was kind of a con artist. When she saw Daddy come in, she knew she was in trouble. But, right away, she put on those crocodile tears. She came over to her daddy and said, “Daddy, I’m so sorry. Daddy, we shouldn’t have been fighting. It was wrong, Daddy, and I want

you to forgive me, Daddy. And, I love you, Daddy.” And, before long, she was in her daddy’s arms, hugging her daddy’s neck, and he was thinking, “Boy, she really has got the right spirit about this whole thing. I don’t need to punish her.” But then, he happened to look out of the corner of his eye, and while she was hugging his neck, she was sticking her tongue out at her little brother. He sat her down, and he said, “Sweetheart, you can’t hug my neck and stick your tongue out at your little brother at the same time.”<sup>f</sup>

I want to tell you, there are some who’ve come this morning to worship the Lord, you come in this beautiful auditorium, and you sing, “It is Well with My Soul,” “’Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus,” “What a Friend We Have in Jesus,” and there’s some brother here, and some sister, that you’ve got a grudge toward. Do you think God receives that worship? I mean, you’re harboring a grudge. There are people who sometimes come to the Lord’s Table and partake of the Lord’s Table and they’re out of fellowship with a brother or with a sister in Christ. *An unforgiving spirit is unforgivable.*

I want to tell you something, mister: that unforgiving spirit will do more damage to you than it will ever do to the person you refuse to forgive. Did you know that? Did you know that resentment and an unforgiving spirit is slow suicide? Did you know that hate is an acid that destroys its container? What a debilitating effect it has on us, emotionally as well as spiritually—people spending all their time, their lives, trying to get even. Friend, don’t you realize that that’s exactly what you do? You get even. When you’re up here and somebody wrongs you, they’re down here. When you get even, where are you? You’re down there with them. You don’t want to get even with them. No, you want to bring them to where you are and to restore that person.

Now, why? Why? Why? What are the compelling reasons for forgiving one another? Number one: the grace we share—God has forgiven us. Number two: the guilt we bear—even though we have been forgiven, and saved, and brought into the kingdom of God, even so, day by day, we fail, and we sin, and we need that daily pardon. *“But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”* (Matthew 6:15)

I wonder, do you have a fifty-dollar grudge today? It’s not worth it, friend. It is not worth it. Now, unforgiveness is a boomerang: it’s going to come back on you, and it’s going to do tremendous damage.

## **II. The Costly Requirements for Forgiving One Another**

Now, secondly—first of all, I’ve talked about the compelling reasons for forgiving one another—secondly, I want to talk to you about the costly requirements for forgiving one another. Now, it costs to forgive. Remember what I said that forgiveness means? To bear the burden, to pay the debt. You cannot forgive easily, but you must forgive.

Now, Jesus is the model for us. We're to walk as He walked; we're to follow in His steps. Remember what the Scripture says? *"Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."* (Ephesians 4:32) That is the model and the pattern for our forgiveness—the way that God forgives us in Christ. *"Be ye kind...tenderhearted, forgiving one another, [in the same way]"*—in the same way—*"[that] God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."* (Ephesians 4:32) Then, therefore, how should we forgive one another?

### **A. We Ought to Forgive Freely**

Well, number one: We ought to forgive one another freely. Now, that means we ought to be in a hurry to do it. Don't wait around. Be swift to offer forgiveness. When they were nailing Jesus upon the cross, as they were driving those searing nails into His quivering palms, His lips are moving. We bend low to listen to hear what the Son of God is saying and what He is praying. And, what is it? *"Father, forgive them"—"forgive them"* (Luke 23:34)—I mean, while they're crucifying Him. He did it freely. He did it quickly.

Have you ever wronged somebody and they took it out on you—I mean, they beat you up over it? I don't mean physically; I mean verbally, I mean emotionally, they squeezed every drop of blood of you. I mean, they told you about it. They extracted their pound of flesh. They excoriated you. And finally, finally, they said, "Well, I forgive you." I feel like saying, "Never mind. I mean, never mind. I've already paid. I mean, I've paid in full. You're not forgiving me. You're just using that as an excuse." You see, we are to forgive freely. We are to forgive quickly.

Why, we're even to chase somebody down that we might forgive them. Look in Matthew 18, where we were, and verse 15. Jesus here is talking about somebody that has wronged you. Jesus says, *"Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone"*—you say, "Well, he sinned against me. Let him come to me." That isn't what the Bible says. The Bible says—*"Go [to him] and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother."* (Matthew 18:15) You're not there to tell him off; you're there to get him back. That's what the thing is. It's not that you're there to let him know what a rat he is. That's not the idea. You're to find him.

You remember after Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden? You would have thought that God would have waited up in heaven and that Adam would have run all over the Garden of Eden without God there and said, "God, where are you?" But, it was Adam that was hiding in the bushes, and it was God walking through the Garden of Eden who said, "Adam! Adam! Adam! Where art thou?" (Genesis 3:9)—God seeking him to forgive him. And, as God forgave me, as God sought me to forgive me, I'm to seek you to forgive you. That's a different level, isn't it, than saying, "Well, it's his fault. He did it. I'll wait 'til he comes to me"? You see, we are to forgive. We are to forgive

freely. We're actually to chase people down that we might forgive them. "*Freely [we] have received, freely [we are to] give.*" (Matthew 10:8)

### **B. We Ought to Forgive Fully**

But, not only are we to forgive freely; friend, we're to forgive fully. What I mean by that is, don't do less than forgive when somebody else wrongs you. You know, so many times we want to do less than forgive. Have you ever wronged somebody and come and confessed it to that person, and they say, "Oh man, don't worry about that! Forget it"? That's not forgiving. Do you know what that is? That's pride on their part. They don't want to admit that it really bothered them. I mean, they want to act like they're bigger than that. Now, it really did bother them. I'm not talking about a thing that is truly inconsequential that needs to be forgotten, but I mean sometimes when there's a real wrong done, and we know there's a wrong done, and that person knows there's a wrong done, but we say, "Look, I'm sorry"—"Ah, man, forget it!" What they're trying to act like is they're above that.

Now friend, you can't forget it until it's forgiven. Did you know that? It can never be forgotten until it is forgiven because forgetting is not the means, it is the fruit, of getting right. Then, you can forget it. But, when you forgive a person, forgive them freely and forgive them fully. Don't make excuses. Truly forgive. Don't act like it doesn't matter. Truly forgive. Forgive that person freely. Forgive them fully. And, by the way, if you wrong somebody, and you come to that person and ask for forgiveness, if you're wise, you'll try to get forgiveness. If they say, "Just forget it," you say, "Well, I appreciate that, but I sure would like to hear you say, 'I forgive you.' Would you please just forgive me?" And, nail it down. It will make him feel better, and it will make you feel better at the same time.

### **C. We Ought to Forgive Finally**

But, not only should you forgive freely and fully; you ought to forgive finally. I mean, when it's forgiven, it is forgiven. That's the way God forgives us, isn't it? "Their sins will I remember against them no more." (Hebrews 8:12; Hebrews 10:17) He has cast our sins behind His back. (Isaiah 38:17) Isn't that great? Where are my sins? Behind God's back. You say, "What if He turns around?" They're still behind His back. When your sins are just behind your back, that's where they are. "*As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.*" (Psalms 103:12) I'm glad He didn't say, "As far as the north is from the south." I can measure from the North Pole to the South Pole, but I can't measure from the east to the west—limitless, boundless infinity. That's how far God has removed our sins from us. "He hath buried our sins in the depths of the sea." (Micah 7:19) Praise the Lord! Gone, gone, gone, gone! Yes, my sins are gone! And, when God forgives, God forgets—and they're gone!

So, I am to forgive freely; that's the way God forgave me. I am to forgive fully; that's the way God forgave me. I am to forgive finally; that's the way God forgives me. *"Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."* (Ephesians 4:32) But, I want to tell you something: that is not easy. It costs. For you to forgive some people some things you're going to have to taste Calvary. Did you know that?

Let me show you what I'm talking about. Turn to 1 Peter 2 for a moment—1 Peter 2. That's kind of back toward the back of your Bible. Let me show you what the Lord Jesus did—verse 24: *"Who his own self"*—that is, Jesus—*"bare our sins in his own body"*—now, do you remember what I told you: that to forgive is to bear the burden?—*"[Jesus] bare our sins in his own body"*—our sins; His body—*"on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."* (1 Peter 2:24) Whoever heard of a doctor who took the disease for the patient? That's what Jesus did. With His sickness I'm made whole. There is no bargain pardon. It cost the Lord Jesus. He died in agony and blood.

You say, "Yes, He did. I praise Him for it." But, I want to show you something. Begin in chapter 3, verse 1: *"Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation"*—*"of the behavior"*—*"of the wives."* (1 Peter 3:1) What does that word *likewise* mean? It means as Jesus took the hurt into Himself, there are some wives that are going have to take the hurt into themselves. Husbands who live in adultery, husbands who are cruel, husbands who are selfish, husbands who are vile, husbands, if they got what was coming to them—I mean, if they got what they deserve—would have no forgiveness and no mercy whatever. God says to a wife, "Jesus suffered for you, *'the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God'*"; (1 Peter 3:18) likewise you can taste of Calvary and forgive that man." There are people in this congregation who've done just that, and a home has been restored, not because that man deserved it, but because there was a little woman who saw that there are no bargain pardons and she tasted a bitter Calvary. But, you see, the Bible says, *"Jesus...who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, [despised] the shame."* (Hebrews 12:2) You can do the same thing.

Have you ever wondered, "Why does the Bible always pick on women? Why is it that the woman has to suffer that the man might come?" Well, the Bible doesn't always pick on women. Look in verse 7: *"Likewise, ye husbands"* (1 Peter 3:7)—same, likewise; same context. There are some husbands who are going to have to taste of Calvary to bring a wife back. There are some parents who are going to have to taste of Calvary to win some children. And, they don't deserve it; that's not the point. We, none of us, deserve it. Christ took our sins upon Himself upon the cross.

You say, "Well, I don't have that kind of strength." You're absolutely right! I don't

either. Friend, that's supernatural, isn't it? I mean, that's supernatural! Have you ever heard this expression: "To err is human; to forgive is divine"? I mean, it is. To forgive is divine. You see, how are you going to do that? Well, the only way I know is Philippians 2:13: "*For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*" (Philippians 2:13) You're going to have to get that strength from God. You say, "I can't do it." That's right. Just say, "God, I can't. You never said I could, but you can. You always said you would, and I'm going to let you. And Lord, I'm going to let you love through me. I'm going to let you forgive through me. I'm going to let you restore through me." There's a cost, but it's worth it.

### **III. The Contagious Results of Forgiveness**

But, not only do I want you to notice the cost; I want you to notice the contagious results of forgiveness. What happens when I take Jesus seriously? What happens when I begin to forgive others "*even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven [me]*"? (Ephesians 4:32)

#### **A. Reconciliation**

Well, first of all, there's reconciliation. People are put back together. Listen to these verses. Matthew 18:15: "*If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee*"—listen to this—"*thou hast gained thy brother.*" (Matthew 18:15) A brother is a precious thing. "*Thou hast gained thy brother.*" (Matthew 18:15) Listen to Matthew 5:24. Jesus said, "*[If you come to worship and remember there] that [your] brother [has] ought against [you]; Leave [first] there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*" (Matthew 5:23–24)

There are some of you who ought not to be in this worship service today. You ought to be out making it right with a brother—it's far more important than you coming and listening to me preach. Did you know that? You ought to just say, "Hey, wait! Before I come to bring my gifts to God, I'm going to go be reconciled to my brother." You see, what God wants is reconciliation. That's so important—reconciliation. That's far more important than singing in the choir. That's far more important than preaching a sermon. That is far more important than taking an offering—reconciliation. "*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*" (Psalms 133:1)

#### **B. Revival**

The very first thing, when we do this, is reconciliation. And, on the heels of reconciliation is revival. You know what revival is? Dr. Charles Culpepper is here this morning. Dr. Charles Culpepper was in the great Shantung Revival. Now, I've heard Dr. Culpepper give his testimony. And, Dr. Culpepper, and Bertha Smith, and others said, "Revival began when people began to confess their faults one to another, prayed one for

another, and forgave one another.” Is that not right, Dr. Culpepper? That’s right. You know what revival is? It is not just getting the roof off; it is getting the walls down. It is not just saying, “I’m going to get right with God”; it is getting right with my brothers and my sisters. And, I want to tell you, I cannot be right with God if I’m wrong with you. I cannot!

### C. Rejoicing

Reconciliation, revival, and, following that, rejoicing. *“Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?”* (Psalms 85:6) You talk about a Holy Ghost joy! When you know there’s nothing between your soul and the Savior and nothing between your soul and a brother, there’s *“joy unspeakable and full of glory.”* (1 Peter 1:8) Joy, reconciliation, revival, rejoicing—that’s the contagious result of hearing Jesus, and obeying Jesus, and praying, *“[Lord,] forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors,”* (Matthew 6:12) and being right with God. How important that is!

### Conclusion

¶ In 1829, George Wilson was adjudicated guilty for robbing the mails and for murder. They sentenced George Wilson to hang from the neck until dead. George Wilson had some friends who petitioned the president, Andrew Jackson, that he might be pardoned. I don’t know why Andrew Jackson pardoned George Wilson, but Andrew Jackson felt like that he ought not to hang. And, he issued a pardon, that George Wilson would be pardoned. They brought the pardon to the prison and said, “Wilson, you don’t have to hang. The president has pardoned you.” Wilson said, “I’m going to hang.” He said, “No, you don’t understand. You don’t have to hang. The president has pardoned you.” He said, “No, I’m going to hang. I refuse the pardon.”

Well, they never had that happen before. They didn’t know what to do with it. It went through one court to another, and it came to the Supreme Court. And, a Justice of the Supreme Court, John Marshall, gave this ruling. Are you ready for it? “A pardon is a piece of paper, the value of which depends upon the acceptance by the person implicated. If he does not accept the pardon, then he must be executed, even though the president has given the pardon.” God loves you, and He wants to pardon you. But, if you refuse it, you’ll die and go to hell. The pardon must be received. George Wilson hung by the neck not because the President would not pardon him, but because he would not receive it. ¶

God is willing to forgive our debts, but we must receive that by a spirit that’s willing to forgive others and cast ourselves upon Him completely. ¶



# Principles of Kingdom Living

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** April 16, 1989

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 6:10

*“Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”*

MATTHEW 6:10

## Outline

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## Introduction

I want you to take God’s Word tonight and find a very familiar passage, Matthew chapter 6, and I want us to look for a few moments at one verse—Matthew chapter 6 and verse 10. Our Lord is teaching us to pray, and in that prayer our Lord gives us this request to pray: *“Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”* (Matthew 6:10) I want to talk to you tonight about the principles of kingdom living. *“Thy*

*kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth...*

Now, if you were to read today's newspaper, or any newspaper, watch any newscast, or listen to any conversation, or even be a casual observer of life, you would find out that God's will is not—I say, is not—being done on earth—not yet! It is in pockets, it is in hearts; but as a general rule, it is not being done. Man has endeavored to dethrone God and enthrone himself in all of his nuclear glory. And as he worships at the shrine of his computer, he says it in his heart, if not with his lips: "Our brothers, who are upon the earth, hallowed be our name. Our kingdom come; our will be done on earth, because there is no heaven."

Well, I want you to think about God's kingdom. What is the kingdom of God? What is it that Jesus asked us to pray for? When we're to pray, "*Thy kingdom come,*" what are we talking about? Well, the kingdom is the realm where Jesus rules. That's what it is. It is the realm where Jesus rules.

## I. The Dimensions of the Kingdom

And, first of all, I want you to think with me about what I'm going to call the dimensions of the kingdom. They are threefold.

### A. A Kingdom of Grace

First of all, His kingdom is a kingdom of grace. This young lady just sang "Amazing Grace." The writer of the book of Hebrews says this in Hebrews chapter 4 and verse 16: "*Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace*"—"the throne of grace." (Hebrews 4:16) Our Lord rules His kingdom from a throne, and that throne is a throne of grace. So, how do you get into the kingdom? The grace of God. The door into the kingdom is the new birth. It's impossible, ridiculous, even ludicrous, to pray that God's kingdom will come, that His will will be done on earth, if you've not invited Him to be King of your heart. First of all, you receive the Lord Jesus Christ into your heart.

Now we are saved by grace, but as I preached this morning, that also means the lordship of Christ; it means that He is King. Notice these phrases: "*the throne*"—that's His kingdom—"of grace." The lordship of Christ—the throne and the grace—are not mutually exclusive; they both dwell together. We are saved by grace, not of works of any kind. But at the same time, Jesus Christ rules from a throne of grace—from a throne of grace. Now the Bible says, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*" (Acts 16:31) *You cannot have Jesus as Savior without having Him as Lord.* You cannot have grace without the throne of grace—His rule, His reign.

† Years ago, I read about Lord Nelson, the great British admiral. And he fought the French, and the French were defeated. And Lord Nelson met a French admiral, and the French admiral was coming to surrender to Lord Nelson. And this French admiral was

all dressed in his regalia; he had this sword by his side. And he walked across the deck of the ship to meet Lord Nelson. He had signed the papers of surrender, and with a smile on his face, he put out his hand to shake hands with Lord Nelson. And Lord Nelson said, “Your sword first, sir.” That is, “Before you give me your hand, give me your sword.” You don’t surrender with a sword by your side. My dear friend, before you can say, “Christ is Savior” and have peace with God, He says, “Your sword first.” God doesn’t take rebels to heaven. †

It is grace, but it is a throne of grace—a throne of grace. “*Let us...come boldly unto the throne of grace.*” (Hebrews 4:16)

## **B. A Kingdom of Goodness**

Now we’re talking about the dimensions of the kingdom. It’s a kingdom of grace. Hey, but wait a moment. It’s also a kingdom of goodness. Let me give you this verse—Romans chapter 14 and verse 17: “*For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*” (Romans 14:17) You see, it’s a kingdom of grace, and it’s a kingdom of goodness. What is our Lord saying? What are we praying for when we pray, “*Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done*”? (Matthew 6:10) Number one: We’re praying that souls will be saved, and then we’re praying that those who are saved will live like saved people. “*For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink.*” It’s not a matter of externals. It’s not a matter of whether you’re rich or poor, whether you’re elevated socially. That’s not it. These three things constitute the children of the kingdom:

### **1. Righteousness**

Number one: righteousness—righteousness. Don’t tell me you’re in the kingdom if you don’t live right. I don’t care what kind of songs you sing, or how you praise, how high you jump, or how loud you shout. It’s how straight you walk that counts. Dear friend, “*the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness.*” Jesus is the “*King of righteousness,*” (Hebrews 7:2) the Bible tells us.

### **2. Peace**

And then, peace. That’s peace with God, and that is the peace of God, because not only is He the King of righteousness, He is “*The Prince of Peace.*” (Isaiah 9:6)

### **3. Joy**

But, you see, there’s also joy—“*joy unspeakable and full of glory.*” (1 Peter 1:8) Now these are college kids behind me, and I thank God for them. And I love the handsome countenance of these men and the gracious beauty of these young ladies. They have so much life in front of them. And all around they’re going to be told, “Here’s where fulfillment is. Here’s where joy is. Here’s where meaning is.” I’m going to tell you kids something: Real joy, true joy—this is more than a cliché; it is an absolute, rock-ribbed

foundational truth—real joy is in Jesus Christ. I mean that with all of my heart. *If I had a thousand lives to live, I'd give every one of them to Jesus.*

*Friends all around me are trying to find  
What the heart yearns for, by sin undermined;  
I have the secret, I know where 'tis is found:  
Only true pleasures in Jesus abound.*

—HARRY D. LOES

### C. A Kingdom of Glory

Now we're talking about the kingdom, and I've said that we're to pray, "*Thy kingdom come.*" It's a kingdom of grace. It's a kingdom of goodness. But, my dear friend, it's also a kingdom of glory. There's more to come. Listen to your pastor tonight: One day, Jesus Christ will actually, literally, bodily come back to this earth and rule and reign here—here on earth, the kingdom of glory. Do you know what we've been taught to pray? "*Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done*"—where?—"in earth, as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:10) Do you think Jesus Christ would have taught us to pray that had that prayer not be intended to be answered? I mean, would Jesus Christ have put in our hearts and our minds, in our bosoms, a desire to pray for something that would not happen?

When the angel announced the birth of the Lord Jesus in Luke chapter 1, verses 32 and following, he said this: "*He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever.*" (Luke 1:32–33) Now the amillennialist scholars, who try to explain away the literal promises of the rule of Jesus on earth, they say this does not really apply, that Jesus is not going to rule here on earth, that that's talking about salvation. But notice it doesn't say He's going to rule over Israel; it says He's going to rule over Jacob forever. There are some people who say that God is finished with the Jew, but Jacob is the name not of the group that we might call spiritual Israel, the church, but Jacob is the name for His fleshly people. "*He shall [rule] over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.*" Where is Jesus going to rule? He's going to rule on earth, where He was born. Where is Jesus going to rule? He's going to rule on earth, where He lived. Where is Jesus going to rule? He's going to rule on earth, where He suffered. Where is Jesus going to rule? He's going to rule on earth, where He was crucified. That's where Jesus shall rule.

#### 4. Man's Revolt

Today, on this earth, Jesus Christ is an outcast. He's an outcast in government, education, and society. But one of these days, our Lord is going to rule and to reign.

##### a. Violent Rage

I want to show you a psalm. Just turn with me, if you would, please, to Psalms chapter 2

for just one moment. I want you to listen to this—Psalms chapter 2, verse 1: “*Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?*” (Psalms 2:1) Do you know what rage is? Rage is what you do when you don’t know what else to do. Have you ever noticed when people are losing an argument, they get red in the face? “*Why do the heathen rage...?*”

#### **b. Vicious Rebellion**

All right, first of all, you have violent rage. And then, look in verse 2: “*The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed*” (Psalms 2:2)—violent rage, now vicious rebellion. They “*set themselves.*” Can you see them as they square their jaws in determined opposition against Christ? May I tell you that Jesus Christ is not only the most loved but the most hated person on earth. The kings of the earth literally set themselves against Christ in their determined opposition.

#### **c. Vain Reasoning**

Violent rage—verse 1. Vicious rebellion—verse 2. Vain reasoning—verses 2 and 3. Continue to read; see what it says: They “*take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.*” (Psalms 2:2–3) They take counsel together. They pool their ignorance. They rationalize away eternal truths. They did it in Nazi Germany. They have done it in Soviet Russia. And they are doing it in the United States of America right now, saying, “Get rid of this religion! Get rid of this Bible! Get rid of these Ten Commandments! Get rid of all of this! We do not want it!” Violent rage, vicious rebellion, vain reasoning.

### **5. God’s Reaction**

Well, what does God say about that?

#### **d. Derision**

Well, continue to read, beginning now in verse 4: “*He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the LORD shall have them in derision.*” (Psalms 2:4) Now, first of all, there’s derision. God laughs. God doesn’t laugh because it’s funny. It’s irony; it’s absurdity. God laughs at man flaunting his puny fist in the face of the Almighty.

#### **e. Displeasure**

Verse 4 is derision. Verse 5 is displeasure. Look, if you will, in verse 5: “*Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.*” (Psalms 2:5) Man has vexed the Almighty, and the Almighty is getting ready to vex mankind.

#### **f. Determination**

But notice not only derision, and displeasure; notice determination. Look in verse 6—and here’s the best part of this psalm: “*Yet...*” Now, if you have your own Bible, just draw a circle around the word *yet*. Here is man in rebellion against Almighty God and

against His anointed—that is, against His Messiah, Jesus—saying, “No, we will not have this One to rule over us.” But here is what Jesus taught us to pray: “You pray that my kingdom will come and my will will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.” (Matthew 6:10) Well, will it be done? Look at that word *yet*. Oh, I love that word *yet*. God Almighty says from the glory, “yet,” in spite of the ranting of the atheist; “yet,” in spite of the scorn of the modernist; “yet,” in spite of the ignorance of mankind; “yet,” in spite of the scheming of Satan, “*Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.*” (Psalms 2:6) What does that mean? It means that Jesus Christ is going to reign from Zion, the very city where they crucified Him.

My dear friend, God has His heart set on it. God says, “I’m going to do it. It doesn’t matter what happens. All hell can’t stop it.” There’s a kingdom of grace: He rules from a throne of grace. (Hebrews 4:16) There’s a kingdom of goodness: “*The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness...peace, and joy.*” (Romans 14:17) But, bless God, there’s coming a kingdom of glory.

May I tell you what my favorite verse tonight is? You know it meanders around. But here’s my favorite verse tonight—1 Timothy chapter 6 and verse 15. It speaks of Jesus coming, and it says this: “*Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords*” (1 Timothy 6:15)—in His time—in His time! When they were carrying Jesus to crucify Him, the women were weeping. And Jesus looked at them, and Jesus said, “Don’t weep for me; weep for yourselves.” (Luke 23:28) He said, “This is your hour; my hour has not yet come.” (John 2:4) Oh, I love that—I love that! Oh, in the city where they crucified Him: “*Yet*”—yet, yet—“*have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.*”

‡ Have you ever played checkers and people move the checkers back and forth, and then one time you see your move, and you put your man right there on king’s row, and you say, “Crown him”? That’s what God’s going to do: put His Son right there and say, “Crown Him.” And Jesus will reign! ‡

*Jesus shall reign where'er the sun  
Does his successive journeys run;  
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,  
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.*

—ISAAC WATTS

The dimensions of the kingdom: It’s a kingdom of grace, a kingdom of goodness, and, bless God, a kingdom of glory. We’re praying for it: “*Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done.*” (Matthew 6:10)

## II. The Demands of the Kingdom

Now there's something else I want you to see: Not only the dimensions of the kingdom, but I want you to see the demands of the kingdom—the demands of the kingdom. What is the demand of the kingdom? Well, if He's the King, then there comes with His lordship our service. So we're to pray for His will to be done. That's the demand of the kingdom.

Now our Lord is teaching them to pray. Do you know what the purpose of prayer is? The purpose of prayer is to secure the will of God. You see, when we pray, prayer is not some exercise where we bend God's will to make it fit our will. Oh, no. *Prayer is finding the will of God and getting in on it.* And that's the reason someone has wisely said, "Nothing lies outside the reach of prayer except that which lies outside the will of God." Prayer is finding the will of God and getting in on it. *"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done."* (Matthew 6:10)

Now, let me give you the formula, therefore, for getting your prayer answered. It's found in 1 John chapter 5, verses 14 and 15: *"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us."* (1 John 5:14) Don't worry about praying in the will of God—I mean, like the will of God is something you have to do. No, the will of God is something you get to do. Praying in the will of God does not limit you; it frees you. Praying in the will of God does not mean fewer blessings for you; it means more blessings for you, because *God wants for you what you'd want for yourself if you had enough sense to want it.* God loves you, and God's will is for your welfare as well as for His glory. But you don't get your prayers answered without faith, and you don't get faith or confidence until you know you're in the will of God.

### A. You Have Never Prayed with Faith About Anything That Wasn't the Will of God

May I tell you, dear friend, number one: You have never prayed with faith about anything that wasn't the will of God—never! You might have called it faith, but it wasn't faith, because God didn't give you faith. God only gives you faith for that which is His will. You see, God is not going to give you faith for something that is not God's desire. So if it wasn't God's will, why would God give you faith to claim something? You see, faith isn't something you generate; faith is a gift of God. You have never prayed with faith for anything that wasn't the will of God.

### B. You Have Never Prayed with Faith but What Your Prayer Was Answered

I'm going to tell you something else: You have never prayed in faith but what your prayer was answered—never! *"This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us"*—whatever it is. (1 John 5:14) When we pray in faith, we have it. That's the reason Jesus Christ taught us to pray, *"Our*

*Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done*—“*Thy will be done*” (Matthew 6:9–10)—because praying in the will of God is the secret of praying in faith.

How do you know the will of God, therefore? May I give you three quick principles that you might pray in faith in the will of God?

### **1. The Surrender Principle**

Number one: There is the surrender principle. You bow before that throne of grace, that throne of goodness, and that throne of glory. He’s the King; let Him reign supreme. You see, the Bible says—and we’ve referred to this verse several times recently—Psalm 37, verse 4: *“Delight thyself also in the LORD: and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.”* (Psalms 37:4) What does that mean? Does that mean that you can love God and have what you want? No, my dear friend. It means if you love God, you’ll want what He wants. That’s what it means. You see, “I want to have what you want me to have, God. I delight in you.” When you delight in God and not in yourself, when you want the will of God, my dear friend, then you’ll have the desire of your heart. James says, *“Ye lust, and have not; ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.”* (James 4:2–3) The surrender principle.

Let me ask you a question: Is there anything you wouldn’t do for God if you knew He wanted you to do it? Now, don’t answer it out loud, but think about it. Is there anything you wouldn’t do for God if you knew He wanted you to do it? My dear friend, if you cannot say, “I am ready to do whatever He wants me to do, regardless,” you’re not in a position to know the will of God. God does not show His will to rebels. There is the surrender principle. When you delight yourself in the Lord, when you say, “Lord, you are Lord”—that means boss—“whatever it is, I’m reporting for duty,” that’s step number one: the surrender principle.

### **2. The Scripture Principle**

Step number two is the Scripture principle. God gives you His Word so that you might know His will. That’s the reason Jesus said in John 15, verse 7, *“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you”—have their dwelling place in you—“ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”* (John 15:7) Now, wait a minute. Do we ask what God wills, or do we ask what we will? The answer is yes—yes. Why? Because we abide in Him, His Word abides in us, and now His will is our will. And now we pray and get our prayers answered—the Scripture principle. But the Scripture principle won’t do you any good at all unless you first of all practice the surrender principle, to say, “Lord, your will be done. I want your will.”



### 3. The Spirit Principle

The third principle: the surrender principle, the Scripture principle, and then the Spirit principle—the Spirit principle. Romans 8, verses 26 and 27: *“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought:”—*isn’t that true? We don’t know—*“but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.”* (Romans 8:26–27) How wonderful! When you have that surrender principle, you get the Word of God in you—that Scripture principle—then the Holy Spirit of God begins to pray in you and through you. He energizes, motivates, and guides your prayer.

And the most wonderful definition of prayer I know of is this: Prayer is the Holy Spirit finding a desire in the heart of the Father, and then putting that desire in our heart, and then sending it back to heaven in the power of the cross. Do you love that? *The prayer that gets to heaven is the prayer that starts in heaven.* We just close the circuit. That’s what it means to pray in the name of Jesus. To pray in the name of Jesus means nothing more or less than to pray in the will of God. Jesus said in John 16, verse 24, *“Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name:”—*that is, “in my will”—*“ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.”* (John 16:24) Now I can’t ask in His name if I don’t know what He wants.

### III. The Desire for the Kingdom

You see, there are the dimensions of the kingdom: a kingdom of grace, a kingdom of goodness, a kingdom of glory. There are the demands of the kingdom: *“Thy will be done.”* (Matthew 6:10) There’s one last thing, and I’ll be finished. And I’ll just shave this point down. There is the desire for the kingdom. Oh, my dear friend, we’re taught to pray for the kingdom. We’re to center our affections on the kingdom. Let me tell you what you should do. You fill in the points; I’ll give you the outline. *We should live for the kingdom. We should long for the kingdom. We should look for the kingdom.* Because, my dear friend, the King is coming! Oh, hallelujah!

### Conclusion

Let’s pray. Father, I thank you for your Word tonight. O God, I pray that you’ll put a desire in our hearts to see the King in His glory and to serve the King until we see Him. And what a day that will be when we look upon His face! O Lord Jesus, be thou King tonight in our hearts and in our lives. †

@ God wants for you what you'd want for yourself if you had enough sense to want it., 8  
@ If I had a thousand lives to live, I'd give every one of them to Jesus., 4  
@ Prayer is finding the will of God and getting in on it., 7  
@ The prayer that gets to heaven is the prayer that starts in heaven., 9  
@ We should live for the kingdom. We should long for the kingdom. We should look for the kingdom., 10  
@ You cannot have Jesus as Savior without having Him as Lord., 3  
# God is going to crown His Son and Jesus will reign., 7  
# Lord Nelson said to the surrendering French admiral, "Your sword first, sir.", 3  
Amillennialism, 4  
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# Make Sure You Get the Real Thing

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** February 21, 1993

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 6:19–24

*“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.”*

MATTHEW 6:19–20

## Outline

Introduction

- I. We Must Possess Real Wealth
- II. We Must Perceive Real Wisdom
- III. We Must Practice True Worship

Conclusion

## Introduction

Be turning, please, to Matthew chapter 6. We’ve been making our way through this wonderful Sermon on the Mount under the general title “Building on the Rock.” And today, we come to Matthew chapter 6, and I begin reading in verse 19. Before I read, may I say that this is a plastic and a phony world in which we live. Many of us have been lied to, conned, abused, gypped, manipulated, deceived, until we have a sales resistance built up. And yet, in spite of it all, many times we sell out too cheaply, and we end up having the wrong thing.

Today I want to talk to you on this subject: “Make Sure You Get the Real Thing.” Verse 19: *“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other: or else he will hold to the one, and*

*despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*” (Matthew 6:19–24) There are three basic truths in these passages that I have read to you—many things, but three basic truths.

## I. We Must Possess Real Wealth

Truth number one: We must possess real wealth if we would be successful in life. Look again in verse 19: *“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.”* (Matthew 6:19) Now, there are many people who think that they are wealthy who are not. It’s a strange thing. We see on television the lifestyles of the rich and famous, and really, many times it’s the lifestyle of the rich and foolish.

When is a rich man poor? Well, a rich man is poor when he tries to find satisfaction in his money, because he will never find it. Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, said, *“He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver.”* (Ecclesiastes 5:10)

¶ A man of modest income said to a man who was very rich, “I have more than you have.” The rich man said, “How is that so?” He said, “Because I have all I want, and you don’t.” Think about it: “I have all I want, and you don’t.” ¶

Did you know that not to want something is better than owning it? You don’t have to maintain it. Listen—listen. A rich man is a poor man when he tries to find satisfaction in what he has. A rich man is a poor man when his wealth increases his worry. Let me give you some verses. Proverbs 15, verse 6: *“In the house of the righteous is much treasure: but in the revenues of the wicked is trouble.”* (Proverbs 15:6) Think about it: *“in the revenues of the wicked is trouble.”* (Proverbs 15:6) You see, many times a man, when he increases his riches, increases his worries.

Thirdly, a rich man is a poor man when he becomes a slave to his money. Put this verse down—Proverbs 23 and verse 4: *“Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom.”* (Proverbs 23:4) If you set your goal to be wealthy, I can tell you you’re going to have difficulty, because when you set your goal to be wealthy, then money becomes your master rather than your servant. It’s incredibly bad advice to tell a young person, “Make all the money you can, just so long as you make it honestly,” because if you tell a person to do that, he’ll be making money when ought to be doing something else. He’ll be making money when he ought to be spending time with the children. He’ll be making money when he ought to be serving the Lord, when he ought to be praying, when he ought to be doing other things. A rich man is poor when he becomes a slave to his money.

A rich man is a poor man when he has no treasure in heaven. Put this verse down—Proverbs chapter 23 and verse 5: *“Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings: they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.”*

(Proverbs 23:5) Money talks all right; it says, “Goodbye.” I mean, you cannot keep it—you cannot keep it. And, if you don’t have any treasure in heaven, really, how rich are you? Everything that you have that you think is yours, in a material sense, sooner or later, you’re going to leave. That’s what the Bible says: “*riches...make themselves wings.*” (Proverbs 23:5)

‡ Some time ago, when the bottom fell out of the oil market, I heard of a woman walking down the streets of Dallas, Texas. She heard a noise on the ground, a little voice. She looked around. She couldn’t imagine who it was that was speaking, but some little voice down there, low behind. And, she looks down, and she picks up a frog off the ground. And, it’s a frog that’s talking, and the frog says, “Kiss me.” She said, “Why should I kiss you?” “Well,” he said, “I am a Texas oilman. I’ve been turned to a frog. But, if you’ll kiss me, I’ll turn back to a Texas oilman.” She took him and put him in her purse. And, her friend said, “Why didn’t you kiss him?” She said, “I’d rather have a talking frog than a Texas oilman.”‡

Friend, money can only last so long, and then it goes. I’ll tell you, a rich man is poor if he dies a Christless death. Listen to this one—Proverbs 11 and verse 4: “*Riches profit not in the day of wrath.*” (Proverbs 11:4) Oh boy, what does that mean? It means, friend, you may pay off a traffic policeman, but you’ll not bribe heaven’s Judge. It doesn’t matter how wealthy you are, your riches are not going to help you at the Judgment if you don’t know the Lord Jesus Christ.

Luke 16—a tragic story. The Bible says, “*The rich man...died...and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments.*” (Luke 16:22–23) Our Lord says, “[Don’t] lay...up for yourselves treasures upon [this] earth.” (Matthew 6:19)

‡ Years ago, I read a story about a man named Charlie Dobson, who lived in Ontario, Canada. They didn’t have regular garbage pickup there; and so, Charlie Dobson had a little fun game, the way he would get rid of his garbage. He took his coffee grounds, and his grapefruit rinds, and his eggshells, and the paper, and the trash, and so forth, and would put it in a little box and then wrap that box up in wrapping paper and put a bow around it and then take it out in front of his house and put it down by the curb. Invariably, someone driving along would see that beautifully wrapped box, would stop, pick it up, put it in their car, and off they would go. And, Charlie was looking behind the curtains all the time, watching those people drive off with their giftwrapped garbage. So often—so often—that’s what the devil does: he just takes the things of this world and wraps them up beautifully. But, all we have is not treasure; what we have is trash.‡

Now, the Bible does not say that it is wrong to have material things. Don’t ever get that idea. Let me give you this verse—1 Timothy chapter 6, verse 17: “*Charge them that*

*are rich in this world*”—are you rich? Listen, God doesn’t condemn you for being rich, but God says this—“*Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded*”—that is, “don’t be proud”—“*nor trust in uncertain riches*”—“don’t put your trust in your possessions”—“*but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.*” (1 Timothy 6:17) God does not mind you enjoying your wealth. Just don’t let it make you proud, and don’t put your trust there. Remember it is a gift of God, and “*God [gives] us richly all things to enjoy.*” (1 Timothy 6:17)

Certainly, when the Bible says, “*Lay not up for yourselves treasure [on] earth,*” (Matthew 6:19) it does not mean you’re not to work, because the Bible says in Proverbs chapter 6, verses 6 and following: “*Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in harvest.*” (Proverbs 6:6–8) God says you’d better learn how to work like an ant works. Nothing wrong with work. Nothing wrong with having material goods.

What does this mean then—when the Lord Jesus Christ says, “*Lay not up for yourselves [treasure] upon earth*”? (Matthew 6:19) Actually, you don’t see it in the English, but He uses the word *treasure* twice in that sentence. What it literally says is, “Stop treasuring treasure”—“Stop treasuring treasure.” That is, when your money possesses you rather than you possessing it, when you see wealth as an end in itself rather than a means to an end, you have begun to treasure treasure. And, when you treasure treasure, you really don’t have any treasure because it can be lost. As a matter of fact, our Lord is not saying, “Don’t have a treasure.” Our Lord is saying, “Do have a treasure; just make certain it’s a real treasure you have.” You see, He’s saying, “Get the real thing”—“Get the real thing.” Don’t be cheated. Don’t let the devil make a fool of you. Quit treasuring treasure. “*Lay up for yourselves [treasure] in heaven.*” (Matthew 6:20) Make sure it’s real treasure. *You want to know how wealthy you are, mister? You add up everything you have that money cannot buy and death can’t take away; then you’ll know how wealthy you are.* Quit treasuring treasure.

Now, listen to this. Put this verse down—1 Peter chapter 1 and verse 4. Peter is talking about what we have in heaven, and he says we have “*an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.*” (1 Peter 1:4) “Incorruptible”—“incorruptible.” You see, our Lord spoke of that—where the moths can eat it, the rust can corrode, the thieves can get it. Our Lord is saying, “You’d better have a safety deposit box in heaven, where the foul breath of decay and the gnawing tooth of time and some thief cannot get what belongs to you—incorruptible, undefiled.” That means that it’s not tainted money. It’s not tainted wealth. It doesn’t have a curse upon it—unfading. That means no fees, no court costs, no taxes, no inflation can take it away—reserved in heaven for you. That’s pretty good treasure.

Jim Elliot, that missionary who gave his life to take the gospel to the Auca Indians and was slain there by the Amazons with a spear, a fine young missionary, died in the prime of his life, but he wrote these immortal words in the flyleaf of his Bible: “No man is a fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.” That’s a pretty good philosophy. You see, He’s talking about treasure in heaven. That’s what our Lord is talking about.

Now, how can you have treasure in heaven? How can you have treasure in heaven? Paul told Timothy that you’re to lay up for yourself a “*foundation against the time to come.*” (1 Timothy 6:19) How can you do this? You know, people say, “Well, you can’t take your money to heaven with you.” Well, that’s right, but you can send it on ahead. You say, “How can you send it ahead?” Well, the only way that you can get your money to heaven—the only way you can take your treasure and put it in heaven, lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven—is to invest in something going to heaven; that’s all. Now, what’s going to heaven? Praise goes to heaven so you ought to praise the Lord. Souls are going to heaven so you ought to win souls to the Lord Jesus Christ. Invest your money in missions. Invest your money in soul winning. Invest your life in prayer and praise and those things that are going to heaven. And, when you invest your wealth in that which is going to heaven, you don’t take it with you; you send it on ahead.

† Some time ago I heard a story that touched me. I have a pastor friend up in Virginia, and his name is Vander Warner. He just recently resigned from the wonderful Grove Avenue Baptist Church there in Virginia—Richmond. But, Vander told a story something like this: He had in his congregation a beautiful young woman. She was working hard. She was saving her money. She fell in love with a young man. They were going to get married. They were just getting ready for the wedding. This young girl in her automobile was driving along, and one of those tragic accidents happened. She had a collision, and she was killed.

When the police came to the scene of the accident, they were trying to find out who this girl was, trying to find out how they were going to notify the next of kin. And so, they had to open her purse. They began to go through her personal things trying to find some address, to find some identification. Do you know what they found? They found her bank statement and where her checks had been written, and from that they got her name. And, somehow they got her fianc, and he ended up there at the scene of the accident. And, the policeman said, “I had to look at this bank statement, and,” he said, “whether it was right or wrong,” he said, “I couldn’t help it,” he said, “but my eyes just went down to her deposits and withdrawals, and so forth, and the checks that she’d written. And,” he said, “I kept seeing a check written to a certain church, a check on a regular basis, a good-sized check written to this church, to this church, to this church.” He said, “What kind of a girl was this?” The young man told what kind of a girl she was,

who loved the Lord Jesus in such a way that you could tell by looking at her bank account, and led that policeman to a saving faith in Jesus Christ.†

I wonder, would somebody come to know Jesus Christ by looking at your bank statement? Would somebody have some idea as to where really your treasure is, what really matters to you? Jesus said, “Don’t lay up for yourself treasure on earth. Lay up treasure in heaven,” (Matthew 6:19–20) because friend, all of these things that you think are treasures, one of these days you’re going to leave. You say, “But now, wait a minute, pastor. I’ve got to save something for me.” And, the Bible does teach that you need to take care of yourself, and plan for your children, and leave an inheritance.

† There’s a wealthy businessman over in Nashville. If I were to give his name, many of you would know his name because it’s a well-known name. That man invested so very much in the cause of Christ. He was a man that God blessed with the ability to make money, but also God touched his heart with the ability to give money; and he gave and gave and gave and gave. And then, he had a financial reverse. Things went wrong for him, and he lost. And, his fortune was gone after he’d given all of that money.

You say, “Pastor, was that right for that to happen to him after he gave all of that money?” God is sovereign. He can do as He wishes. He did with Job, didn’t He? This man lost all that money.

One day a friend came to him, and the friend said, “You know, you don’t have anything now, do you?” He said, “No, I really don’t—not in this world.” He said, “Well, do you ever think about all that money that you gave away? Do you ever think about that?” “Oh,” he said, “I think about it a lot of times.” He said, “That’s all I have left.” Don’t you love that? “That’s what I have left.” That’s the part that nobody can get. It is in heaven, reserved; nobody can take it away. That’s what the Lord Jesus Christ is talking about when He says, “*Lay up for yourselves [treasure] in heaven.*” (Matthew 6:20) †

## II. We Must Perceive Real Wisdom

What I’m trying to say to you as your pastor and as your friend—we must possess real wealth. Second thing: Not only must we possess real wealth, but we must perceive real wisdom. Look, if you will, in verses 22 and 23: “*The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!*” (Matthew 6:22–23)

There are many people who think they have wisdom, but they don’t. They don’t have real wisdom. The light that is in them is darkness. How great is that darkness! I can hardly overstate the need for wisdom in this world. Proverbs chapter 4, verses 4 through 7: “*He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my*



commandments, and live. Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee”—talking about wisdom—“love her, and she shall keep thee. Wisdom is the principle thing”—young man, listen to me this morning—“Wisdom is the principle thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.” (Proverbs 4:4–7) We’re not talking here about learning; we’re talking about wisdom. We’re not talking about intelligence; we’re talking about wisdom. Make sure you get the real thing. “If...the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!” (Matthew 6:23) Suppose you go off to the university, and you get a graduate degree. You have a 4.0 average, and you don’t know Jesus Christ. You’ve made straight A’s and flunked in life. You’ve missed it. You have missed it.

Now, when our Lord is talking about the eye, He’s not talking about the eye of the body; He’s talking about the eye of the soul. And, He’s comparing the eye of the soul to the eye of the body. Our Lord here is talking about sight physically, and insight spiritually, and He uses your physical eye as an illustration because it’s your physical eye that lets in the light. It’s the light that enables you to see. And so, what our Lord here talks about is the single eye and the sinful eye. “If [your] eye be single, [your] body [is] full of light...if [your] eye be evil”—and the word for “evil” there is the word that means “sinful”—“[then your] body [is] full of darkness.” (Matthew 6:22–23)

So, you have the single eye, and you have the sinful eye. Now, a single eye is an eye that is healthy, an eye that is focused. And, what is it focused on? Of course, it’s focused on the Lord. The Apostle Paul said, “I determined...to know [nothing] among you, [except] Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” (1 Corinthians 2:2) The Apostle Paul was a one-note man. You say, “Well, now wait a minute. Paul preached about many things other than Jesus Christ.” Now, if you analyze it, no matter what else he was talking about, it was just more about Jesus. Everything centers in Jesus. You see, you may learn more about Jesus; you may go deeper into Jesus. “But really,” Paul said, “I haven’t known anything else but Jesus.” You say, “Isn’t that fanatical?” Call it what you wish, but you need a single eye. The Apostle Paul said, “This one thing I do.” (Philippians 3:13)

🔦 Remember that old story about the man who had the cello and was playing it just like this? Somebody said, “You don’t move your fingers up and down like other people; you just hold your finger in one spot.” He said, “They’re looking for it. I’ve found it.”🔦

Friend, that is it! That is it: Jesus Christ! Other people can go up and down as they wish—“if [your] eye be single.” (Matthew 6:22) Oh, to know the Lord Jesus! To have all your wellsprings in the Lord Jesus! You can go deeper into Christ. You’ll never go beyond Christ. When you come to that spot, your body will be full of light. (Matthew 6:22) There are times when I get busy and get on the fast track, and I pray and so forth.

But, sometimes I have an idea that I'm just really not centered in Christ like I need to be—just not what I ought to be—and I have to have a session. I'll get in my study and lock the door, and I say, "Lord, I've been double-minded; I need to be single-minded." And, I take everything that means anything, and I bring it under the dominion of Jesus Christ. And, I take things that are precious to me—I take my family (very precious to me), give it to Jesus Christ; I take any so-called "possessions" that I think I hold title to and make Him Lord of those things; I take any so-called "ability" as a speaker, as a preacher; I take this church; I take my health, my body, my right to myself and give it Jesus Christ.

Now, sometimes I say that I am more than I am, and I know that I haven't arrived yet, so I have to stay there and I have to wrestle. Maybe you never do, but I have to go through this from time to time. You know how I can tell when I get there? My body is full of light. You say, "Well, what does that mean?" I don't know that I can explain it to you, but there's something about being clear. There's something about saying that Jesus Christ is Lord of all. And, when your eye is single, your body is full of light. (Matthew 6:22; Luke 11:34) That's the way God wants us to live, my dear friend—with real wisdom; the single eye, as over against the sinful eye.

What is the sinful eye? Well, if the single eye is an eye that is focused, the sinful eye is an eye with double vision. James says that, "*A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.*" (James 1:8) But, the sad thing about the man with double vision is that he thinks that he sees. You see, Jesus said, "*If...the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!*" (Matthew 6:23) It's bad when a man is in darkness and knows he's in darkness, but isn't it tragic when a man is in darkness and thinks he's in the light?

Do you know in the book of Judges what it says about a time of moral declination? It says in the book of Judges that "*every man did that which was right in his own eyes.*" (Judges 17:6; 21:25) He didn't do what was wrong in his own eyes; he "*did that which was right.*" (Judges 17:6; 21:25) And, the nation was going deeper and deeper and deeper into moral declination. That's exactly where America is today. These people that are trying to lead this nation, they're not doing what they think is wrong; the tragedy is that they're doing what they think is right, and they're so wrong. When the blind lead the blind, they both fall in the ditch. "*Every man did that which was right in his own eyes.*" (Judges 17:6; 21:25) It is morality by majority rather than the Word of God. And, "*if the light that is in [you] be darkness, how great is that darkness!*" (Matthew 6:23) "*Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.*" (Romans 1:22) And, it becomes midnight at high noon. I mean, they're saying, "Oh, we're walking in the light," and they're stumbling in the darkness. Wisdom is the principle thing. Knowledge is proud that it knows so much. Wisdom is humble that it knows so little. You need knowledge to

pass the test in school. You need wisdom to pass the test of life. Knowledge is learned. Wisdom is given. Knowledge comes by looking around. Wisdom comes by looking up.

*“If [your] eye be single, [your] body [is] full of light.”* (Matthew 6:22) What is our Lord saying in the passage before us? He’s saying, “Make certain you have real wealth. Make certain that you have real wisdom. Don’t let the light that’s in you be darkness.” What a tragedy! What a travesty!

### III. We Must Practice True Worship

The third thing our Lord is saying: not only make sure that you have real wealth, not only make certain that you have real wisdom, but make certain that you have real worship. Possess true wealth. Perceive true wisdom. Practice true worship. Look at it—verse 24: *“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”* (Matthew 6:24) Now, what is *mammon*? Just an Aramaic word for “possessions.” It came to be the god of wealth, the god of personal possessions. You can’t serve both. Now, Jesus, here, did not say, “You ought not to try to have two masters.” Jesus didn’t say, “It’s better not to have two masters.” What Jesus Christ here is talking about is an impossibility: you *can’t* serve two masters. It’s absolutely impossible.

You say, “Now, wait a minute. I’ve got a job. I work for this company so many hours. And then, after I work for this company so many hours, I quit. I get something to eat. I’ve got a second job. I have two masters. I have a job here, and I moonlight over here. I have two masters.” No, you don’t; you have two employers—and that’s fine. If you can carry it, if you can handle it, fine; that’s all right. That’s not what our Lord is talking about here at all. The word that he uses for “master” is the word *kurios*: “lord, a slave owner.” Now, if you are my slave, you can’t be anybody else’s slave. We’re not talking about somebody that you serve, in the sense of your willingness. Willingness doesn’t have anything to do with this. We’re talking about a master and his slave. And, Jesus said, “You can’t be a slave to two any more than you can walk in different directions at the same time.” *“No man can serve two masters.”* (Matthew 6:24) It is absolutely, totally impossible. And, there is one absolute Lord, and His name is Jesus. And, Jesus does not want a place in your life—He really doesn’t. *Jesus does not want prominence in your life. Jesus demands*—listen, demands—*preeminence in your life*. He is *Kurios*. He is Lord. That means no rival, no refusal, and no rebuttal.

Now, if you’ve got two slave owners, which one owns you? Neither one. You are His slave. You say, “Well, I don’t want to be a slave.” Then you’ll never know what Christianity is, and you will never know the freedom that comes through absolute slavery. When you bow the knee to Jesus Christ and say, “I’ll say ‘yes,’ Lord—yes, you

are Lord of all,” then Jesus said, *“If the Son shall make you free, [you’ll] be free indeed.”* (John 8:36)

You say, “Well, I don’t want to be anybody’s slave.” You already are. “He that serves sin is the slave of sin.” (Romans 6:16) You say, “Well, I’ll do as I want.” Yes, you’ll do as you want, but you’ll never do as you are. You’re free to do as you want, but you’re not free to do as you ought, until you become a slave of Jesus Christ. You’re the slave, the servant, of Satan. Make sure, friend, that it is real worship that you get.

So many people think that coming to church on Sunday is worship—coming, sitting, listening to Adrian preach is worship; listening to the choir is worship. And then, you go back out to that other world, and you’re trying to serve God and mammon. You can’t do it. You deceive yourself. *Our God is not a moonlighting God. He doesn’t have a duplex for a throne.* There’s one God. *“Thou shalt [serve] the Lord thy God, and him only.”* (Matthew 4:10; Luke 4:8) And, if He is not Lord in the true sense of the word, you haven’t got the real thing.

Jesus is saying that you must possess real wealth. Jesus is saying you must perceive real wisdom. Jesus is saying you must practice true worship. Make certain it’s the real thing that you get.

† This past week I was in California, the National Religious Broadcasters, and we heard Paul Yonggi Cho speak. You know who Paul Cho is? He’s the pastor of the largest church in the world. You say, “Well, I think this a big church you pastor here, Pastor Rogers. How big is that one?” Well, buckle your pew belt. Let me tell you: 700,000 members. I didn’t mistake that: 700,000 members. We’d better get busy, folks—700,000 members in Seoul, Korea.

I’ve met Paul Cho—had dinner with him in Korea, preached in his church. Brother Bob, we were there together. Paul Cho, among other things, is a man of prayer. He told of an experience. He said, “I knew I have to have that special time with God in prayer so I told my secretary, “I’m going to pray. I do not want to be disturbed by anyone unless it is Jesus Christ Himself. Don’t disturb me.” He went to pray. And, the president of Korea came. The president of Korea said, “I want to see the pastor.” The secretary said, “I’m sorry. He can’t be disturbed.” He said, “You don’t understand. I, the president of Korea, want to see the pastor. I want to talk with him.” She said, “I can’t disturb him. He’s talking with God,” and wouldn’t let the president of Korea in to see the pastor. Later on, the president’s wife was talking to Paul Cho, and she said, “You ought to fire that secretary that you have. She wouldn’t let my husband in to see you.” He said, “I told her to do that.” “Well,” the wife of the president said to the pastor, “he is the president of Korea.” He said, “I was talking to the President of the universe.” One Master, one Master, one Master—not two; one. That challenged me because I think if the president of the United States wanted to see me, I’d say, “Excuse me, Lord. I’ve got somebody

more important.” That was a challenge to me.†

I also had some time some special time with one of my dear friends, Bill Bright. You know, Bill Bright is the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ. Do you know what happened to Bill and Vonette Bright? Bill Bright, in 1951, was a young businessman, and Bill Bright began to study the Bible. Christ got a hold of his life; and so, Bill and Vonette, just young people, many years ago, 1951, decided that what Jesus Christ said in this passage of Scripture, that *“no man can serve two masters”* (Matthew 6:24) ... Do you know what they did? I’ll tell you what they did: they wrote out a contract and signed it—Bill and Vonette together; they signed it—and this contract said, “Lord, we will be your slaves.” And, they signed it—not just said it, but actually wrote it out and signed it, a contract. That was 1951. Today, they head up that organization called Campus Crusade for Christ that has forty thousand fulltime workers, counselors, and volunteer workers around the world in 152 countries—because they said, “Lord, we are your slaves.”

You say, “Well, Lord, you can have a little bit of my time.” He doesn’t want it. Just keep it. You say, “Lord, you have a little bit of my life.” Just save yourself the time. *“No man can serve two masters.”* (Matthew 6:24) You just can’t do it.

## Conclusion

Why don’t you make certain it’s the real thing you get? Real treasure—you’ll never lose it. Real wisdom—*“[your] body [will] be full of light.”* (Matthew 6:22) Real worship—*“Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”* (Philippians 2:11) †

# A Word for Worriers

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** July 19, 2000

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 6:24–34

*“Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”*

MATTHEW 6:34

## Outline

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### Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you find Matthew chapter 6 in the Word of God? And, I want to talk to you about something that you need to hear tonight. Now, this is a word for worriers. Now, I know it doesn't really apply to you, but you can give this on to somebody else who may need it. Actually, all of us, if we would be honest, worry more than we should worry. And, actually, we shouldn't worry at all according to this passage of Scripture.

Look, if you will, in Matthew chapter 6, beginning in verse 25. Now, these are the words of Jesus, not of pop psychologists. Jesus said, *“Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought”*—now, let's just stop there. And, the Greek word doesn't mean that you're

not to think, but the idea is anxious thought, worrisome thought—*“Take no [worrisome] thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body more than raiment?”*—or “clothing”—*“Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought”—*that is, “by anxious care”—*“can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:)* for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” (Matthew 6:25–34)

Now, worry, really, is a serious problem that we all must face. And, in some way or another, we worry. The ignorant worry that they know so little, and the educated are concerned that they know so much. The poor fret and worry because they don't have any money, and the rich fret and worry because they have assets and they're afraid somebody's going to take them away. The old worry because they're facing death and the sunset of life, and the young worry because they're facing an uncertain future. And, we just worry. As we get older, we're afraid—we're afraid we will get older, and then we're afraid we won't. And so, we just worry. It's kind of built into human nature, but in verse 25, and verse 31, and verse 34, our Lord tells us not to do it. (Matthew 6:25,31,34)

Actually, the word *worry*, or “anxious thought,” has the idea of division, being pulled apart, being double-minded. James tells us that *“a double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”* (James 1:8) Now, when Jesus says, *“Take...no thought for the morrow,”* (Matthew 6:34) He's not saying that we're to live a careless, happy-go-lucky, flippant life that does not consider the future. To the contrary, Jesus taught us to consider the future, to prepare for death and after death. And, He said before we go to war, we ought to decide whether or not we have enough to fight the battle. (Luke 14:31) If we go to build a tower, we ought to consider whether or not we have enough to finish the tower. (Luke 14:28) Jesus is not against planning. He's not against looking toward the future and doing as we ought to make ready for the future, but what He is warning against—as a matter of fact, forbidding—is foreboding; that is, to worry about the future.

Now, in this passage of Scripture, God doesn't merely tell us not to worry, but He tells us how not to worry. And, if He just simply told us not to do it and we were not able to do it, all that would be to increase our worries.

## **I. The Cause of Worry**

So, what is the cause of our worry? Well, the Lord summarizes that right here. Look, if you will, in chapter 6, beginning in verse 24, and you're going to find out of about four or five things that we all are prone to worry about.

### **A. We Are Prone to Worry about Finances**

The first is finances. Look in verse 24: *"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."* (Matthew 6:24) Now, mammon is just a word for the god of riches, the god of wealth. You can't put money first. When you worry about money, it's just a way of making money your god rather than God your God—so He mentions mammon in verse 24.

### **B. We Are Prone to Worry about Food**

And then, He mentions food in verse 25. Look at it there: *"Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat."* (Matthew 6:25) And, He tells us how foolish it is to worry about food. He says, "God feeds the fowls of the air. Isn't He going to feed you? Aren't you worth more than they?" (Matthew 6:26) There was a wonderful logic about Jesus' teaching. The inference is, what farmer would feed his chickens and starve his own children? If God takes care of the fowls of the air, won't your Heavenly Father take care of you? He's not saying we ought not to work for food. The chickens scratch for their food, but He's saying that God doesn't throw the worms in the nest. The birds have to go out and get them, but God feeds them.

### **C. We Are Prone to Worry about Fashion**

And then, not only do people worry about finance and food; they also worry about fashion. Look again in verse 25. He says here in verse 25: *"Nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on."* (Matthew 6:25) And, so many today are worried about fashion and the clothes that we're going to wear. Verse 28: He says again, *"And why take ye thought for raiment?"*—"for clothes"—*"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."* (Matthew 6:28–29) "If God puts these beautiful robes on the flowers that fade, how much more," He says, "will He take care of you?"

### **D. We Are Prone to Worry about Fitness**

And then, He mentions not only finance and food and fashion, but He also mentions



fitness. Look in verse 27: *“Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?”* (Matthew 6:27) Now, we’re asking ourselves this question: “Does that mean can you worry yourself taller?” The commentaries that I’ve studied says this does not primarily refer to height, but it refers to length of life. And, what He’s saying is that you’re not going to be able to make yourself live longer, you’re not going to add to your lifespan, by worry. Again, the Bible is not against exercise. The Bible is not against diet. The Bible is not against vitamins and proper rest. I hope that you do all of those things. I try to do those things. But, worry is not going to lengthen your life; it’s going to shorten it. You can worry yourself to death if you want to.

### **E. We Are Prone to Worry about the Future**

And, Jesus not only mentions fitness, but He also mentions what most of us are more prone to worry about than anything else: the future. Look, if you will, in verse 34: *“Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.”* (Matthew 6:34)

So, just look at all the things that He says to not worry about. Don’t worry about finances. Don’t worry about food. Don’t worry about fitness. Don’t worry about fashion. Don’t worry about the future. Just don’t worry about these things. Now, many of us worry about all of these things, or some of these things. I was doing some reading on this subject of worry, and I came across somebody’s statistics. I cannot vouch for the statistics, whether or not they’re accurate, but I can certainly say that they are interesting. Listen to this: “Forty percent of the things that we worry about will never happen. Thirty percent are about the past, which cannot be altered—it has already happened. Twelve percent of the things we worry about deal with the area of criticism by others—and most of that is untrue. Ten percent of what we worry about deals with our health—and worry and stress only makes that worse. Eight percent are about real problems that must be faced.”

So, much worry, as we’re going to see in a moment, the best you can say about it: it’s useless. And, most of the things we worry about never come to pass anyway.

¶ I think about a little lady who said, “Don’t tell me that worry doesn’t do any good. Most of the things I worry about never happen.”¶

And, worry just has a way of just capturing us unnecessarily.

## **II. The Cost of Worry**

Now, those are the things we worry about—and maybe some things that Jesus did not list. But, think not only about the cause of our worrying, but think about the cost. What will worry do to you? Why does our Lord forbid it? In the Psalms, He says, “Fret not thyself; it tendeth only to evil.”(Psalms 37:1–8) Well, look, if you will, in verse 27 again:

*“Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?”* (Matthew 6:27)  
That tells that the best you can say about worry is that it’s useless. It is absolutely useless. That’s the best thing you can say about it. It never solved a problem. It never lifted a burden. It never dried a tear. It is absolutely useless.

When I was a youngster, somebody told me something I’ve never forgotten. Somebody said, “Adrian, there are two categories—two classes of things—you should never worry about. Number one: things that you can do something about. If you can do something about it, don’t worry about it; do it. The second category that you should never worry about are things you can’t do anything about. If you can’t do anything about it, worry’s not going to change it.” Now, that may seem to you like it’s simplistic, but there’s a lot of wisdom there. Two categories of things that you’re never to worry about: number one, things you can do something about; number two, things you can’t do anything about. And, that covers the waterfront, doesn’t it? That’s it. There’s nothing else. At the best, worry is useless.

### **A. Worry Hurts You**

But, worry is absolutely harmful. Worry is harmful to you physically. It will do the same thing to you physiologically that sand will do to machinery.

¶ I read this interesting comment on worry: *little ants can pick the carcass of a dead animal cleaner than lions can—a lot of little ants. It seems like it’s just those little nagging things seem to pull us down.*¶

### **B. Worry Hurts Others**

But, not only is worry harmful to you; it’s harmful to other people. Do you like to be around people who are neurotic and who worry all the time? I mean, I know individuals who, when they walk into a room, it seems like somebody just turned the lights off, and they brighten up the room when they leave it. And, as I said about the bitter people Sunday, there ought to be a place where you could lock all the worrywarts up and let them worry one another.

### **C. Worry Hurts God**

Now, I say that, but it’s kind of cruel because, seriously, these people need our pity and they need our love. But, worry’s harmful to you. It’s harmful to other people. But, have you ever thought what a wound in the heart of God that worry must be—how worry must hurt our God? Look in verse 30: *“Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?”* (Matthew 6:30) Now, a little faith is an insult to God.

¶ If you were to speak about me and say all sorts of nice things about me—and if you want to do that, I give you permission—but then say, “There’s one thing about Adrian:

you can't trust him," well, no matter what else you may have said about me, if you then say that I'm not trustworthy, you've just cut the taproot of my character.†

You say, "God is good. God is great. God is strong. God is grace. God is love. God is this. God is that. But, I don't believe Him; I don't trust Him." Well, the Bible says that *"he that believeth not God hath made him a liar."* (1 John 5:10) Do you see how worry just says, "God, Romans 8:28 that says 'all things are working together for good to those who love God, who are the called according to his purpose,' is not true"? (Romans 8:28) Worry is an insult to the face of God.

† We have children. Joyce and I had the joy of seeing our children grow up—and our grandchildren now. But, suppose when my children were small, I came home and found my four children in the corner sniveling and crying and trembling. And, I would say, "Well, children, what's wrong?" And, they would say, "Well, Dad, we're afraid that the money's going to run out in the family; and so, therefore, we're going to have to move out of the house. And Dad, we're afraid that we're not going to have food to eat. And Dad, we're concerned that we're not going to have clothes to wear. And Dad, we don't know what's going to happen tomorrow—it may get worse. Dad, we're terribly concerned." Well, how do you think that would make me feel as a father if I saw my children feeling that way? That would grieve my heart, would make me feel like my children feel like I cannot take care of them. The truth of the matter is that since I'm only human, I may not be able to take care of them—that is, in and of myself. But, that aside, I would be deeply grieved to see my children sniveling and crying and trembling, thinking that their father was not able to take care of them. Worry says to our Heavenly Father, "Father, this is too big for you. You can't handle this. It's beyond you, God."†

We are concerned about things that are going to get out of hand, and that's the reason He says, *"Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field,"*—verse 30—*"which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"* (Matthew 6:30) And then, He goes on to say in verse 31: *"Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?"*—now, watch this next phrase, and it will hit you right between the running lights. Verse 32—*"(for after all these things do the Gentiles seek:)." (Matthew 6:31–32)* What He is saying is this: "You're acting like pagans when you worry. Worry is pagan." When He says, "the Gentiles," He's talking about the pagans. He said, "That's the way the people of this world think."

### III. The Cure for Worrying

Now, we've talked about the things that we worry about. We've talked about that worry is harmful to us. It's harmful to others. It is an insult and a wound to the heart of God. It

is the hallmark of small faith when we worry. Worry is faith turned inside out—that’s all it is. “Well, pastor, that’s fine. You’ve got me under conviction. Can you give me some help?” Well, God can, and He’ll do it through His Word and, I trust, through His preacher tonight. Let me give you some factors that will help you and things that I have proven in my own life—still learning, not there yet, not perfect—let me give you some factors.

### A. The Father Factor

The first factor is what I want to call “the Father factor.” Look, if you will, in verse 32: *“(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.”* (Matthew 6:32) I want you to see God as your Father. He is your Heavenly Father.

Now, we talk about our obligations to God. Has it ever dawned upon you that God has an obligation to you? When somebody brings a child into this world, do they not have an obligation to that child to take care of that child? Do you think that God some day is going to be accused of child neglect? Do you think that God brought you into this world, created you to begin with, and redeemed you to forsake you? No! *“He that spared not his own Son, but [offered] him up [freely] for us all, how shall he not...also [with him] freely give us all things?”* (Romans 8:32) God loved you enough to send Jesus to die for you. You don’t have to doubt His love any more. And so, there is the Father factor: He is your Father.

Now, you’re in Matthew chapter 6. Just turn over to Matthew chapter 10 for a moment, and look, if you will, in verse 29. We’re talking about the Father factor. Look at it: *“Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.”* (Matthew 10:29–31) Now, if God attends the funeral of a sparrow—and He does: “not a sparrow falls but what He knows about it”—if God attends the funeral of a sparrow, is not your Heavenly Father going to take care of you? Put your trust in Him.

*Said the robin to the sparrow,  
“I should really like to know,  
Why these anxious human beings  
Rush about and worry so.”  
Said the sparrow to the robin,  
“Friend I think that it must be,  
That they have no Heavenly Father,  
Such as cares for you and me.”*

—ELIZABETH CHENEY

If God takes care of the birds, He’s going to take care of us.

## B. The Focus Factor

So, there's the Father factor: remember that He is your Father; He will not abandon you. The Bible says, *"When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up."* (Psalm 27:10) And, secondly is the focus factor. Once you settled the Father factor, then you can focus on something else. And, the focus factor is to focus on the will of God. Look, if you will now, in verse 33: *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."* (Matthew 6:33) What things? Finances, food, fitness, fashion. Put God first.

Now, there's one thing about God: He will not work in second place. I've heard people challenge Matthew 6:33, but I've never known anybody who put it into practice to see it to fail. *"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness."* (Matthew 6:33) Do you know what worry is? Worry is just simply the symptom that tells you you have things out of focus; you are focusing on the wrong things. You are focusing on food, or fashion, or fitness, or finance, or future, but you're not focusing on the Father, seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. What God is saying is this: "You trust me enough to take care of my business, and I'll take care of yours." I believe that with all of my heart. You see, God is more able to take care of the things of life than you are. Most of us feel, "Well, you know, if I put God first, then I'll be neglecting the things, and the things may slip away from me." That's wrong. That's just a lack of faith; you don't see God as your Father. Now, He's the source of everything. Do you think it's up to you to conserve the things that you have? They can slip away. Riches have wings; they fly away. And, not only can they leave you; you can leave them. An air bubble hits your brain tonight—then whose shall those things be which you have provided for yourself?

So, how do you not worry? There is the Father factor: see God as your Father. *"Your [heavenly] Father knoweth what things ye have need of."* (Matthew 6:8) He is your Father. He brought you into this world. David said, *"[Once I was] young, and now [I'm] old; yet [I] have...not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."* (Psalms 37:25)

## C. The Future Factor

Now, there's a third factor. The first factor is the Father factor. The second is the focus factor: you focus on the things of God, not on things of this world. It's not to say that these other things are not important. *"[He knows] what things [you] have need of."* (Matthew 6:8) He knows you need food. He knows you need clothes. He knows you need recreation. *"[He knows] what [you] have need of."* (Matthew 6:8)

† I got an invitation to preach in Florida one time when my grandchildren were down there, and I accepted the invitation. And, Joyce said, "Adrian, you're not accepting that invitation just because the grandkids are down there, are you?" I said, "Well, God knows

where my grandchildren are.”<sup>f</sup>

God is good—God is good! “[He knows] what things [we] have need of.” (Matthew 6:8) God knows when we need sleep. God knows when we need fun. “[God knows] what [we] have need of.” (Matthew 6:8) God is good all the time.

Now, there is the Father factor. There is the focus factor. And, primarily, there is the future factor. And, this is very, very important—I want you to look at it in verse 34: “Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” (Matthew 6:34) Now, if you’ve been around churches very much, you’ve heard this before, but you need to hear it again: God has arranged your life and my life with a sort of ecology. God sits at master control, and God plans the events that will come to us. If He doesn’t cause them, He allows them. And, God allows—God engineers—for me, for you, difficulty for every day. Some days are more difficult than the others. Now, the Bible calls it “evil”: “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” (Matthew 6:34) Now, the word *evil* here does not mean “sin”; it means “difficulty,” like we would say, “That’s an evil smell.” It means “vile” or “difficult” or “problem.”

You may think that the devil’s causing your problems. No, back in the Garden of Eden, what did God say to Adam and Eve? “Cursed is the ground for [your] sake” (Genesis 3:17)—not “for your punishment,” but “for your sake.” The worst thing that could happen for sinful people such as we would be to live lives without trouble: we would never seek God. So, God gives us enough trouble every day to cause us to turn to Him and to get the grace. So, “sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” (Matthew 6:34) Sufficient what? Sufficient grace for today’s problems.

Now, God doesn’t give us grace for tomorrow’s problems. God says, “As [your] days [are], so shall [your] strength be.” (Deuteronomy 33:25) God doesn’t give me strength today for tomorrow’s problems. That’s what He’s saying. Look at this verse again: “Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself”—save that ’til tomorrow, see?—“Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” (Matthew 6:34) God gives you sufficient evil, and God gives you sufficient grace. Now, if you take things that belong to tomorrow and you bring them into today—I’m not talking about planning now; I’m talking about concern, worry, anxious thought. You reach out to tomorrow and you borrow problems; you bring them over to today—we call that “borrowing trouble.” Now, if you borrow trouble, you’re going to find out that the interest is very high. What is the high cost of borrowed trouble?

### **1. Worry Buries Blessings**

Number one: It buries blessings. When you bring tomorrow’s trouble into today, it makes it more difficult for you to see today’s blessings because not only will you have, today, difficulty, but you’ll have delights today; not only will you have burdens, but you’ll

have blessings. Now, listen to me carefully: *worry does not take the sorrow out of tomorrow; what it does is to take the joy out of today.* It's very important that you understand this. You see, what worry does is to pull tomorrow's clouds over today's sunshine. Now, there are plenty of blessings today if you will think about them. But, if you go out into tomorrow and begin to worry about things that God does not intend for you to worry about and you bring that into today, it's going to make you blind to blessings today. You're not going to see all the blessings that you have.

¶ I had a couple come to see me. He was a handsome man. She was a beautiful girl. They were in their early twenties. They had a little baby with them, and I wondered, "Well, what could the problem be?" The woman was in tears. The man was near tears. I said, "Well, tell me what your difficulty is." And, without telling you the whole story, their difficulty was they "didn't have anything," they said. They didn't have a house. They didn't have a car. They had a meager job. And, they saw everybody else had all these things—they didn't have them.

And, I looked at that man—he was well built, noble looking, handsome. She was beautiful. The baby was gorgeous. I said, "I want to tell you kids something: you don't know how wealthy you are." I said, "Would you sell this baby?" "Oh, no!" I said, "Not even for a thousand dollars?" "No!" "All right, well, let's try five hundred." "No! We wouldn't sell our baby for anything." I said, "Well, sir, there are a lot of people who don't have a baby who would give almost anything to have a baby like you have."

Then I said, "Let's look at your health. Suppose a millionaire were to come to you and say, 'Let's do a head exchange. Take your head and put it on my body; take my head and put it on your body. And, we'll just exchange, and I'll have your body.'" I said, "If such an operation were possible, would you exchange your body for an old man's body who is about to die—if he were to give you millions of dollars?" He said, "No, of course not!"

I said, "This girl sitting next to you—do you love her?" He said, "With all of my heart." I said, "Do you love him?" She said, "Oh, I love him." I said, "Do you know there are a lot of people who would give everything they have just to have their home back together?"

I said, "You're an American. Have you ever lived in a foreign country?" "No." I said, "Do you know that there are people who are leaving absolutely everything they have—who are leaving absolute fortunes behind—just to come to America, just to get on this shore, and to have nothing, just to be here?"

I said, "Look—look at that baby; look at your health; look at your marriage; look at the land: you are wealthy!" Boy, they straightened up and began to feel so good. And folks, that wasn't rhetoric. They were wealthy. But, what they were thinking about—they were focusing on what they felt was an uncertain future rather than thanking God for the blessings that they had right there.¶

## 2. Worry Steals Strength

What does worry do? Worry buries blessings. I'll tell you what else worry does: it steals strength. It steals strength when you worry about tomorrow. Remember God does not give you strength today for tomorrow's problems. The Bible says in Deuteronomy 33, verse 25, "*As thy days, so shall thy strength be.*" (Deuteronomy 33:25) I appreciate these words:

*God hath not promised skies always blue,  
Flower-strewn pathways all our lives through;  
God hath not promised sun without rain,  
Joy without sorrow, peace without pain.  
But God hath promised strength for the day,  
Rest for the labor, light for the way,  
Grace for the trials, help from above,  
Unfailing sympathy, undying love.*

—ANNIE JOHNSON FLINT

But, what does God promise? Strength for today. You see, worry just saps strength. Worry is wasted energy. Worry doesn't get us ready for tomorrow. It doubles up the load today so that when we get to tomorrow, we get to tomorrow out of breath. What does worry do? It buries blessings. What does worry do? It saps strength. You know, the Bible says in Psalm 103 that God "*[knows] our frame.*" (Psalms 103:14) Do you know what that means? Well, He knows how much you can bear.

¶ When I was working my way through school, among other things I did, I drove trucks. And, we learned what a two-ton truck was, a ton-and-a-half truck—whatever the load was, the frame, the chassis, you're just supposed to put so much load. You're not supposed to overload the truck because it has a frame that will just carry so much. God knows your frame. Do you know why there are so many wrecks on the highway of life and God has to send a wrecker out to pick you up? You've overloaded your truck. God knows your frame.¶

Now, God's not going to put more on you than you can bear, but you can reach out into tomorrow and try to carry loads that God did not give you strength for. Jesus said, "*Take...no thought for the morrow...the morrow shall take thought for...itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*" (Matthew 6:34) "*As [your] days [are], so [your] strength.*" (Deuteronomy 33:25)

## 3. Worry Produces Problems

Now, worry buries blessing. You can't see today's blessing. Worry steals strength. And, therefore, worry produces problems. Worry really can produce the very things that you're worried about. Job said, "*The thing which I...feared is come upon me.*" (Job 3:25)



Some people—you've been behind them—they expect every light to turn red; by the time they get there, it has. Tomorrow has two handles: fear or faith. And, you can take it by either handle. The Bible says, "*Fear [has] torment.*" (1 John 4:18)

## **Conclusion**

And so, what do we do? There is the Father factor: just keep saying to yourself, "God is my Father. He knows what I have need of. How foolish for me, what an insult it is to Him, what a wound in His heart when I worry!" There's the focus factor: I'm going to seek the kingdom of God with all of my heart and trust God to add these things to me. And, there's the future factor: I will leave the future in God's hands. "*Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*" (Matthew 6:34)†

# How to Win in the War with Worry

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** March 14, 1993

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 6:25–34

*“Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?”*

MATTHEW 6:25

## Outline

Introduction

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Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take God's Word and find again the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew chapter 6, we're going to begin reading in a few moments and read right through verse 34. Have you ever worried? Well, I know you do. I do. We all do. But we ought not. As a matter of fact, to worry is a sin: not just a weakness, but a wickedness. I want to speak to you today on this subject: "How to Win in the War with Worry."

All right now, let's begin to read here in Matthew chapter 6 and verse 25. And every worrier—that's us—pay attention. Our Lord is speaking, and He says, "Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought"—and the word here actually means, "Don't worry, no

anxious thought”—“*for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?*”—or clothing. “*Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? Or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*” (Matthew 6:25–34)

Now worry is a serious problem. The ignorant worry because they don't know enough. The smart worry because they know too much. The rich worry because they're afraid of losing what they have. And the poor worry because they don't have anything. The old worry because they're facing death. And the young worry because they're facing an uncertain future. Back to the old: When we were young, we used to worry that we were getting older. And when we get old, we worry that we won't get older. And so we just continue to worry. And it doesn't matter who we are, and what category we are, we can find something to worry about.

Now, when our Lord says, “*Take no thought,*” the word for “thought” there is a word that may be translated “worry.” It's a root word, which means “to divide.” That is, worry divides our minds. It is a distracting thing. It is a dividing thing. And you remember what the Apostle James said, in James chapter 1 and verse 8, that, “*A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.*” (James 1:8) And there's nothing more destabilizing than worry.

Now, when our Lord says, “*Take no thought,*” He's not talking about not planning ahead. He's not talking about having a flippant, happy-go-lucky attitude that does not provide for tomorrow. As a matter of fact, the Bible takes the ant that provides her meat in the summertime for the winter as an example. (Proverbs 30:25) The Bible teaches that we should remember the law of sowing and reaping. (Galatians 6:7) God is not saying that we ought not make provision for tomorrow. God is not saying that we ought to just go through life in a lackadaisical, happy-go-lucky, flippant way.

It is not foresight, but foreboding, that is forbidden; not foresight, but foreboding, that this passage deals with: three basic things, if you would win in the war with worry.

## I. Recognize the Cause of Your Worry

First of all, you must recognize the cause of your worry. What is it that people worry about? Well, it's very interesting here; our Lord has summarized them for us right here.

### A. Food

First of all, people worry about food: how they're going to get enough to eat. And maybe that's not your worry, but for many people in many places of the world, that is indeed a very big worry. Look, if you will, in verses 25 and 26: *"Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat,"*—that is, food—*"and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them."* Here's the logic of our Lord: *"Are ye not much better than they?"* (Matthew 6:25–26)

Now, if God Almighty takes care of the birds, and you're so much better than a bird, isn't He going to take care of you? The logic is this: What farmer would feed his barnyard chickens and starve his beloved children? Now He's not telling us that we ought not to work for food. God feeds the birds, but He doesn't throw it in the nest. Remember, we told you that. And the birds must work. The early bird does what? He's the one that gets the worm. And the Lord is not saying not to work. What the Lord is saying is: "Don't worry."

### B. Fashion

But not only do we worry about food; we worry about fashion. Look again in verse 25. He tells us there not to worry about raiment, what we shall put on our bodies. (Matthew 6:25) And then, look in verse 28: *"And why take ye thought for raiment?"*—that is, clothing. *"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon..."*—and he was the most opulent, rich, incredibly decked out king that you can imagine—*"even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."* (Matthew 6:28–29)

Now the flowers fade. The flowers bloom today, and then they're cast into the ovens. The women of this day would heat their oven with the grass, the straw, the field. And what our Lord is saying is, "If God takes such care of fading flowers, aren't you worth so much more?"

### C. Fitness

And then, not only does He mention food and fashion, but He mentions fitness. Look in verse 27—and this is what so many Americans worry about: *"Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?"* (Matthew 6:27) Now He's probably not talking about making yourself taller. You cannot worry yourself taller. But the word here

*stature* is translated by many, “lifespan.” What He’s saying is that worry cannot lengthen your life. You just can’t worry yourself into a longer life. Now He’s not saying, again, that you ought not take care of yourself. He’s not saying that you ought not to jog. He’s not saying that you ought not to exercise. He’s not saying that you ought not to eat nutritional food. He’s not saying that you ought not to get proper sleep. He’s not saying, “Don’t do that.” But what He’s saying is that worry won’t lengthen your life. You can worry yourself to death, but you can’t worry yourself to a longer life. That’s what He’s saying. He’s saying, “Now, look”—in the area of food, in the area of fashion, in the area of fitness.

#### **D. The Future**

And then, in the area of the future. Now many of us who have the food that we need, and the clothes that we need, and we have the strength that we need today, that’s not enough now, if we say, “But I may not have it tomorrow.” So, look down in verse 34, and He says, “*Take...no thought for the morrow:*”—now He mentions the future. He says—“*for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*” (Matthew 6:34) Now, remember, it’s not foresight, but foreboding, that our Lord says we’re not to do. We’re not to reach out into tomorrow and borrow trouble. We’re not to pull tomorrow’s clouds over today’s sunshine.

Somebody has done a study about what the average person worries about. They took a survey and they found this: that forty percent of what people worry about—forty percent of the things that people worry about—never happen at all. Thirty percent of what people worry about has already happened: it’s in the past. So forty percent’s not going to happen. Thirty percent has already happened. And you can’t do anything about it. Twelve percent of what the average person worries about is in the area of criticism, what people say about you—most of it untrue. Ten percent deals with your health—according to this survey—and worrying would only make that worse. Add all of these together, that’s about ninety-two percent: you only have about eight percent of the things that are considered to be real problems, and even for these, worry will not do any good. But it’s incredible that we worry about a lot of things that are not going to happen, or already have happened—like the little lady who said, “Don’t tell me that worry doesn’t do any good: most of the things I worry about never happen.” So worry really is sort of a futile thing: that’s what our Lord is saying.

I read recently an interesting thing: that in a dense fog—I mean a dense fog, that would cover seven city blocks one hundred feet deep—you know how much water it takes to make a fog to cover seven blocks a hundred feet deep? Less than a glass full—less than a drinking glass full. It is divided up into more than six hundred thousand million little droplets. You could take a couple of jugs of water and put a fog over all of

## Memphis, Tennessee.

Worry is not like a thunderstorm where you have rain and thunder and lightning—you can put up an umbrella; you can go inside, wait for the storm to come over. And that happens to all of us. We have storms, and we have to deal with them. That's not worry. But worry is like that fog; it's like that less than a glass of water that just permeates all of our life.

## II. Realize the Cost of Your Worry

Now our Lord, first of all, says that we should recognize the cause of worry. And then He goes on, secondly, to help us to understand the cost of worry. Once we recognize the cause, we need to realize the cost. Now worry is a costless thing. The very best thing that you could say about worry—I mean, if you wanted to say something good about it—the best thing you could say is not good, and it is this: that it is useless—absolutely useless.

Look, if you will, in verse 27 again: *“Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature?”*—just by worry. (Matthew 6:27) I mean, it doesn't do any good. It's well been said, there two categories and classes of things we should never worry about: a) those things that we can do something about; and, b) those things we can't do anything about. Now, whether we can do something about it, or whether we can't do anything about it, worrying only makes the matter worse.

*For every evil under the sun,  
There is a cure, or there is none;  
If there be one, try and find it,  
If there be none, never mind it.*

—WILLIAM HAZLITT

*“Which of you by taking [anxious] thought can add one cubit to his stature?”* Worry never dried a tear. Worry never lifted a burden. Worry never solved a problem. The best thing that we can say about worry is that it is useless.

### A. Worry Is Harmful to Self

But worry is absolutely harmful—and harmful, number one, to you, to yourself. There are few forms of dissipation that will do more damage to you physically emotionally and spiritually than worry. Worry will do the same thing to you that sand will do to machinery. And it's not the big things that get most of us; it's the little things.

*I read that where a mighty lion may destroy and kill, still little ants will pick the carcass far cleaner than the mighty lion. It's the little ants that seem to nibble at us.*

### B. Worry Is Harmful to Other People

Worry is harmful to us in every area. Worry is harmful to other people. Have you

known folks that, when they walk into the room, it seems like somebody turned the lights off? You know people like that? I know people like that. They brighten up the room when they leave. These are just the worriers. And not only do they worry themselves; worry is contagious, and they just start spreading this gloom and this worry everywhere. There ought to be a place where they could quarantine these people—just lock them up and let them worry one another.

### **C. Worry Is Harmful to God**

Worry is harmful to the self. And worry is harmful to other people. God deliver us from the worriers in the church. And then, worry is a wound in the heart of God. Do you know how our Lord remonstrates with them? Look, if you will, in verses 30: *“Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you,”*—now, watch this little next phrase here—*“O ye of little faith?”* Do you see what worry says about God? *“O ye of little faith.”* Do you know what an insult worry is to God? Do you see how this worry says, in response to Romans 8:28, that “all things work together for good to those who love God who are the called according to his purpose,” do you see how that points the finger in the face of God and says, “God, that’s a lie”? Verse 31: *“Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? Or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?”* Now, watch verse 32: *“(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:)”* (Matthew 6:30–32)

What’s He talking about there? The people of the world, the people who don’t know Jesus. Do you know what our Lord is saying? Beloved brother or sister in Christ, what our Lord is saying is that, when you worry, you’re living like a pagan. That’s what He’s saying. He’s saying that’s pagan; it’s faithless: *“O you of little faith! You’re like the people of this world. You are thinking like the world. You’re not thinking like somebody who has a heavenly Father.”* Worry, I say, is a wound in the heart of God, and it is an insult to the providence of God.

## **III. Rely on the Cure for Your Worry**

All right then, thirdly, let’s move on. Our Lord talks about the causes—and we must recognize the causes; and then He talks about the cost, and the curse—and we must realize the cost, the curse, of worry; but then our dear Lord deals with the cure. And this is not just pop psychology. Our Lord gives us just a very real, very practical, down-to-earth way to win in the war with worry.

### **A. The Father Factor: Trust in the Lord**

Number one—this is so simple: Trust in the Lord. Look, if you will, in verse 32: *“(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father”*—just underscore that phrase: *“your heavenly Father”*—*“knoweth that ye have need of all these things.”*

(Matthew 6:32) You don't have a need in your life but what someone who loves you so incredibly that He gave his dear Son, the Lord Jesus, to die for you, He knows all about it. And so you're just simply trust in the Lord. That's what I call the Father factor—the Father factor.

You have a heavenly Father. If you could fast-forward in the Gospel of Matthew, you'd come to Matthew chapter 10 and verses 29 through 31. Our Lord, again, is on this same subject. He says, *“Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.”* He doesn't say that a sparrow won't fall. He doesn't say that you're not going to have trouble. But He says God is right there. He attends the funeral of every sparrow. And then He says, *“But the very hairs of your head are numbered.”* Friend, He knows things about you that you don't know about you. You think He doesn't understand: you don't understand how much He does understand—how much He does understand. There is not a person here that knows how many hairs you have on your head, except a few guys that I'm looking at right now. *“The very hairs of your head are numbered.”* And then our Lord says, *“Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.”* (Matthew 10:29–31)

*Said the robin to the sparrow,  
“I should really like to know,  
Why these anxious human beings  
Rush about and worry so.”  
Said to the sparrow to the robin,  
“Friend I think that it must be,  
That they have no Heavenly Father,  
Such as cares for you and me.”*

—ELIZABETH CHENEY

Are you not worth more than a sparrow?

There is the Father factor. Robert Louis Stevenson used to delight in telling the story about a ship that was at sea on a rocky coast. It was very important that a ship not be washed upon a reef, and it was a stormy, blustery time. There was a sailor and some other sailors that were beneath the waterline in that ship that was being tossed and turned. They knew the danger. They knew that they were in peril and danger. And they were wondering, “Are we going to make it?” One of those sailors beneath the deck could take it no longer. He left his duty, went up to the pilothouse, pushed open the door, and there was the captain of the ship in the pilothouse, steering that ship through those treacherous waters. The captain knew that the sailor was worried. And he didn't say a word to the sailor. He just turned and smiled at him. The sailor went back down below the deck, and he said to his fellows, “Don't worry. It's all right. I have seen the captain, and he smiled at me.”



I like that. You know, I think that's what we need to do: just see the smile of God, don't you? You know that God is in control. Somebody wrote a couplet like this:

*Every morning lean your arms awhile  
Upon the windowsill of heaven  
And gaze upon the Lord.  
Then with the vision in your heart,  
Turn strong to meet your day.*  
—THOMAS BLAKE

Isn't that what we need to do? Early in the morning get up and see that we have a Father in heaven who knows. He cares. He loves. Friend, He really does. There's the Father factor—there's the Father factor.

### **B. The Focus Factor: Put First Things First**

There's the Father factor. And then there's another factor, which is the focus factor. Do you know that a person who is worrying is a person whose mind is out of focus? Remember what we told you? He's double-minded. Now, what our Lord says is that you need to get your focus back. Look again, if you will, in this passage of Scripture now in Matthew chapter 6 and verse 33: *"But seek ye first"—"first"—"first"—"the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things"*—food, fashion, fitness, future—*"shall be added unto you."* (Matthew 6:33) Just seek God first!

Do you know what many of us do? We try to put things first and God second. Now, we don't exclude God—we don't exclude God—but we just try to kind of add God in. You know, for many people, living the Christian life is doing the best we can with God's help. That's what many of us do: the best we can with God's help. But that isn't the Christian life. Our Lord does not want a place in your life; He demands, deserves preeminence. *"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."* (Matthew 6:33)

You say, "Pastor, it won't work." Before you tell me it won't work, I'm going to ask you this question: Have you tried it? Have you tried it? Don't tell me it won't if you are not a person who has obeyed the Lord. After the Father factor—your Father knows what you have need of; He knows!—then get your life in focus and *"seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness."* (Matthew 6:33) And do you know what God is saying in this passage? Our Lord is saying, "You take care of my business, and I'll take care of yours. You take care of my business, and I will take care of yours. You put me first"—*'seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness'*—*"and I'll take care of all of these things that are bothering you."* God is more than able to take care of the *things* in your life.

### A. The Future Factor: Don't Borrow Trouble

Now here's the third factor. There's the Father factor, there's the focus factor, and there is the future factor. Now look, if you will, in verse 34: "*Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*" (Matthew 6:34)

Now what's He saying? The Father factor: Trust in the Lord. The focus factor: Put first things first. The future factor: Don't borrow trouble! Don't borrow trouble! Don't do it! "Take no thought for the morrow; the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself." (Matthew 6:34) Do you know what you do when you take thought and worry about tomorrow? You borrow trouble. Do you know what worry is? Worry is the interest paid on borrowed trouble. That's what worry is. Worry is the interest you pay on borrowed trouble.

Now what God has done is God has arranged your life with a perfect ecology. We talk about the ecological problems in the world today. Well here's one where people get the concern out of balance. Now what does God do? God engineers your problems. Did you know that God has arranged some problems for you today? God is up there in heaven saying, "Well, I'm going to give her this problem; I'm going to give him that problem. I'm going to give this one that problem. God is preparing some problems for you. You say, "I thought God loved me." Yes, He does, and that is why He gives you some problems. Did you know that we would not come to God, we would not trust God, we would not lean upon God, if we didn't have some problems? Did you know that?

Back in the Garden of Eden, God said to Adam, "Cursed is the ground for your sake." (Genesis 3:17) He didn't say, "For your punishment," but "For your sake." It is trouble that reminds us that we live in a sinful world. It is trouble that tells us, we must come to God. And so God gives us every day some evil: "*Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*" (Matthew 6:34) The evil for what? He doesn't mean sin; He means problems, difficulties. That's the kind of evil He's talking about. We all have it. God gives it to us to cause us to depend upon Him because we are frail human beings, and we need some trouble. All sunshine makes a desert, and so our Lord gives us some trouble.

But with the sufficient trouble, God gives us sufficient grace. So "*sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*" (Matthew 6:34) What God does, God gives us grace for today, not for tomorrow. God doesn't give us grace for tomorrow, only for today. Now, if you begin to reach out into tomorrow, and we said, "You pull tomorrow's clouds over today's sunshine," what you do is you upset that ecology. The Bible says, "As your days are, so shall your strength be." (Deuteronomy 33:25) God did not give me strength for tomorrow.

Now, listen. If you fail to understand the future factor, if you begin to reach out into

the future and drag the future into today, here are three terrible things you are going to do to yourself.

### **1. It Buries Blessing**

What does this do? Well, in the first place, it buries blessing. Did you know that God not only has given every one of us today some difficulty, but God has given every one of us today some great, great blessings? And the danger is that you get the ecology out of balance, and you do not see the blessings of today. There are plenty of blessings around, if you'll just look around and not let worrying about the future blind you to them.

### **2. It Steals Strength**

But not only does worry bury blessings, it steals strength. It steals strength. You see, worry is not just useless—I've already told you—it's harmful. Not only does it take the joy out of today; it takes the strength out of tomorrow. You see, what happens is this, that when you do get to tomorrow, you get to tomorrow out of breath because you have been carrying a double load today. Do you know that the God who designed you knows how much you can bear; He knows your frame? (Psalms 103:14) Do you know that?

A truck—we say that's a ton-and-a-half truck, that's a two-ton truck, a five-ton truck. What do we mean? Not how much the truck weighs, but how much the truck can carry. Now the manufacturer of that truck knows the frame, the chassis, of the truck. And so he says, "Don't ever put a load on that truck that it ought not to bear."

Now your Father, according to Psalm 103, He knows your frame. (Psalms 103:14) And so, "as your days are, so shall your strength be." (Deuteronomy 33:25) God is not going to give you a burden that you cannot bear if you use the strength that God gives you. But what we do is this: We overload today with tomorrow's problems. And therefore, friend, we break down the springs of life, and it's no wonder that we have to call a wrecker to haul us in because what we have done is just simply overloaded our spiritual truck. And not only does it bury blessings; it steals strength! It breaks us down.

### **3. It Produces Problems**

The third thing, and finally, it produces problems. Did you know that the thing you worry about may happen just because you worry about it? You know what Job said? Job said, "The thing I feared"—"the thing I feared"—"is come upon me." (Job 3:25)

Have you ever gotten behind a person driving; they expect every light to turn red? By the time they get there, it has. Have you ever done that? There are people who go through life that way.

## **Conclusion**

And our Lord says, "Listen. Don't worry about tomorrow." He didn't say not to plan for tomorrow. He said, "Don't take anxious thought for the morrow, *the morrow shall take*

*thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.’ ” (Matthew 5:34)*

Don't let worry bury blessings! Don't let it steal strength! Don't let it produce problems! Live today! This is the day the Lord hath made. I will rejoice and be glad in it. (Psalms 118:24)

# The Incredible Power of Proper Priorities

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: March 21, 1993**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 6:33**

*“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”*

MATTHEW 6:33

## Outline

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## Introduction

We're preaching through the Sermon on the Mount—"Living on the Rock"—"Building on the Rock." And I want you to take God's Word now and turn to Matthew chapter 6, and we're going to look at a verse that we touched on last week but did not have enough time to do it I think proper justice, and we're going to look again in Matthew chapter 6 and verse 33: *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”* (Matthew 6:33) *“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.”*

I want to speak to you today on this subject: “The Incredible Power of Proper Priorities”—“The Incredible Power of Proper Priorities.” Our Lord here is speaking about priorities. He’s telling us what to put first. And He says, “*Seek ye first the kingdom of God.*” And if ever a message were needed, this one is, in this generation, in this day, in this age, and in this place. Ours is a nation, and ours is a city, of vanishing values, and therefore pathetic priorities. You see—listen—values determine priorities; and priorities always determine success or failure. Values determine, and priorities always determine, success or failure.

Recently, in *The Wall Street Journal*, March 15, 1993, William Bennett, former *Secretary of Education*, talked about the leading index of cultural indicators—not economic indicators, but cultural indicators—and he gave some alarming statistics. William Bennett said this—and I’m quoting now from *The Wall Street Journal*. This is not some Baptist preacher speaking, but a highly trained, skilled surveyor of the social situation. He says—and I quote—“Since 1960, the U.S. population has increased 41 percent; the gross domestic product has nearly tripled; and total social spending by all levels of government (measured by constant 1990 dollars) has risen from \$143.73 billion to \$787 billion”—that’s social spending. That’s the money that we spend to solve problems—“more than a fivefold increase”—that’s in thirty years, with constant dollars. That’s allowing for inflation: a fivefold increase. “Inflation-adjusted spending on welfare has increased by 630 percent, spending on education by 225 percent. But during the same 30-year period there has been a 560 percent increase in illegitimate births;”—by the way, there are no illegitimate children; just illegitimate parents—“a quadrupling in divorce rates;”—that is, the divorce rate has increased fourfold—“a tripling of the percentage of children living in single-parent homes;”—listen to this one—“more than a 200-percent increase in the teen-age suicide rate; and a drop of almost 80 points in SAT scores.” And then he goes on to say, “Perhaps more than anything else, America’s cultural decline is evidence of a shift in the public’s attitude and beliefs.”

Now that’s exactly what I was trying to say: that values determine priorities, and priorities determine success or failure. We are a generation of misplaced priorities. Therefore I want to speak to you about “The Incredible Power of a Proper Priority.” Our Lord said, “*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*”

## **I. The Principle of His Preeminence**

Now, listen very carefully this morning, because our Lord has a wonderful, wonderful truth for us. Here’s the first thing I want you to see. It’s the preeminence of our Lord that is required. When the Bible says, “*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness,*” what does that mean? It means, “Make the King supreme.” That’s what

it means. It is the kingdom of God. You are to give to your Lord proper preeminence.

Turn, if you want to—or listen to me as I read—Colossians chapter 1, and I'm going to begin reading verse 17. I think there's not a better commentary on what our Lord has to say than Colossians chapter 1 and verse 17. It speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is what the Apostle Paul says of our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: *"And he is before all things, and by him all things consist."* That means everything hangs together by the Lord Jesus Christ. He's the glue of the galaxies. *"By him all things consist."* Now, listen to verse 18: *"And he"—that is, Jesus—"is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."* Now that ought to be underscored in your Bible. That's one of the key secrets of Christian living: that in all things Jesus Christ would have the preeminence. Now, notice verse 19: *"For it pleased the Father that in him"—in Jesus—"should all fulness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven."* (Colossians 1:17–19)

Now, look up here and let me tell you something. In every life—in your life and in my life—someone or some thing has first place. Isn't that true? In everybody's life—in your life and in my life—someone or some thing has first place. Dr. S. D. Gordon used to say, "In everybody's life there's a throne." And he used to say that, "Either Christ or self is on that throne. Now," he said, "if self is on that throne, then Christ is on the cross. But if self is on the cross, Christ is on the throne."

*God's plan for you is not that Jesus Christ have a place in your life. God's plan for you is not that Jesus Christ have prominence in your life. God's plan for you is that Jesus Christ have preeminence in your life: "that in all things he might have the preeminence."* (Colossians 1:18) That's what the Apostle Paul said. And Jesus said we're to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

Now, you see, you want to understand what God is about? You want to unravel the mystery of history? You want to cut the Gordian knot? The mystery of history is this: that it pleases the Father that in Jesus all fullness dwells. And everything that God does is for this reason. Why did God send the Holy Spirit? To glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. Why is there going to be a final judgment? *"That...every knee should bow...and...every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God."* (Philippians 2:10–11) I mean, everything that God does is that Jesus Christ will have the preeminence.

And on what basis does He deserve and demand preeminence?

#### **A. Because of His Deity**

Well, because of His deity. In verse 18, that I just read to you, it says this concerning the Lord Jesus: *"He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the*

*firstborn from the dead.*” (Colossians 1:18) I mean, He is the Lord. He is the Lord. He is God. He’s not a Baptist preacher saying that you’re to give Him preeminence. It is not some denomination that requires preeminence.

## **B. Because of His Death**

He is God because of His deity, and because of His death. “He died,” the Bible said, “that He might redeem us.” Now, if He’s God, and if He died for us, isn’t it reasonable that He ought to have first place? If He is God, and He died for us, isn’t it reasonable that He have preeminence? I say to you, by every foul mouthful of spit they spat in His face, by every hair of His beard that they plucked from His cheeks, by every lash that they laid on His back, by the piercing of that crown of thorns, by those hellish nails that held Him to the cross, by every drop of blood that fell to the ground, by the agony and the great heartbeat of the Lord Jesus Christ, He deserves preeminence in your life. “You are not your own. You are bought with a price. Therefore you’re to glorify God in your body and your spirit, which are God’s.” (1 Corinthians 6:19–20) That’s the reason the Apostle Paul brought His life into a burning focus and had gotten proper priorities. And the Apostle Paul said, in Philippians chapter 3 and verse 13, *“I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do,”*—one thing, one thing I do—*“forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 3:13–14)

Now Paul had learned a proper priority: that is, that Jesus Christ is number one. The secret of true success in any realm is to bring your life into a burning focus. Jesus Christ said, *“No man can serve two masters.”* (Matthew 6:24) James said, *“A double minded man is unstable in all of his ways.”* (James 1:8) To be successful, you’ve got to narrow your interests. In your life, someone or some thing is going to be number one. Jesus says, *“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.”* That means, where the King is supreme. People say, “Don’t put all your eggs in one basket.” Friend, put all your eggs in one basket. And watch that basket.

**Jesus is Lord—Lord. Concentration is the secret of power in any realm. You take water, and put it in a channel: it becomes a mighty river. Just spread it out: it becomes a stagnant swamp. Everything—everything—in your life ought to come under the heading of the Lordship of Christ. He must have preeminence in everything.**

But you say, “Pastor, I have a job. I’ve got to pay attention to my job. I have a family. I must pay attention to my family. I need rest. I need recreation. I need friends. I’ve got to watch my diet.” Of course you do. Of course you do. But why do you do these things? All of these things must become the servant of your master goal. Even your vacation ought to make you a better Christian: to serve the Lord Jesus Christ; that in everything



He would have the preeminence.

That means there are some things that can stay in your life, and there are some things that have to go. You remember what the Apostle Paul said there in 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 12? He said, “All things are lawful for me, but not all things are expedient.” (1 Corinthians 6:12) What does that word *expedient* mean, anyway? It’s just a big double-jointed word. Think about it. What word do you hear in there? *Expedition*. What is an expedition? An expedition is a trip. Well, what do you do on a trip? You’re going somewhere. Now what the Apostle Paul says, when he says, “All things all things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient,” is this: that “I have a goal. I’m getting to that goal. Now, if anything hinders me from my goal, even though it might be legal, it might be lawful, if it keeps me from getting to my goal, then it’s got to go in my life.” That means any friend, any pleasure, any sleep, any rest, any job, any ambition, any hobby, anything that keeps me from making Jesus Christ number one in my life: it’s got to go. Any thing, any job, any friend, any love, any hobby, any emotion that pushes me *this* way: it’s got to stay. Everything has to serve my master goal: that in everything Jesus Christ would have the preeminence. It pleased the Father that in Jesus all fullness should dwell and that He should have the preeminence. We’re to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

Now, have you done that? I say, have you done that? Have you come to the place where you have made Jesus Christ absolute, total Lord of your life? If you’ve not done that—if you’ve not done that—I don’t think you have any right to call yourself a Christian. Jesus said, “*Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*” (Luke 6:46) The Bible says, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*” (Acts 16:31) Now, don’t tell me it won’t work, if you haven’t tried it.

## **II. The Practice of His Preeminence**

First of all, friend, you must recognize His sovereign preeminence. You must yield to the fact that the King is supreme. That’s what Jesus is saying, when He says, “*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.*” Now, having done that, how is that going to work out in our practical lives? When we think of the sovereign demand of this priority, what are the sweeping dimensions of this priority?

Well, let’s just see if we can get practical. If Jesus Christ is number one in my life, if I’m seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, what’s that going to mean to me day by day and week by week?

### **A. Give Him the First Thought of Every Day**

Well, number one, it means that I am going to give Him the first thought of every day. I’m to wake up with heaven on my mind. I love Psalm 5, verse 3: “*My voice shalt*

*thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.*" (Psalm 5:3) When you get out of bed, when you open your eyes, the very first thought, as you seek first the kingdom of God, the very first thought ought to be your Lord. Rather than letting the alarm clock go off, and you roll over and look at it, and say, "Good Lord, it's morning," you ought to be able to say, "Good morning, Lord. I am awake, and I'm going to live this day for you."

I have developed a little habit I just simply call "pacing" myself. I don't know if I've ever told you this in public, but I do this. It's a habit every morning—almost every morning, anyway. *P-A-C-E*. Do you know what *P* stands for? It says *Praise*. I wake up, just open my eyes, and praise the Lord: "God, I give you glory." Praise. *A*: that's to abide. I say, "Lord, I live in you. You live in me. I'm in you. You're in me. Your strength is my strength. *C*: that is control. "Lord, I live, therefore, for you. Whatever you want to do with me today, you can do it." *E*: "I expect you to live in me, and I thank you for it, and I praise you. *P-A-C-E*: I just *pace* myself. That's the *pace* I want to live. I want to give God the very first thought when I roll out of the bed. On my way in to brush my teeth, I am *pacing* my life, praising my Lord, saying, "I'm abiding in you; I'm under your control; I expect you to live your life through me today."

## **B. Give Him the First Day of the Week**

If in all things He has the preeminence, then He ought to have the first thought every morning. And then, not only that, but you ought to give Him the first day of the week—the first day of the week. Do you know what Sunday is? It is not the weekend. It is the first day of the week. And it belongs, not to Michelob, but to Jesus Christ. Acts chapter 20 and verse 7: "*Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them.*" (Acts 20:7) First Corinthians 16, verse 2: "*Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay him in store, as God hath prospered him.*" (1 Corinthians 16:2) That is, you're to bring your gifts to God on the first day of the week. We're to come to church and honor our Lord, because He's first. He has the first day of the week. The Bible says, in Hebrews chapter 10, verse 25, we're not to forsake "*the assembling of ourselves together, as the matter of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*" (Hebrews 10:25) As we get closer to the end time, you need more and more and more to be in the house of God with the people of God to hear the Word of God and to exhort one another on the first day of the week.

Sunday is the Lord's Day. We've made it everything else. We've made it a time for football, baseball, fishing, motorcar racing, and all of the rest of it. Friend, Sunday needs to be set aside for Jesus Christ. It is the Lord's Day. It is not the Sabbath. The Sabbath is Saturday. Sunday is the Lord's Day. What is the difference? All of the Old Testament

Sabbath prophecies were summed up in the Lord Jesus Christ upon the first day of the week. Upon the first day of the week, Jesus rose from the dead. Upon the first day of the week, He first appeared to His disciples. Upon the first day of the week, the Holy Spirit descended upon the early church. Upon the first day of the week, the Apostle Paul preached to them. Upon the first day of the week, they received their offerings. And you need to give Jesus Christ preeminence, and give Him the first thought every day, and you need to give Him the first day every week, and reserve this day for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

### **C. Give Him the First Fruits of Your Income**

I'll tell you the third thing. You need to give Him, friend, the first fruits of all your income. Proverbs chapter 3, verse 9: *"Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase."* (Proverbs 3:9) That doesn't mean, after you've paid your grocery bill, and after you've paid Sears, and after you've done this and this and this, then you see what you have left to give to God. What a disgrace! What a disgrace!

Suppose you invited me to your house, and there's a lovely cake there, and you give a piece to everybody else, and then there are some crumbs on the plate, and you say, "That's what's left, pastor. That's for you." We're giving God the leftovers. We're giving God the crumbs. We give this thing, and we give this thing, and we pay that bill, and we pay that bill. Friend, you honor God with the first fruits of all your increase. You take God's part first—not second, first. He is your sovereign Lord. He died for you. There is nothing more important than your recognizing Almighty God. Jesus said, *"Seek ye first the kingdom of God."*

You say, "Well, pastor, if I did that, I wouldn't have enough." The reason you don't have enough is because you don't do that. Jesus said, "You put me first, and all these things shall be added unto you." *You'll do more with nine-tenths and God as a partner than you'll ever do with ten-tenths by yourself*, my dear friend. *"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness."*

There are three reasons to tithe. The lowest reason is, if you tithe, you'll prosper. A higher reason is, there's the need of a lost world. But the highest reason is the honor and glory of your great God. There was no other need: even if you didn't get blessed, you should still give Him the first fruits.

### **D. Give Him the First Consideration in Every Decision**

I'm going to tell you something else: you need to give the Lord the first consideration in every decision; you don't make a decision without bringing it to God. Second Corinthians chapter 8 and verse 5: *"And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God."* (2 Corinthians 8:5) When you give yourself to the Lord, then everything else is going to follow out—your choice of

a job, a vacation, a girlfriend or boyfriend—whatever it is has to be considered in the light of Calvary.

Many of us want the Lord in our lives, but you know how we want the Lord? We want the Lord as a spare tire. Friend, He doesn't want to be the spare tire. He's the steering wheel in your life. He's the control center in your life. He's not the emergency kit. He is number one in your life.

### **E. Give Him the First Devotion of Your Heart**

You're to give Him the first devotion of your heart. You're to love Him. You're to love Him more than anybody or anything else. *Anything you love more, serve more, or fear more than Almighty God is an idol.* And idolatry is the number one sin. Our Lord remonstrated with the church at Ephesus for this one thing. I'll tell you what it was: they left their first love. He said to this church—it was a wonderful church, a going, growing, glowing church—but He said this, in Revelation chapter 2, verse 4: “Nevertheless I have this against you: you have left your first love.” (Revelation 2:4)

Do you know what first love is? Well, were you ever in love? Well, I can remember first love with Joyce. What an experience that was! I remember the first time I kissed Joyce. We were grade-school sweethearts. Chills went up and down my spine. Her popsicle was leaking. Seriously. I've known this girl so long. But, you know—this is the truth, not rhetoric—as sure as there's a God in heaven, I love her more today than I ever have. But I'll tell you why. I'll tell you why: because the honeymoon has not ended. She's more beautiful to me, and more pleasing to me, than she ever was—because I've not lost that first love. Somebody says, the honeymoon is that period of time between “I do” and “You'd better.” But, friend, listen. Jesus said to this church, “There's something wrong with you: not that you don't love me, but you've left that glowing, burning, passionate love that you used to have.”

Do you remember how it was when you first got saved? Do you remember how? Friend, if you don't love Jesus Christ more today, you love Him less. And if you don't love Him more today than you did yesterday, you're living in sin. Every day with Jesus ought to be sweeter than the day before. And He deserves, He demands, first place in your devotion. Give Him the first thought in the morning. Give Him the first day of the week. Give Him the first fruit of your income. Give Him the first consideration in every decision. Give Him the first devotion of your heart and of your life.

One great preacher proposed to his wife this way. He said to her, “Would you consider being second place in my life?” Isn't that beautiful? I love that. “Would you consider being second place in my life?” You say, “I don't want to be second place in anybody's life.” If you're a smart woman, you'll want to be second place in a man's life, because any man who loves Jesus Christ supremely will love you in a way that He

could never love you any other way. Friend, He will love you with the love of God. And you ought to thank God for a man or woman that loves Jesus Christ more than anything else.

### III. The Promise of His Preeminence

Now, what are we saying? We're saying, this verse says, "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.*" That means a wholehearted devotion to our Lord. And then it means there are some practical considerations. And then, not only is there that principle, and that practice; but, friend, there is the promise.

Now, look at the promise. Go back and look at it—verse 33: "*But seek ye first the kingdom of God...and all these things shall be added unto you*"—"all these things." Most of us are in the *thing* business, aren't we? Our Lord said, "Don't worry about the things." This verse is the key to prosperity, and this verse is the cure for worry. Modern Americans put things first, and God second. As I told you last week, *we're to worship God, love people, and use things. Most Americans love things, use people, and ignore God. And we wonder why we're in the condition that we're in.* But our Lord says, "If you will do this, if you will put me first, then I'm going to take care of your problems." Do you know what a worrier is? Primarily, a worrier is a person who has put things first—that's all. A worrier is a person who puts things first.

Now, let's review just a little bit. Why did our Lord say not to worry?

#### A. Worry Is Needless

Look, if you will here, in chapter 6 and verse 25. Look at it. He says here, "*Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought*"—that is, anxious thought—"for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" And verse 26: "*Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them.*" (Matthew 6:25–26) What our Lord is saying—put it down, number one: worry is needless.

#### B. Worry Is Senseless

But then if worry is needless, then it is senseless. Verse 26: "If God takes care of the birds and the flowers, isn't He going to take care of you?"

#### C. Worry Is Useless

But not only is it needless, and senseless; in verse 27, it is useless: "*Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?*" (Matthew 6:27) That means his lifespan. You can worry yourself to death, but you can't worry yourself alive.

#### D. Worry Is Faithless

It is faithless. Look, if you will, in verse 30: *“Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?”* (Matthew 6:30) It is faithless.

#### E. Worry Is Excuseless

And, therefore, it is excuseless. Verses 31 and 32: *“Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (for after all these things do the Gentiles seek:)”*—you know what the Gentiles were? They were the pagans. Worry is pagan—*“for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.”* (Matthew 6:31–32)

### Conclusion

You say, “But wait a minute, pastor. Don’t tell me not to worry. That doesn’t do any good. Tell me how not to worry. All right, I will. Verse 33: *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”* Worry is needless. Worry is senseless. Worry is faithless. Worry is excuseless. Oh, friend, we are to seek God: the kingdom of God and His righteousness!

Some years ago at Bellevue Baptist Church we had as a guest Pete Maravich. Were any of you here when Pistol Pete came and spoke? A lot of you remember Pistol Pete Maravich, I suppose, one of the greatest, if not truly the greatest, basketball player who ever lived—Pistol Pete. He was an amazing guy. If you’ve ever watched the film clips of Pistol Pete Maravich, that guy could do anything with a basketball. I mean, he invented the moves that the pros are using now, and the college and high school students try to emulate. He was the guy who taught people how to dribble behind their back and pass between their legs. He could make such amazing passes that, many times, not only would he catch the opposition off-guard but catch his own teammates off-guard. Let me tell you what his average was in college. His average: forty-four points. That was his average. That was not his high game. I mean, that was his average, Scotty: forty-four points. In his day, he was the top scorer in all collegiate basketball, three-time All American, 1970 Player of the Year. And he didn’t stop. When ol’ Pistol Pete went into the pros, he was an incredible player there. There averaged thirty-one points per game. In a career of a span of ten years, Pistol Pete Maravich played with a flare, and with an intensity, that never has been seen, in my estimation, on the basketball floor. I used to watch it.

You know why he played basketball that way? It was his life. Pistol Pete Maravich said, “This one thing I do.” He went to bed with a basketball. He told me about it, sat in my study. We talked about it. Basketball was his life. But it never satisfied. His life

seemed to come apart. His mother committed suicide. Pete felt responsible. He became a social drinker, and then he became a problem drinker—even while playing basketball. He had no inner peace. He thought, “Maybe, if I could win a professional basketball championship, then I would be at peace; maybe that would be it.” But he never won that championship. And he retired at thirty-three, the same age our Lord was when He was crucified, and the same age that Alexander the Great was when he conquered the world.

Pistol Pete Maravich, at thirty-three, who many consider to be the greatest in the sport, now retired, had almost more than he could take. For twenty-five years, basketball had been his god. It never met the need of his heart. So Pistol Pete began to turn to other things, strange things: New Ageism, mysticism, astrology, survivalism, even UFOs. Nothing like that could meet the need of his heart. Then somebody told him of Jesus Christ that our Lord loved him, died for him, rose for him, wanted to come in and satisfy him, and change his life. And Pistol Pete told me how, in November 1982, when he could not sleep, he rolled out of bed, put his knees on the floor, opened his heart, and received Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. And Jesus, and Jesus alone, became first in his life.

Pistol Pete Maravich learned the verse that I’m talking about: *“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.”* He went to Columbia, South Carolina, where Billy Graham was speaking in a crusade. Pistol Pete Maravich gave his testimony before thirty-five thousand people. I want to quote to you what he said. He said, “Next week, I will be inducted into the Hall of Fame. But I wouldn’t trade my position in Christ for a thousand NBA championships, for a thousand Hall of Fame rings, or for a hundred billion dollars.” That’s what Pistol Pete Maravich said. No longer was basketball number one; Jesus Christ was number one.

I remember rejoicing with him, and praying with him, and thanking God, as I saw the burning intensity of this young man. Then it happened so suddenly. He was forty. Out on the basketball court, just playing with a friend. His friend said to him, “Pete, how do you feel?” He said, “I never felt better,” and then fell to the floor in writhing pain. They called an ambulance. For fifty minutes they tried to revive Pistol Pete. But it was all over. At 9:42, January 5, 1988, he stepped into the presence of Jesus Christ, and could look into the face of someone that he’d made number one.

I’m so glad he didn’t walk up to the throne dribbling a basketball, saying, “Lord, watch these moves.” I’m so glad Pistol Pete could say, “Lord, I got it settled. I gave you my heart, my life. And you, Lord, are number one.”

Now, look at me, everyone in this building. In everybody’s life here today there is someone or some thing that is number one. If Christ is number one, if He has the preeminence in you life, then Matthew chapter 6, verse 33, perhaps, for you can be the

greatest verse in all of the Bible: “*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*” But if you put things first, and God second, you’ll never discover the peace that I’ve discovered, that Pistol Pete discovered, and that millions have discovered.



# The Incredible Power of Proper Priorities, Part 2

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: March 21, 1993**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 6:33**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Fellowship Before Worship
- II. The Spiritual Before the Material
- III. Purity Before Ministry
- IV. Binding Before Loosing
- V. The Inside Before the Outside

Conclusion

## Introduction

Take God's Word and be finding Matthew chapter 6 and verse 33. Have you heard that verse before—Matthew chapter 6 and verse 33? The title of our message tonight: "The Incredible Power of Proper Priorities: Part 2." Just a lot in this verse, and I want us to look at it just a little more tonight: *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."* (Matthew 6:33) "The Incredible Power of Proper Priorities."

You could put the problem in most people's lives in one phrase: the failure to put first things first. That's really it. I mean, just let all the air out of it. The problem in everybody's life is the failure to put first things first. When you put first things first, you cannot fail. If you don't, you cannot succeed. Our Lord has made a solemn promise: *"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."*

I heard some time ago about a man who went into a pet store and there he saw a parakeet advertised for twenty-five dollars, which is remarkably low-priced for a parakeet guaranteed to talk—and this one was. He bought the parakeet, and bought a cage, and brought it home, and waited for several days. And the parakeet said not a word, so he went back to the pet store and said, "Look, I paid twenty-five dollars. And I realize this was a low price for a parakeet, but you said it was guaranteed to talk, and this one has not talked yet." "Well," the man said, "did you get a little swing?" He said,

“No.” He said, “Well, he always gets up on the perch on the swing before he says a word.” He said, “Well, how much is a swing?” He said, “That’s ten dollars.” “Well,” he said, “all right.” So he bought a swing and went back, waited several days, and went back again to the pet store and said, “Look, I paid twenty-five dollars for this bird. I bought a cage. I bought a swing. He has not said a word. The man said, “Well, did you get one of the little mirrors?” “What do you mean?” “Well,” he said, “he always gets on the perch, and then looks in the mirror, before he talks. You don’t have a mirror?” He said, “No.” He said, “That’s another ten dollars.” So he bought a mirror, went home. Several days, he went back again. He said, “Look, I bought the bird. I bought the cage. I bought the swing. I bought the mirror. He’s not said a word.” He said, “Well, you mean he pecked the bell, and didn’t say anything?” He said, “You didn’t say anything about the bell.” “Oh, yes,” he said, “he gets on the perch, he looks in the mirror, he pecks the bell before he talks.” He said, “That’s ten dollars for a bell.” So the man bought the bell, went home.

Several days, he went back. He said, “Look, this is getting old. That bird has still not said one word.” He said, “Do you mean to tell me that he sat on the perch, looked in the mirror, pecked the bell, ran up and down the ladder, and didn’t say anything?” He said, “You didn’t say anything about the ladder.” “Oh, yes,” he said, “he always runs up and down the little ladder before he talks.” He said, “That’s ten dollars for a ladder.” So he bought the ladder. After a while, he came back. The man said, “How is the bird?” He said, “The bird is dead!” He said, “You mean, the bird died?” He said, “Yes, the bird died.” He said, “Did he never say a word?” “Yes,” he said, “the bird talked.” He said, “Well, what did he say?” “Just before he died, he said, ‘Don’t they sell any bird seed in that store?’”

I think that that illustrates the importance of proper priorities. I think, in our Christian life, we’re sitting on a perch, looking in the mirror, pecking the bell, running up and down the ladder, but somehow we have failed to prioritize and to feed ourselves and nurture ourselves on the Lord Himself. “*Seek ye first*”—first, first—“*the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*”

Now I want us to look in the book of Matthew from a different perspective, and I want to give you tonight five powerful priorities—five powerful priorities.

## **I. Fellowship Before Worship**

Now, go back now to Matthew chapter 5, and look with me, beginning in verse 23—our Lord is speaking: “*Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought*”—that means “anything”—“*against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way;*”—now here’s our word. Look at it; look at it—“*first*”—

*“first”—“be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.”* (Matthew 5:23–24) What is the priority here? The priority here is this: fellowship before worship—fellowship before worship. What our Lord is saying is this: that you cannot consciously be right with God if you’re consciously and willingly wrong with your brother.

Now, here’s a man. He comes to worship. He’s taken his envelope. He’s filled his envelope out. He’s put on there the date. He’s put on the amount, or whatever he does, and fills that out, licks it, seals it, comes to church on Sunday morning. The offering is taken, and he puts his envelope in the offering plate. And he feels good about it. But he knows that he knows that there’s somebody in the congregation that has something against him, and he doesn’t make it right. Do you know what? That gift is not acceptable to Almighty God. God does not receive that gift. No one can worship God who does not first get right with his brother if his brother has ought against him. It doesn’t say, “if he has something against his brother.” It doesn’t say, “if somebody has wronged him.” If people have wronged me, I can worship. As a matter of fact, it causes me to worship all the better. But if I have wronged somebody else, if there’s somebody who has something against me—that is, I have done something that is wrong, and I know it—and I don’t go and make it right, God says that all I call worship is sheer vanity. I can give my money, but God will not accept it. I may sing, but no praise goes to God. I may pray, but God does not hear my prayer. There’s a divine priority: fellowship first; worship second. You cannot be right with God if you are consciously and willingly wrong with your brother.

Is there something you need to make right? Are there some debts that you owe that you’ve not paid? Are there some harsh words that you’ve spoken that you’ve not asked forgiveness for? Is there some criticism and some gossip that you’ve done that needs to be put right? Is there some duty towards some individual that you’ve neglected?

“Well,” you say, “Pastor Rogers, since you’ve told me that—that if I bring my gift tonight, God will not receive it—then I’ll just take it and spend it for what I want.” No, go back and read it again: “If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has ought against you, leave your gift”—“leave your gift”—“and go be reconciled to your brother.” Don’t take it and spend it. That would be even worse. It is tainted money: *t’ain’t yours—t’ain’t yours*. But it is tainted, and God cannot accept it. It is being held in escrow. It is never put on the blessing side of the ledger until you go and get right with your brother.

You see, there is a divine priority: *“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”* (Matthew 6:33) Many of us need to go get right with a brother, with a sister. And when you go to get right, be certain of your motivation. What some people call “burying the hatchet” is really just

digging up more dirt. Go in a spirit of love, and be reconciled to your brother. Confess; make it right.

## II. The Spiritual Before the Material

Here's another priority in the book of Matthew: Not only does He teach relationship and fellowship comes before worship, but He also teaches that the spiritual comes before the material. Look again in Matthew chapter 6 and verse 33—that's the second powerful priority: *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness;"*—that's the spiritual—*"and all these things shall be added unto you."* (Matthew 6:33) Now I would say that 99.44 percent of Americans put things first and God second. But this verse, as we told you this morning, is the key to prosperity, and it is the cure for worry: to put the spiritual before the material, to *"seek...the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."*

Do you really expect to go to heaven worshipping things? Anything you love more, fear more, serve more, or are more concerned about than God, to you, is an idol. And *what you go after here determines where you will go hereafter.* *"Seek ye first the kingdom of God."*

## III. Purity Before Ministry

Priority number one: fellowship before worship. Priority number two: the spiritual before the material. Priority number three: purity before ministry. Look, if you will, in chapter 7, verse 1: *"Judge not, that ye be not judged. For what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote"*—that means "the speck"—*"that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam"*—a log, a crosstie—*"is in thine own eye?"* Don't tell me that Jesus didn't have a sense of humor. Here's a man with a railroad tie in his eye trying to do surgery, removing a speck, a mote, out of his brother's eye. Notice what Jesus says: *"Thou hypocrite, first..."*—there's our word again. Do you see it? Three times He's used it already—*"first..."*—*"first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."* (Matthew 7:1–5) What is our Lord saying? First, purity; and then, ministry.

Our Lord here does not say we're not to judge. This verse has been misused and abused more than any verse in the Bible, I suppose. And next Sunday morning, God willing, we'll do a full exposition of what it means to judge or not to judge. What our Lord here is warning about is being a hypocrite. He's talking about hypocritical judgment.

Now, in the very next verse, He tells us that we need to discern, or we need to judge. For example, look, if you will, in verse 6: *“Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.”* (Matthew 7:6) You’ve got to be able to judge the difference between sheep, dogs, and swine. You’ve got to be able to make discernment. You’ve got to be able to judge in that area. What our Lord is warning against here is the sheer, unmitigated hypocrisy of an individual endeavoring to remove a speck out of somebody else’s eye when he has a log, a crosstie, in his own eye.

What our Lord says: “Purity comes before ministry.” He’s not saying not to get the speck out of your brother’s eye; He is saying, “Get the speck out of your brother’s eye.” He says, “If you’ll get the crosstie out of your eye, then you’ll see more clearly how to remove the speck out of your brother’s eye.” The Bible teaches very plainly in the book of Galatians that we *“which are spiritual”* are to help these that need help. Galatians chapter 6, verse 1: *“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual...”*—not hypocritical—*“ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness.”* (Galatians 6:1) If I have a speck in my eye, I want you to help me get it out; but I don’t want you to help me get it out if you’ve got a crosstie in your own eye. There’s something about the sin of a hypocrite that blinds him:

Faults in others I can see;  
But, praise the Lord, there are none in me.

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Now, listen. May God help you to prioritize and have your life absolutely, totally clean with God before you try to minister to somebody else! When I first came to this church, I got the deacons together, twenty years ago, and I said, “Brother deacons, I want you to do something. I want you to help me to minister to those who’ve come forward. I want you to be ones to go to the prayer room and pray with people. I want you to be the ones that take the Bible and show these people how to come to Jesus Christ. I want you to be the ones to bear their burdens and weep with them and pray with them and lead them to Jesus Christ.” And then I said, “May God have mercy on you if you try to point a man, a woman, a boy, a girl, to Jesus Christ, or to make any spiritual decision, and your heart is not absolutely, totally right with God!” You agree, don’t you? How can anybody get a speck out of somebody else’s eye when he has a log in his own eye?

Now I’m not a perfect man—you’ve discovered that, I know, a long, long time ago—and my wife can tell you I’m not a perfect man; but I tell you what else my wife will tell you: “He’s not a hypocrite.” I would not dare stand in the pulpit and preach the Word of God with unconfessed, unrepented-of sin in my life. What arrogance! What an unmitigated fool is the man, the woman—anybody—who would take sacred and holy

things in profane hands and would try to tell others what to do or what not to do when he's got a crosstie in his own eye! If you're a Sunday School teacher in this church, and you're not going to live a righteous and a holy life, for God's sake, my sake, and your sake, resign! Get right with God, or resign! If you're a deacon in this church, and you're not going to be pure and clean and holy, and live before God as you ought to live before God, then resign! Don't do it! If you're a staff member in this church, and your life is not absolutely, totally right with God—blameless, pure—don't attempt to minister in the name of Jesus! It is folly! It is sin! It is repugnant to God! We're to *"seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness."* (Matthew 6:33) Our Lord says, "You hypocrite! First get the log out of your eye; then you'll see more clearly how to get the speck out of somebody else's eye." (Matthew 7:5)

I heard about a man who went into the psychiatrist's office, had a fried egg on his head, a strip of bacon over each ear. He said, "I came to see you about my brother." Many of us are just like that:

Faults in others I can see;  
But, praise the Lord, there are none in me.  
—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

#### IV. Binding Before Loosing

Our Lord says there is a proper priority: that fellowship comes before worship; that the spiritual comes before the material; that purity comes before ministry. Then, I want you to turn to Matthew chapter 12, and it gets even more serious. Look, beginning in verse 22: *"Then was brought unto him"*—that is, "unto Jesus"—*"one possessed with a devil..."*—now, every time in the King James Version where you read the word devil—"a devil"; not "the devil, but "a devil"—it means "a demon"—*"one possessed with a [demon], blind, and dumb: and he"*—that is Jesus—*"healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw."* This was a miracle. Now there is a spirit of blindness and a spirit of speech impediment. Not everyone who is blind—obviously, not everyone who is blind—is demon-possessed; or everyone who cannot speak is demon-possessed; but this man was. *"Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?"* That's just a way of saying, "Isn't this the Messiah?" *"But when the Pharisees heard it..."*—now the Pharisees hated Jesus because the people were following Jesus. They were envious of Jesus. The Bible said it was for envy that they delivered Him. (Matthew 27:18) Besides that, they had no compassion. They didn't care that a man had been healed. In these guys, the milk of human kindness had curdled—*"when the Pharisees*

*heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of devils.” (Matthew 12:22–24)*

That was one of the vilest things they could say. Beelzebub was a Phoenician god of filth. They worshipped filth—the lord of the flies. The Phoenicians saw that when there was carrion and filth on the ground, after awhile there would be larvae, maggots. They couldn’t see the microscopic eggs that the flies would lay, so they thought that life came out of putrefaction; life came out of filth and stench and manure; and so they worshipped that. Can you image any idolatry any worse than that? Now, you know what they call this god of filth? Beelzebub.

Now I want you to see how cruel, and how malevolent, and how wicked, and how twisted, and how warped these Pharisees were. They said, “Yeah, He healed him, but He healed him by Beelzebub, the god of filth, the prince of the devils.” *“And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: and if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.” (Matthew 12:25–28)*

Now Jesus uses that spiritual logic that He has. He says, “Nobody works for the devil by lifting drooping spirits, by cooling fevered brows, by opening blind eyes, by loosing dumb tongues, by driving out devils. I am not in collusion with the devil; I am in collision with the devil.” And you know that—very obvious. They knew that. And Jesus then goes on to talk and tell how He does cast out demons. Look in verse 29: *“Or else how can one enter into a strong man’s house, and spoil his goods,”*—that means “carry off his materials”—*“except he”*—and here’s our word—*“first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house”*—*“first bind the strong man.” (Matthew 12:29)*

Now, who is the strong man in this parable? Jesus said, “You go into a man’s house. He’s got all of this wealth. You want his wealth? How are you going to get his wealth? Well, first of all, you’ve got to go in there and tie him up, because he’s very strong and you’re not going to be able to carry all this loot away unless you first bind the strong man.” Who is the strong man? The strong man is Satan. And Satan is strong. As Martin Luther said, “His craft and power are great, and, armed with cruel hate, on earth is not his equal.” But Jesus said, “In order to rob him, you must bind him. You must first bind him. You must take away his goods by binding him.”

Now, notice Jesus didn’t say that you could sneak up on him. The thief slips under cover of night. You can’t do that. He’s the master of the night; he is the prince of darkness. You cannot slip into his house and steal anything from him. He’s too clever

for that. The only way that you're going to take anything from Satan is armed robbery. I mean, you're going to have to strong-arm him. You'll never fool him; you'll never trick him. He is the prince of darkness.

And it's time that churches and organizations and everybody else learn that we're not going to outwit, out-move, outmaneuver, out-manage, out-organize, out-advertise the devil. You can't do it. You've just got to overcome him with sheer force. You've got to bind him. Jesus said, "You know the way I got this man out of Satan's territory? How did I deliver this man who had become the victim of a wicked, cruel, malevolent, strong person?" Jesus said, "I bound him. That's how I did it: I bound him. I bound Satan. And, therefore, I robbed his house, and I carried away his goods. This man that he thought was in his possession, I carried him away, and I delivered him."

First—first—the binding; and then, the loosing: That's the priority. Before you would loose anyone, you must first of all bind Satan. Many of us, when we go to war, we don't know exactly what we're doing. We are wrestling against flesh and blood, but the battle is not against flesh and blood. Are we stronger than Satan? Of course not! Is Jesus stronger than Satan? Of course He is! Does Jesus live in us? Yes, He does. Has He given us the power of attorney? Yes, He has. And we can bind Satan, and we can loose souls.

Now you're in Matthew chapter 12. Turn to Matthew chapter 18; look in verse 18: "*Verily I say unto you*"—now, when our Lord says, "*verily*," that means "pay attention; put up your antenna"—"*[Truly, truly],*"—"verily"—"*I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.*" (Matthew 18:18–19) The binding comes before the loosing. Jesus said, "I did not rob the strong man's house except I first bound the strong man." (Matthew 12:29) That's the proper priority. We've got to get it in the right order.

Now you say, "Well, Pastor Rogers, if I have a son, a daughter, a husband, a wife who's in the grip of a vile and cruel devil, demon-possessed, can I take them out of Satan's hands?" If they want to come, you can. You see, many of them don't even have the ability to come except you pray, except you bind. You remember, in 2 Corinthians 4:4, the Bible says, "*The God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ...should shine unto them.*" (2 Corinthians 4:4) Who is "*the god of this world*"—literally, "the god of this age"? Satan! He's "*the prince of the power of the air,*" (Ephesians 2:2) and he is the sinister minister of deception. He has "*blinded the minds of them which believe not.*" Never scold an unsaved man when he says, "I don't see it." He doesn't see it. He's not lying. He can't



see it. *“Except a man be born again, he cannot see.”* (John 3:3) Jesus said, “He is blind.” Your job is to bind the blinder, the one who’s blinding them. Your job is to render him inoperable, so you can go into his house and carry away his captives.

Does that mean that, *ipso facto*, I can bind Satan and carry away whomever I wish? No. They’ve got to be willing to go—they’ve got to be willing to go. You see, my prayers free you to be saved; they don’t force you to be saved. God won’t force anybody to be saved. But there are many people today who are in bondage. They need somebody to pray for them. They need somebody to bind Satan. They need to go into the strong man’s house. And many of them would be saved, and could be saved, if we would become people of a proper priority and *“seek...first the kingdom of God”*: (Matthew 6:33) get right with those that we’ve wronged—fellowship before worship; get our value system right—the spiritual before the material; get our ministry right—purity before ministry; get the battle right—binding before loosing.

We’re in a battle, and we’re losing. And I’ll tell you why we’re losing: We’re not even showing up for the war. “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, and powers and spiritual wickedness.” (Ephesians 6:12) We need to learn how to bind the power of Satan that’s carrying this community and this nation to hell in a handbasket. And he has his captives, and he’s carrying them off with chains of darkness. Many of us have failed to pray and to bind the strong man.

## **V. The Inside Before the Outside**

Now, here’s the last of these five powerful priorities. Turn, if you will, to Matthew chapter 23; look, if you will, in verse 25—our Lord says, *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites...”*—you know, Jesus had loving words for drunkards, thieves, prostitutes. He had such compassion. He was called “a friend of sinners.” (Matthew 11:19; Luke 7:34) But He had His most scathing denunciation for hypocrites. Jesus, with no equivocation, excoriated those that were hypocrites, actors playing church—*“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse”*—here’s our word—*“first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.”* (Matthew 23:25–26) There’s the proper priority: the inside before the outside. That just sums up everything else—the inside before the outside.

Now, evidently, the way that men do dishes hasn’t changed through the years. Joyce will hand it back to me and say, “Adrian, that’s not clean.” Well, I’ll hold it up. She says, “Look on the inside.” A man can just sort of polish the outside and say, “I’ve done a good job.” But if you’re going to eat out of a vessel, you’d much rather have it clean on the inside than on the outside, hadn’t you?

Our Lord says, “Don’t be a hypocrite. Don’t just simply polish the outside of the vessel without doing the inside.” You see, what men need is a new birth, not another bath. I mean, they need to be changed from the inside. They need to be changed radically and dramatically.

What do most people do? What does government try to do? Government tries to change men by starting on the outside and working to the inside. We think if we can change the environment, we can change the man. Do you realize that man got in trouble in a perfect environment, the Garden of Eden? Do you think that the environment is the answer? I’m for a good environment—that’s better than a bad environment. But men always want to start on the outside and try to work toward the inside. God starts on the inside and works toward the outside.

That’s the reason we need to understand the proper role of the church and the proper role of the state. I believe in government. God founded government. God ordained government. But learn this about government: Government cannot make you good; it can’t do it. Only God can make you good. Only the church has the message that makes men good. The government is not here to make you good; the government is here to restrain evil. That’s what the government is for. There’s no law on earth that can make you love me, Greg, so I’ve got to have one to keep you from killing me, see? The government is here to restrain evil. Only God can make you good.

Man always thinks if he can simply begin on the outside, he can work to the inside. He cleanses the outside of the cut; he fails to cleanse the inside. Jesus Christ begins in the heart of man, and Jesus says, “First, the inside—get your heart right; and then, the outside will be taken care of.” When a man comes to Jesus Christ, is he going to sprout wings and get a halo? If somebody comes down this aisle tonight to give his or her heart to Jesus Christ, does that mean he will never curse again? Does that mean he’ll never lose his temper again? Does that mean he’ll never lust again? Of course not! He will. Why? Because he has in him a nature that has been accustomed to do these things. But then he comes to Jesus, and he gets saved: The Lord transforms him. There’s a germ that is planted on the inside—a life, more than a germ; the life of God. He’s made a “partaker of the divine nature.” (2 Peter 1:4) And God begins to do a miracle in the heart of that man, and he begins to “*grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*” (2 Peter 3:18) And he’s not perfect. He will be perfect. But he’s not perfect. The Bible says in Philippians chapter 1, verse 6, that “*he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it.*” (Philippians 1:6) That is, He’s going to complete what He started.

Joyce and I were taking our walk the other morning. Spring—we love spring! Don’t you love spring? I love it. In Florida, we didn’t have spring. We didn’t have winter either,

though—just green all year round. All right, we're taking our walk, and do you know what happened? I mean, it's springtime—spring now. And I saw a dead leaf come floating down. That's supposed to happen in the fall. I said, "Joyce, look at that. It's spring, and the leaves are falling." And, you know, most of the leaves fall off the trees in the fall. But, you know, there are some leaves that don't fall off the trees until the spring. Have you noticed that? There are some that just kind of cling on there, and they don't fall until the springtime. And do you know what causes them to fall, ultimately? They don't blow off; they're not knocked off. They're pushed off—they're pushed off. What pushes them off? It's new life: a new leaf that is pushing the old life, the old leaf, off. Something is happening on the inside. Until you just get full of Jesus, you'll save a lot of time picking leaves. Just let Jesus come into your heart, into your life.

Jesus says, "First—first, first—the inside; then, the outside." You may have some habits; you may have some problems; you may be wrestling with some things; but you begin to take care of and nurture the inner life and "*seek...first the kingdom of God*" (Matthew 6:33)—just seek it—and you're going to find out that your life will be being changed day by day by day. But if you start on the outside with resolutions and good intentions and rededications and all of that, if you don't tend to the inner part, you'll never have real victory.

## Conclusion

Now, these are five powerful priorities. They're taught by our Lord—our Lord—who said, "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.*" (Matthew 6:33) I want to say again that if you're having difficulty living the Christian life, it is because your priorities are wrong. And if your priorities are wrong, it's because your values are wrong. And if your values are wrong, it's because you're ignorant of this book, or you don't believe in it. So that's why you're here, and that's why I'm preaching tonight.

# The High Cost of Borrowed Trouble

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date:** January 8, 1989

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 6:33–34

**Main Scripture Verse:** *“Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”*

## Outline

Introduction

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Conclusion

## Introduction

Take God’s Word, please, and turn to Matthew chapter 6. And in just a moment, we’re going to read two very familiar verses—Matthew chapter 6. I’m going to be speaking to you on the subject of worry. There’s not a person here, including this pastor who is doing the speaking, who doesn’t need to hear the message. And so I’m listening to what I have to say about you, because indeed worry seems to be America’s favorite indoor and outdoor sport. We worry about so many things. Those who are poor worry because they don’t have any money, and those who are wealthy worry about everybody getting what money they have away from them. Those who are ignorant worry because they don’t know very much, and those who know a lot worry about what they know. Those who are young, they worry because they face an uncertain future. And those who are old, they worry because they seem to be facing sickness and death. And we just seem to think that worry is normal and natural, and some of us actually think that worry does good. But the Bible says, *“Fret not thyself.”* (Psalm 37:1; Psalm 37:7; Psalm 37:8; Proverbs 24:19) It tends only to evil—it tends only to evil. Now, the very best we could say about worry is that it is useless. Jesus said, *“Which of you by taking [anxious]*

*thought can add one cubit unto his stature?”* (Matthew 6:27) It doesn't do any good at all. Worry never solved a problem. Worry never lifted a burden. Worry never dried a tear. The best we could say about it, folks, is that it is useless.

But, oh, my dear friend, I don't want to talk to you about the uselessness of worry; I want to talk to you about the harmfulness of worry. I want to show you what worry will do to you today in this message that I'm going to call "The High Cost of Borrowed Trouble." Now, look here—Matthew chapter 6, and I begin reading in verse 33: *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."* (Matthew 6:33) Now, what things is He talking about? Well, He's talking about the things that people worry about. Verse 31: *"Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (for after all these things do the Gentiles seek:)"*—and when He says "Gentiles," He's saying "the pagans." And what He's saying is, folks, that worry is pagan—*"for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."* And then Jesus gives this command. Look at it. It's not a suggestion, and it is not pop psychology. It is a command. Look at it. He says here, *"Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."* (Matthew 6:31–34) Now, look at that phrase *"the evil thereof."* He doesn't mean, "Sufficient unto the day is the sin thereof." The word that is translated "evil" here means "the trouble, the problems."

Now every one of us has problems. Just nod your head. And, by the way, God engineered you to have problems. God doesn't want you to live a problem-free life. Back in the Garden of Eden He said to Adam and Eve, *"Cursed is the ground for thy sake."* (Genesis 3:17) It is for your good that you have problems.

## **I. What a Problem Does in the Life of a Believer**

What do problems do in the life of a believer? What does this evil that our Lord talks about that we have every day, what does it do? What good does it do?

### **A. It Silences Satan**

Well, in the very first place, it silences Satan. Did you know that God gives us trouble so we can shut the devil's mouth? The devil said to God one day, "You've got a man down there named Job, and that Job, he doesn't really love you, God. Oh, he just serves you because he doesn't have any trouble. If he had some trouble, he would curse you, God, to your face." (Job 1:9–11) God said, "You don't know my servant Job. I'm going to allow you to give him trouble. And even though he has trouble, you're going

to see that he continues to praise me.” And Job did, and Job silenced Satan. Now some of you out there are suffering. Just keep on praising God; just keep on giving Him glory—and I’ll tell you what it will do: It will silence Satan.

## **B. It Builds Believers**

But not only will it silence Satan; let me tell what else trouble does: Trouble builds believers. That’s the way you’re going to grow. You don’t sharpen an axe on a pound of butter. God wants you to have trouble to put strength in your soul. Trouble will build purity. It will build patience. It will build sympathy. And it will build humility. Trouble builds believers.

## **C. It Glorifies God**

But not only does it silence Satan, and build believers; it glorifies God. You see, these other two things, the sum total is the glory of God. Remember when Jesus approached that man who was born blind and Jesus said, “This sickness is not because of sin, but for the glory of God”? (John 11:4) Trouble glorified God. Now, just put it down: Every day—every day—has a sufficient amount of evil or trouble. But God, along with that sufficient amount of trouble, God gives us a sufficient amount of strength. I’m going to show you later on that God says, “As your days are, so shall your strength be.” (Deuteronomy 33:25)

Now God is sitting there in heaven, and God is mixing your life together in the crucible of His wisdom. God takes a certain amount of trouble, and God takes a certain amount of strength, and God takes a certain amount of blessings; and He mixes them all together, and God says, “That’s just right for today. That is sufficient for today.” Now what happens is this: Many of us go out into tomorrow, and we borrow trouble from tomorrow, and we take tomorrow’s problems, and we add tomorrow’s problems to today’s strength. And when we add tomorrow’s problems to today’s strength, we get the whole ecology—we get the whole thing—messed up. Notice what the Lord said. The Lord said, “*Take...no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.*” And then He says this: “*Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*” (Matthew 6:34) That is, “I give you sufficient strength for today’s problems”—okay? “I don’t give you strength for tomorrow’s problems; I give you sufficient strength for the problems of today.”

Now, when you go into tomorrow, and you borrow problems and bring them into today, you don’t take the sorrow out of tomorrow; you take the strength out of today. Do you know what worry is? *Worry is the interest you pay on borrowed trouble—worry is the interest you pay on borrowed trouble.* When you go into tomorrow and you drag tomorrow’s problems and stuff them into today, you mess up the whole ecology; you

mess up the whole delicate balance that God has made for your life. *“Take...no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”* God has a very delicate balance for you, and God wants you to live today’s life with the strength that God gives you for today.

## II. What Borrowed Trouble Does in the Life of a Believer

Now, when you borrow trouble, here’s what that borrowed trouble will do for you; here’s the high cost of borrowed trouble.

### A. It Buries Blessings

First of all, it buries blessings—it buries blessings. You see, not only does today have some trouble; today also has some blessings. There’s not a one of us but if we would look around—I don’t care what kind of difficulty you’re in—not a one of us today, if we would think, we’d just say, “God has blessed us tremendously”—every one of us. If we would just think about the blessings that God has given us! Every one of us is knee-high in blessings, but many times we don’t see it, because *worry pulls tomorrow’s clouds over today’s sunshine*. And sometimes we can stand knee-high in harvest, and be looking for a famine, and fail to see the blessings that God has given us already.

You see, again, there’s that balance. You see, God gives us blessings, and God gives us burdens. *Both are necessary—just like God gives rain and God gives sunshine. All sunshine—you wouldn’t want that, because all sunshine makes a desert. All rain—you wouldn’t want that, because all rain makes a swamp. But rain and sunshine makes a garden, and that’s what God is up to. God is up to building your life.*

And so God says there’s a sufficient amount of evil, but, oh, there’s also a sufficient amount of blessings, because He says in verse 33, *“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”* (Matthew 6:33) So here are the blessings. And then in verse 34, (Matthew 6:34) here are the burdens. And God just mixes them all together. But, you see, what happens sometimes is, when you go out here and you bring more burdens into today than you’re supposed to bring into today, those burdens bury the blessings and you don’t see the blessings.

Many of us are not seeing the blessings that God has given us. *Do you remember—did any of you used to read Li’l Abner? I used to read Li’l Abner. And there was a little fellow in Li’l Abner, his name had no vowels in it, all consonants—Joe Btflsplk. And you couldn’t pronounce his last name, and that guy went with a little cloud over his head. Everywhere he went, there was a little cloud over his head. Am I the only guy that remembers that? Do you remember that? What was his name? Do you? You can’t pronounce it—Joe somebody. And there was that little cloud that went over his head.*

Everywhere that bird went, that little cloud, dark cloud, thunder, and lighting—and it could be sunshine everywhere else. I know people just like that. I mean, no matter how many blessings they've got, there's that little cloud that goes over their head. And, you know, you don't dare ask them how they feel, because they'll tell you. I mean, you get an organ recital.

And this doesn't mean that we're not to be sympathetic with people who have problems—I don't mean that at all. But, my dear friend, don't let the problems cover up the blessings. If you get too many problems, they're going to cover up the blessings. If you go out here to tomorrow and you just bring tomorrow's problems into today, you're going to bury blessings.

Now I was talking to a couple a while back, a precious little couple. And none of you know them, so I feel free to use this illustration. It was in another place. But they came to me; they were just heartbroken—I mean, just sobering. I thought, "What kind of a terrible problem could these people have?" It was just, oh, you'd have thought it was the end of the world. So I brought them into my study, and I sat down. I said, "Tell me about your problems." He was handsome and young and virile. She was beautiful and gracious, and they had a precious little baby. And I said, "Tell me about your problems." He was out of work; he didn't have any work, and they were out of money. And they were just heartbroken; they were just weeping.

I said, "Hold it! Whoa! Wait just a moment!" I said, "Now here you are weeping and crying, and you live in America." I said, "Don't you know all over the world there are people who would leave all of their possessions if they could just immigrate and come to America? They'd be glad to start where you are. They'd leave everything. They would leave a fortune just to be where you are." I said, "Don't you understand that?" I said, "Let me tell you something else." I said, "Sir, how much is your wife worth to you?" "Oh," he said, "she's worth the world to me." I said, "Well, she seems to be lovely." I said to her, "How much is your husband?" "Oh," she said, "he's a wonderful man. I love him so." I said, "Well, you're pretty rich, aren't you? How much would you sell this baby for?" "Oh, we wouldn't sell our baby." I said, "There are a lot of people who would give everything they have if they could have a little baby like you have." And I said, "You're healthy—you're healthy. Would you sell your health?" "Why," they said, "no." I said, "Well, there are plenty of millionaires who'd be glad for you to take their millions if you'd just give them your body. Just trade places. You could have all of their millions—just give them your health." I said, "You're young. How much would you sell twenty-five years of your life for?" They said, "Nothing." I said, "Hey, you're pretty wealthy people, aren't you?" And they were: living in America, loving one another, with a baby, with youth, and with health, blubbering and crying, because what they had done is just let



tomorrow's clouds hide today's sunshine.

Now I'm not saying that we don't have problems. Friend, we do have problems. But the Bible says, "*Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*"

## **B. It Steals Strength**

And what this does—this borrowed trouble—is, number one, it buries blessings. I'll tell you what else it does: Not only does it bury blessings; it steals strength—it steals strength. Now, notice what our text says: "*Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*" (Matthew 6:34) Sufficient what? Not only sufficient evil, but sufficient strength. You see, when God gives you a problem, then God gives you the strength to meet that problem. Let me give you a wonderful verse—Deuteronomy 33:25. Are you ready for it? Deuteronomy 33:25: "*As thy days, so shall thy strength be.*" (Deuteronomy 33:25) Isn't that wonderful? God gives you strength for today. "As your days are, so shall your strength be." That's, I believe, exactly what our Lord was talking about when He said, "*Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*" God's saying, "I'm not giving you strength for tomorrow." There are two days God doesn't give you strength for, because you don't need it: number one, you don't need strength for yesterday; number two, you don't need strength for tomorrow.

Dr. Jerry Vines, President of the Southern Baptist Convention, was telling me he was on an airplane, and it got in one of those real bad storms. Have you ever been in one of those real bad, bad storms? I mean, it was so bad, and I think the airplane was malfunctioning some, too. Jerry said he really got scared. You know, that airplane poison—you know, one drop will kill you. And so he said, "I got concerned." And he said, "I got to praying to the Lord." He said, "I said, 'Now, Lord, this is a serious matter.'" And he was telling God all about this, and he thought they were going down at any time. And, finally, they broke through, and they got on the ground, and it was all right. And he said, "Lord, I'm a little concerned." He said, "I thought you were supposed to give me dying grace; and, Lord, I was scared stiff." God said, "Son, you weren't dying!" A lot of times, dear friend, we're wanting God to give us something we don't need.

Now, listen—listen. God gives you strength for today's problems. "As your days are"—"as your days are"—"so shall your strength be." Now you remember over there in Psalm 103 the Bible says, "*Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.*" (Psalm 103:1) And then the Bible in Psalm 103 has a wonderful little phrase. It says, "*He knoweth our frame;*"—"he knoweth our frame"—"he remembereth that we are dust." (Psalm 103:14) Do you know what that means? He knows what kind of a load you can bear. A one-ton truck has a frame to bear one ton; a two-ton truck bears two tons. He knows our frame. He knows what kind of a load you can bear. And

so God says, “All right, here is your frame. Here’s how much Adrian can bear,” and He puts that much on Adrian. You say, “Why do I have trouble more than other people?” Maybe it’s a compliment to you. Maybe God knows you can bear more than other people. He knows our frame; He knows what you can bear.

But now, wait a moment. Suppose He has fully loaded your truck, and then you go out and put another load on it? No wonder you have to call a wrecker on the highway of life! What you have done, dear friend, is you’ve just simply overloaded. Now, “*Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*” And God says, “You’re a one-ton truck. I’ll give you a one-ton load,” and you go out and add tomorrow’s half-ton to it. You say, “What’s wrong with me? Why can’t I cope?” My dear friend, this borrowed trouble, it just simply steals strength—it steals strength.

Listen to what a lady wrote:

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

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

—ANNIE J. FLINT

You see, “God hath promised strength for the day.” Now what happens is this: When you borrow trouble and begin to pay that interest, you’re going to find out that you’re bankrupting your strength. You’ve just overloaded yourself, and that’s not good for you.

I heard about a grandfather clock that stood in a hallway for two generations and told time—a beautiful old clock. But one day the grandfather clock got to thinking about the responsibilities that were on it, and it went to see the clock psychiatrist. And the clock psychologist said, “What is your problem?” He said, “Well, I’m afraid I’m going to have a nervous breakdown.” And the clock psychologist said to the clock, “Well, why? Why are you going to have this nervous breakdown?” He said, “Well, I got to thinking.” He said, “You know, I tick two ticks a second, and,” he said, “that means that’s 120 ticks a minute.” He said, “That’s 7,200 ticks an hour. That means 172,000 ticks every day. That means that would be 1,209,000 ticks a week.” He said, “Listen: That’s 62,000,000 ticks a year.” The grandfather clock said, “I just don’t know whether I can do that or not.” And so the clock psychologist stroked his whiskers a moment and thought, and he said to the clock, “Well, I want to ask you a question: How many ticks do you have to

tick at a time?” “Well,” the clock said, “I only have to tick one tick at a time.” And the clock psychologist said, “Well, let me suggest you do this. Don’t think about ticking 62,000,000 times a year. Just go back and tick one tick at a time. And when you tick one tick and that’s finished, then tick the next tick. And don’t worry about how many ticks you’re going have to tick.” The clock said, “That sounds like good advice to me,” and went back and has been ticking ever since.

Now I think we could take our verse and say, “Tick no tock for tomorrow.” Listen, dear friend: “*Sufficient*”—“*sufficient*”—“*unto the day is the evil thereof.*” (Matthew 6:34) Just live one day at a time. If that’s too much, just live one hour at a time. If that’s too much, live one moment at a time: “Moment by moment, I’m trusting in thee.” You see, that’s so wonderful. Let me tell you what happens, friend. When you worry, when you go out there and overload your truck, you don’t take the sorrow out of tomorrow; you take the strength out of today.

### C. It Produces Problems

And that brings us to the third high cost of borrowed trouble. The first high cost is it buries blessings. The second high cost is this: that it steals strength. The third high cost is, it produces problems. Now, when you bury blessings, and when you steal strength, you’re headed for trouble; you’re going to have problems. And when you get to tomorrow, you know what’s going to happen to you tomorrow? God gave you strength for today, and He’s going to give you strength for tomorrow. But what you do is you overload today, and then when you get to tomorrow, how do you get to tomorrow? Out of breath! You get to tomorrow run down; you get to tomorrow where you can’t even use the strength that God gives you for tomorrow, because you have exhausted yourself with the stolen strength out of today. And so you just come to tomorrow with problems in your heart and in your life.

And a lot of the problems we worry about never happen, anyway. One man said, “My life has been filled with terrible misfortunes, most of which never happened.” That’s true about a lot of folks. We just worry about things that never come to pass. But let me say this: Many of the things that we worry about do come to pass because we worried about them; and had we not worried about them, they would not have come to pass. Remember that line in the book of Job where Job said, “*The thing which I...feared is come upon me*”—“*the thing which I...feared is come upon me.*” (Job 3:25) Worry produces problems that we would not have if we did not worry.

Now, dear friend, that’s the reason why I said that not only is worry useless; it is absolutely harmful. It doesn’t make us ready; it makes us unready. We think, “Well, boy, I have to lie awake all night and worry about tomorrow, because I’ve got a lot to do

tomorrow.” Well, friend, if you’ve got a lot to do tomorrow, it would be better for you to be sleeping soundly—wouldn’t it?—than staying up all night worrying about it. You see, it doesn’t make you ready; it makes you unready. You face the future out of breath, because you’ve been fighting imaginary foes. The Bible says, *“Fear hath torment.”* (1 John 4:18) And you just let yourself keep on worrying, and you’re going to torment yourself into a form of mental illness.

Now I’m not saying that we are not to be concerned. The Bible doesn’t talk about a happy-go-lucky life. Jesus said, “Which of you who is going to build a tower doesn’t sit down first of all and count the cost?” (Luke 14:28) And Paul said, *“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”* (Galatians 6:7) Our Lord is not saying, “Don’t plan for tomorrow.” Our Lord is not saying, “Don’t live a concerned life,” when there are legitimate problems. Our Lord is not saying that we’re not to have burdens. Our Lord is not saying there are to be no tears. He is not saying that we’re to be happy-go-lucky, flippant people. Folks, there are some real serious problems in this world, and people have legitimate burdens. But what I’m trying to say is, don’t overload yourself with burdens that God doesn’t want you to bear today. That’s what I’m saying: *“Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”* (Matthew 6:34) And when you overload your truck, when you bring today’s problems into tomorrow, it buries the blessings of today, it steals the strength of today, and it produces problems tomorrow that you would not have had had you not worried about them. *“Fear hath torment.”* (1 John 4:18) It’s a form of mental illness. The word *worry* actually means “to divide.” *“A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”* (James 1:8)

“Well,” you say, “pastor, well and good. You’ve just made me feel worse now, because I’m going to worry about my worry.” Well, I don’t want to do that—I don’t want to do that. I want to tell you how to deal with this thing. You see, before verse 34 is verse 33. That’s profound, isn’t it? All right, verse 33—and here’s what our Lord says; he says—listen—*“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”* And then He says, *“therefore.”* Do you see the word *therefore*? It just follows: *“Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.”* (Matthew 6:33–34) What’s our Lord saying? He’s saying in verse 34, in the light of verse 33, “If you’ll put God first—if you’ll honor God, trust God—He’s going to take care of you—He’s going to take care of you.”

He feeds the birds. It doesn’t mean He throws it in the nest, but He takes care of them. What father would feed his chickens and starve his children? (Matthew 6:26; Luke 12:24) That’s the rationale—that’s the logic—of Jesus. If He feeds the fowls of the air, isn’t He going to take care of you? Let me tell you something, folks. The wealthiest man on earth couldn’t feed all these birds for one day. God feeds them every day; He feeds

them every day. The wealthiest man on earth couldn't feed them one day. God feeds them all every day, and He's going to take care of you. You seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness. Now, if you get your mind all fastened on "I'm not going to worry; I'm not going to worry; I'm not going to worry," it's going to make you worry more, okay? So don't get all wrapped up in that kind of stuff. It's unprofitable. Seek God. "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.*" Forget about trying not to worry, and just bring your heart, your life, to God.

I heard about a lady who was living a victorious life. She was just one of these ladies that just seemed to have a lot of trouble. She had a lot of problems, but she was on top of her problems. And another lady who was prone to worry decided she'd go talk with this lady and see if she could learn anything from her and learn her secret of victory. When she found this particular lady, she said to her, "Are you the lady with great faith in God?" She said, "No, I'm not." She said, "I am the lady with a little faith in the great God." Now, you think about it: "I am the lady with a little faith in the great God." You see, dear friend, it is not primarily the size of your faith; it's the object of your faith. "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.*"

When you come to think of it, it's really not much of an honor to call somebody "a person of great faith." Now I want to be a person of great faith; but if I am, it's not an honor to me; it's really an honor to my God.

Let me illustrate what I'm talking about. I have a wife. Her name is Joyce. Joyce and I were grade school sweethearts. We just grew up together. I love her more than anything. She's precious to me, and she's a great, great influence on my life. She's the best Christian I know, and by far the biggest on my life for Christ, for good, for God. But sometimes I have to travel. When I travel, Joyce stays home sometimes. And do you know that she can write any kind of a check she wants on our bank account? She can go wherever she wants. She can do what she wants.

You say, "Well, how do you know that Joyce is not going to bankrupt you, or how do you know Joyce doesn't have a boyfriend when you're away?" I'm not worried about it. "You're not worried about it?" Not that much! Not one-half of one fingernail am I worried about it! Not one scintilla of an iota! I don't worry about it at all. You say, "Well, wow! What great faith!" Oh, no. What a great wife! What a great wife! It's not a compliment to me that I don't worry; it's a compliment to her—who she is—who she is!

## Conclusion

Now, friend, what I'm trying to say to you is this: You need to see who God is. That's the answer. Look in verse 33—that's the way to get to verse 34: "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness*" and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew

6:33) He's the God who loves you; He's the God who cares for you. Friend, if you worried, it wouldn't do you any good, anyway; but it tends only to evil. I want to remind you again that when you go out in here to tomorrow, and you take these problems of tomorrow and you jam them into today, you'll just blow up; you mess up everything. *"Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."* (Matthew 6:34) God has a plan for you today. "And as your days are, so shall your strength be." (Deuteronomy 33:25) You just say, "Today, dear God, I'm going to put my eyes on you. I'm going to trust you." And, friend, *"The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 4:7)

# The High Cost of Borrowed Trouble

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: September 23, 1979**

**Main Scripture Text: Mathew 6:34**

*“Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof”*

MATTHEW 6:34

## Outline

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- A. Difficulties Silence Satan
- B. Difficulties Build Believers
- C. Difficulties Glorify God
- I. Borrowed Trouble Buries Blessings
- II. Borrowing Trouble Steals Strength
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Conclusion

## Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn to the Gospel of Matthew chapter 6 and verse 34—Matthew chapter 6 and verse 34. And, here’s some strong medicine for tired souls, the words of Jesus: *“Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”* (Matthew 6:34) I want to speak to you today on this subject: “The High Cost of Borrowed Trouble.” Listen to the text one more time: *“Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”* (Matthew 6:34) When you go into the future and bring the problems of the future into the present, all you do is mortgage the present to the future; all you are doing is borrowing trouble. And, worry is the interest you pay. *Worry is the interest paid on borrowed trouble.* And, so many people today want to borrow trouble. They want to go into the future and begin to take thought for the morrow.

Now, when the Bible says, *“Take no thought for the morrow,”* (Matthew 6:34) the Bible doesn’t say, “Don’t fail to plan for tomorrow.” That’s not what the Word means here. When the Bible uses the phrase “take no thought,” it means “don’t worry” about

tomorrow. It doesn't tell you not to plan about tomorrow. As a matter of fact, our Lord said, "What man going out to build a tower doesn't sit down first and count whether he has sufficient to build the tower?" and so forth. (Luke 14:28) No, the Bible is not against a thought-out life. The Bible is not against planning. But, the Bible is definitely against worry.

Now notice, the Bible speaks of evil today. Look at it: "*Take therefore no thought for [tomorrow], for [tomorrow] shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*" (Matthew 6:34) Now, the word *evil* there doesn't mean "sin," but it means "the difficulties" of today. Every day has its difficulties. And, God wants us to have difficulties. Now, sometimes we think that God is here always to deliver His little darlings from difficulties, but that's not so, ladies and gentlemen. God wants to deliver us *through* difficulties, not *from* difficulties. Difficulties are God's plan for us. God planned it that way. And, difficulties serve a very definite purpose.

#### **A. Difficulties Silence Satan**

Number one: to silence Satan. You remember when Satan chided God and said, "[Does] Job [serve you] for nought?" (Job 1:9)—"No wonder Job serves you. You've been so good to Job. Why, you've built a hedge around him. You take away all of these things that you've given him, God, he'll curse you to your face." And, God said, "You don't know my servant Job. He doesn't love me because of what I've done to him. He doesn't love me just because the sun is shining on his life. Job is not a fair-weather Christian. Job just loves me. And, you can take these things away from him, and he will still serve me." (Job 1:8–10) And, I want to tell you, my dear friend, when in the midst of difficulties you praise God, it will also shut the mouth of Satan. And, I'll tell you one of the wonderful things about difficulty is that it gives us an opportunity, number one, to silence Satan.

#### **B. Difficulties Build Believers**

But, not only does it silence Satan; it builds believers. We're built, we're strengthened, by difficulties. You don't sharpen an ax on a pound of butter, but on a grindstone. And, God is going to build into us patience, and God is going to build into us sympathy. And, God is going to build into us endurance, and God is wanting to build into us humility. And, these things often come on the anvil of difficulty. That's how they are forged and that's how they are founded—on the anvil of difficulty and in the crucible, sometimes, of sorrow. And, that's all right. God has a purpose in it.

Do you remember back there in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, and God came, and God said to Adam and Eve a very remarkable thing? He talked about the curse that was going to be upon the ground, how it would bring thorns and thistles and all this. But, this is what God said: God said, "*Cursed is the ground for*



*thy sake.*” (Genesis 3:17) That is, “Adam, I’m not doing this as a part of your judgment altogether. I’m doing it because I love you. The thorns, the thistles, the sweat, the labor, the heartache, the sorrow—it’s for your sake.” You see, the worst thing that would have happened to Adam and Eve would have been this: for them to live with a sinful nature in a world without difficulties. They would never see their need of God.

¶ Say, if the doctor could give you an injection and promise you that with this injection you’d never feel any more pain, would you allow him to do it? Be careful now. Pain is a gift of God. Pain tells you something is wrong. Now, if you couldn’t feel any pain this afternoon, you’re liable to go home and be slicing the roast and find your finger in the plate. Why, it’d be terrible, wouldn’t it? And, you’d never know the difference. You’d sit on a hot stove and never know the difference until you smelled the smoke. Why, that would be awful. Why, you’d step on a nail or whatever. Why, pain is God’s gift. Pain is God’s way of telling you there’s something wrong; you’d better do something about it.¶

And, I want to tell you, when God said, “*Cursed is the ground for thy sake*” (Genesis 3:17) and God allowed our world to be a world of daily difficulties, God was doing it for our sake—to tell sin-cursed man there’s something wrong in the universe and to keep us coming back to the Great Physician, you see. That’s what difficulties are: difficulties are to the universe what pain is to the body. It is God’s signal. It is telling us that something is wrong. And so, it causes us, dear friend—sinful creatures though we be—to depend upon the Lord.

### **C. Difficulties Glorify God**

And so, difficulty silences Satan. Difficulty builds believers. Difficulties glorify God as He delivers us through them. Remember there when Lazarus was sick, and the disciples came and said, “Master, the one that you love is sick,” (John 11:3) Jesus said there in John 11: “*This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God.*” (John 11:4) That puts a new wrinkle on it, doesn’t it? “*For the glory of God.*” (John 11:4) You see, God works through those things to get glory to Himself.

And so, the difficulties that we have, they silence Satan, they build believers, they glorify God. And, every day has its measure of difficulty and trouble. And, don’t you think for one scintilla of a moment that just because you become a Christian and just because you’ve given your heart to Jesus Christ that you’re not going to have any more difficulties. You indeed are.

But now, those difficulties are for today. But, you would make a tragic mistake if you were to go into the future and bring tomorrow’s difficulties and dump them into today. That’s what brings so much mischief and problems into our lives. And, I want to speak to you about “The High Cost of Borrowed Trouble,” and I want to mention three definite

things that it does.

## I. Borrowed Trouble Buries Blessings

Number one: Borrowed trouble buries blessings. Now, what do I mean by that? I mean, dear friend, that when you bring the fears of the future and the potentialities—the unknown potentialities—of the future, and you bring them into today, and you dump them upon today, they cover up today's blessings. You see, God, in the crucible of His love, is mixing into your life a very delicate balance. God gives you every day a certain number of burdens, and God gives you every day a certain number of blessings. And, God balances the burden and the blessing. But, if you bring more burdens into today than today is meant to have, you begin to bury the blessings and you don't see the blessings; you don't see God's goodness to you.

You see, God not only gives us our daily dose of difficulties, but God also gives us our bountiful blessings every day. The Bible says, “[He] daily loadeth us with [blessings]” (Psalms 68:19)—every day. God is so good, ladies and gentlemen. But, you see, you can get to be so much of a pessimist and so much of a worrywart and you can focus so much on difficulties—or even imaginary difficulties—that many times you fail to receive today's blessings. But, you see, you can become such a pessimist and so much of a worrywart that you focus too much on the difficulties and then fail to see God's blessing.

Now, if God were to just give you blessings and no difficulties, that wouldn't be good. You see, all sunshine—a desert. But, if God were to just give you all difficulties and no blessings, all rain makes a swamp. But, you see, when God gives us the blessings and the burdens and these things are mixed together, they cause a beautiful garden of joy and character to grow in our lives.

But again, when you borrow trouble, you bury blessings. You aren't able to see the blessings that God is giving you because you are focusing in on and overloading the burden side of your life. And, some people just can't enjoy life because they just are built of such a nature they are always anticipating what's going to happen. One lady said, “I always feel bad when I feel good because I know I may feel bad later.” And, there are people who are just that way. They just are looking forward to feeling bad. They are like an accident going somewhere to happen. They stand neck-deep in blessings and harvests and anticipate famine. There are plenty of blessings for you, dear friend. And, God is blessing you today abundantly if you'll just stop and look around.

† I was speaking to a couple a while back—they came to see me. I have never seen people that looked like they were on a lower limb. This little, sweet, young lady—I guess they were about twenty-five years of age—she was weeping. The young man—strong,

stalwart in appearance—but he was weeping. I couldn't imagine what kind of difficulties they were having. I said, "Tell me about it." They had a precious little baby—healthy, beautiful baby. And, I said, "What's wrong?" "Well," he said, "I've lost my job, and I can't get a job. And, we're destitute, and we're worried about the future." And, they were just weeping.

I said, "Now, wait a minute. Let me ask you a question: How much is it worth to you to live in the United States of America?" He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Well, I've been reading in the paper about people who are trying to get out of Cuba and trying to get out of Vietnam, and people who are trying to get out of East Germany, and people who are trying to get out of Soviet Russia, and people who are trying to get out of China, and so forth, who are leaving all of their possessions behind so that they can live in the United States of America—people who were very wealthy who are willing to leave their wealth that they might live here." "Oh," he said, "well, it means a lot to me that I can live here."

I said, "Well, I want to ask you another question: Your health, your body—are you healthy?" He said, "Yes, sir. I'm healthy." I said to the lady, "Are you healthy?" "Yes, sir. I'm healthy." I said, "Well, now, would you sell your health? I mean, if a millionaire were to come to you and say, 'You can have my millions; just give me your health.' And, let's suppose he had a run-down, decrepit, broken-up body." I said, "Would you trade?" He said, "No siree." I said, "You mean, that body's worth more than a million to you?" He says, "It is indeed." I said, "Well, you're young." I said, "Suppose an older person were to come and say, 'Just give me some of your years and I'll give you some of my money; you just sell me some of your years.'" I said, "Would you sell? How much is a year of your life?" "Oh," he said, "my life's not for sale." "Huh," I said. "You value it." "Oh, yes, yes."

I said, "Well, let me ask you a question: Are you in love?" "Oh, yes, we love one another." I said, "Would you sell your wife?" He said, "No, sir." I said, "Would you?" "Oh, no, no, no. My husband means more to me than anything." I said, "This little baby," I said, "suppose somebody wanted to buy this little baby. Is it for sale for half a million dollars? A million? Two million?" "No, that baby is not for sale." I said, "Well, you're multimillionaires, aren't you?" They said, "We sure are." They put a smile on their face and went walking out.

Now, the problem is—look—the problem is they had so much. Man, in a way, the people all over the world would have loved to have traded places with that little couple. But, what they had done—they had gone into the future, and they had anticipated some bugbear of a problem and brought it into the present; and they were whining, and groaning, and moping, and complaining. I want to tell you this, dear friend—you'd better learn this and learn it well: that *worry doesn't take the sorrow out of tomorrow; it only*

*takes the joy out of today.* Now, just learn that: worry doesn't help tomorrow; it just messes up today.

That's the reason Jesus said, *"Take...no thought for the morrow...the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself."* (Matthew 6:34) There are plenty of blessings today. God is so good. And, if you'll look around, you'll see and count your many blessings—and that's not trite. "Count your many blessings...it will surprise you what the Lord hath done." (Johnson Oatman, Jr.) Some people just don't want to do that.

† They are like a woman I know of. She was complaining about all of her problems, and someone said, "Well, think on the bright side." She said, "No siree. If God gave me tribulations, He expects me to tribulate." And, there are people just like that. I mean, brother, they are they going to tribulate, and you can't stop them.†

## II. Borrowing Trouble Steals Strength

Now look, what is the problem? What is the high cost of borrowing trouble? Number one: Borrowed trouble buries blessings. It keeps us from seeing the goodness of God, *"who daily loadeth us with benefits."* (Psalms 68:19) But, not only does it bury blessings; secondly, it steals strength. It saps your strength. You see, with the burden, God gives strength. Every day has its fair measure of difficulty, and God wants you to have that difficulty. But, you see, along with the difficulty God gives you added strength. But, He gives you strength just to meet today's difficulties. He doesn't give you any more. God doesn't give strength for yesterday, and God never gives strength for tomorrow. He just gives us strength for today.

Now, I want you to put this in the margin alongside Matthew chapter 6 and verse 34—I want you to write in your margin "Deuteronomy 33, verse 25." And, this is a wonderful promise. This is what it says: *"And as thy days, so shall thy strength be."* (Deuteronomy 33:25) *"As thy days, so shall thy strength be."* (Deuteronomy 33:25) Now, you remember what the Bible says here in the text that we just looked at? *"Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."* (Matthew 6:34) That is, God gives you a sufficient amount of evil. God knows just knows how much is a sufficiency for you. But, the same God who gave you a sufficient amount of difficulty is the God that gives you a sufficient amount of strength to meet that difficulty. *"As [your] days [are], so shall [your] strength be."* (Deuteronomy 33:25)

Now, there's a very delicate balance. God knows how much difficulty you need; and so, God knows how much strength you need to meet those difficulties. Now, if you go and you add to the difficulties, you're not going to have enough strength to meet those difficulties because God only gives you strength for today. And, when you bring tomorrow's burdens in, then you are going to run out of strength. You see, the Bible says, *"He knoweth our frame" he remembereth that we are dust."* (Psalms 103:14)

¶ When a manufacturer manufactures a truck, he knows the frame of that truck. He knows what load that truck can bear. He knows the frame of that truck. So, maybe he says, “This is a one-ton truck” or, “This is a two-ton truck,” or whatever—“a ton-and-a-half truck. Don’t overload it. If you overload it, you’re going to break it down.” Now, dear friend, God knows your frame and knows how many burdens you can bear. But, when you borrow trouble, you overload your truck. And, when you add the weight of tomorrow to today’s load, it is no wonder someone should call a wrecker and pick you up on the highway of life—because what you’ve done, you’ve just overloaded things. “As [your] days [are], so shall [be your] strength.” (Deuteronomy 33:25)¶

Now, when you go into tomorrow and you take that load of tomorrow and you dump it onto today, dear friend, God didn’t give you that much strength. He gave you strength for today, not for tomorrow. There are two days God won’t help you—yesterday and tomorrow—because those are just imaginary days. Yesterday is gone, and tomorrow is not yet. We live now. The Bible tells us we are to “[forget] those things which are behind” (Philippians 3:13)—just forget them. You know, some of you want to live in the past, much less the future, and you’re going around saying, “What a fool I was! What a fool I was!” Why don’t you say, “What a fool I am to keep saying what a fool I was”? Forget it. Paul says, “Forgetting those things which are behind” (Philippians 3:13)—commend them to God. God will forgive you, and you bury them in the grave of God’s forgetfulness. God’s not going to give you strength for yesterday. You don’t need it. It’s gone. And, God’s not going to give you strength for tomorrow because it’s not yet here. “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” (Matthew 6:34) “As [your] days [are], so shall [your] strength be.” (Deuteronomy 33:25)

¶ I heard of a man who was unloading a ship down in New Orleans. He was walking the gangplank, and the gangplank broke; and he sank to the bottom of the Mississippi. He came up. He called for help. He sank again. He came up and yelled for help. He sank the third time, pushed off the bottom, came up to the top, and said, “If somebody doesn’t come help me, I’m going to have to drop these anvils that I’m carrying.” Now, I have an idea he could have made it out if he were to let go of an anvil in each hand. Now, yesterday and tomorrow are like anvils, and we’re in some difficulty right now. Why don’t you drop those things here? God will give you strength to swim out if you will just let go of yesterday and if you’ll just let go of tomorrow. Those are days that God doesn’t give you strength for.¶

He never has promised to give you strength for yesterday. He never has promised to give you strength for tomorrow. The Bible says, “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” (Matthew 6:34) and, “As [your] days [are], so shall [your] strength be.” (Deuteronomy 33:25) You see,

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

[...]

*But God hath promised strength for the day,  
Rest for the labor, light for the way,  
Grace for the trials, help from above,  
Unfailing sympathy, undying love.*

—ANNIE JOHNSON FLINT

That's what God has promised: strength for today.

¶ Dr. Jerry Vines, pastor of the Dauphin Way Baptist Church, was telling me a story the other day that amused me. He was telling me about being on an airplane and going somewhere, and the airplane got into difficulties: they were in some real rough weather, and they couldn't get the landing gear down. And, the pilot came on with that ominous message, and he could tell by the sound of the pilot's voice they were in serious trouble. He said, "Ladies and gentlemen, we're having some difficulty, and the stewardess is going to come by and tell you what to do because we may have to have a crash landing," and told them, you know, how to sit with their heads down, and put the pillows up and cover their faces, and do what all they do in those kinds of difficulties. And, Jerry said, "Up until that time, people had been laughing and talking and carrying on in a raucous sort of a way, but they all got very religious. They began to go through all kinds of religious motions and signs, and it got quiet in there."

And, he said he did a little checking up on himself, too. He's a pastor, but he said, you know, he kind of renewed his relationship to the Lord, did a little last minute confessing and cramming for the finals. And, he said that he just got all that thing straightened out, and he said his heart began to beat a little faster, and his palms got clammy and so forth, and he just got a lump in his throat, and pretty fearful. But then, the pilot came back on and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, we've got the landing gear down, and we've got a hole in the clouds. We're coming in. Everything's all right. Relax."

Whew. Everything was fine then, you know. But, he said he got to thinking. He got to feeling a little ashamed of himself. He said, "Lord, I've been preaching all this time about dying grace: "When it comes time to die, if you love Him, He's going to give you dying grace." And, I said, "Here I was about to die, and I didn't have any dying grace." And, I said, "What's wrong with me?" He said, "God just leaned over and said, 'Jerry, you weren't dying.'"

Now, you know, so many times we just want strength for things we don't need

strength for. God's going to give us our strength. "As [our] days [are], so shall [our] strength be." (Deuteronomy 33:25) But, you see, when I reach into tomorrow and I load today with tomorrow's problems, what I do is I take strength that I need for today's problems to solve those imaginary problems of tomorrow, and I just don't have enough strength. You talk about an enemy of progress!

Now friend, worry takes energy. It saps your strength. It steals strength away. You talk about conserving energy—one good way is to stop worrying, amen? You'll conserve a lot of energy that way, if you'll just stop borrowing trouble. It's a waste of energy. You see, worry is useless. That's the best thing that we could say about it, is that it is useless. That's the best thing. It doesn't do any good. Jesus said in this same chapter, "*Which of you by taking [anxious] thought can add one cubit [to] his stature?*" (Matthew 6:27) You can't do it. Worry doesn't change a situation. It doesn't make it any better. Worry never solved a problem. Worry never dried a tear. Worry never lifted a burden. It just doesn't do it. It is absolutely useless. There are two things you should never worry about: those things that you can do something about and those things you can't do anything about. Amen? If you can do something about it, do it. If you can't do anything about it, well, worry is not going to help it.

*For every evil under the sun,  
Either there is a cure, or there is none.  
If there be one, seek 'til you find it.  
If there be none, never mind it!*

That is, what's he saying? He's just saying that worry doesn't do any good at all. "*Which of you by taking [anxious] thought can add one cubit [to] his stature?*" (Matthew 6:27) Worse than that, not only does it fail to do good; it literally does harm. You see now, if I have today's problems, and I have today's strength to meet today's problems, and so I go to work on today's problems, that is therapeutic. But, if I have an imaginary problem and I worry about it and that worry is not translated into work, the energy generated by that worry turns into acid that destroys my stomach; it turns into frustration that tenses up my nerves. You see, not only is worry useless; worry is harmful. And, that's the problem of borrowing trouble. Dear friend, it saps strength; it steals strength, and you ought not to do it. God has given you strength to meet today's problems. "*Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*" (Matthew 6:34) And, "*as [your] days [are], so shall [your] strength be.*" (Deuteronomy 33:25)

† I think I told you one of my favorite stories about an old grandfather clock that stood in the hallway for two generations and kept wonderful time until one day it began to think about the future. And, the clock started to reason with itself, and it said, "You know, I tick every second." And then, he started doing a little mathematics, and he said,

“Why, that’s 120 ticks a minute. Why,” he said, “that’s 7,200 ticks an hour.” And then, he said, “My goodness, that’s 172,000 ticks a day.” And then, he said, “My, my, my, that is 1,905,000 ticks every week.” And then, he said, “Why, that would be 62,000,000 ticks a year!”

Why, he had a nervous breakdown, and he went to the clock psychiatrist. And, the clock psychiatrist began to talk to the old grandfather clock, and he said, “Why, I want to ask you a question now. You’re worried about all these ticks you’re going to have to tick in the future. How many ticks do you have to tick at a time?” “Well,” he said, “I only have to tick one tick at a time.” “All right,” he said, “from now on, I want you to go back, and rather than thinking about all the ticking you’re going to have to do, just think about the one tick you have to tick. And,” he said, “don’t think about the next tick until you tick this tick.” And so, he went back, and he started just thinking about one tick at a time. And, for the last twenty years, he’s been there, healthy as can be, just ticking one tick at a time.†

Now look, folks, that’s the way you are to live. God gives you strength for today. God gives you strength for now. “As [your] days [are], so shall [your] strength be.” (Deuteronomy 33:25)

### III. Borrowed Trouble Produces Problems

Now, the third thing I want to mention about the high cost of borrowed trouble—the first thing I said that it does: it buries blessing; the second thing I said that it does: it steals strength—the third thing that it does: it produces problems. Did you know that the very thing that you worry about happening may happen because you worry about it? Do you know what Job said? “*The thing...I...feared [has] come upon me.*” (Job 3:25) Did you know that you can worry yourself into problems? It is true that many of the things that we worry about never happen, and therefore it is foolish. One philosopher said, “My life has been full of terrible misfortunes, most of which have never happened.” It is true that many of the things we worry about never come to pass. But, it is also true that our worry can cause some things to come to pass that would not have come to pass had we not worried about them.

†Have you ever gotten behind someone driving who approaches every traffic light expecting it to turn red? Boy, that eats my lunch. I mean, you get behind a car and there they are—I mean, it’s green and they are slowing down, getting ready for it to turn red. And sure enough, it does, every time.†

Now, there are people who live that way. I mean, they’re telegraphing trouble. They’re anticipating trouble. They’re borrowing trouble. And, with their borrowed trouble they are producing problems, and the thing they fear does indeed come upon them.



Now, tomorrow has two handles, and you can reach out and grab it by either handle. One is called fear, and the other is called faith. And, worry doesn't make you ready to meet tomorrow; it makes you unready to meet tomorrow. You face the future out of breath because you've been fighting imaginary foes. Many times, you produce these foes in the future.

Fear has torment. Why should you be tormented by fear?

¶ The Chinese warlords used to have an ancient torture they called "the Chinese water torture." And, they would take the poor, hapless victim and chain him to meet a canvas bag that would drip a huge barrel filled with water—that would drip on top of his head. Drip, drip, drip, drip, drip—one drop of water, day after day—drip, drip. After a while, the dripping of that water would be like hammer blows. One! Two! And finally, the whole sensibilities would explode, and the man would be driven insane just by the dripping of water over and over.¶

Worry will do that to you. It's not the great problems that we have. Listen. Somebody says, "Oh, you just lost all your money" or, "Your loved one has been hit by a car." God gives you strength, and right away you move into action. Those things you work through, but it is that constant dripping, a nagging worry, that mortgaging today on the future, that going into the future and paying the high interest of worry and borrowing problems—I tell you, it produces problems. You were not meant for that. You were meant to live today with today's strength. "*Take...no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself*"—when it gets here, God will give you strength for it—"*Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*" (Matthew 6:34) When are we going to learn how to live according to God's book of psychiatry, the Holy Bible?

## Conclusion

Let me just close this simple message this morning by saying that all of this was given in the context of Matthew chapter 6 and verse 33. Now, I may be talking to some people and telling you to live this way, and you say, "Well, Brother Rogers, that's pretty easy for you to say. You don't look like you have any difficulties." Well, I didn't say that. Jesus said it—the One who was facing the cross. He's the One who said it. And, He tells you how to live this way. You cannot apply Matthew chapter 6 and verse 34—"*Take...no thought for the morrow*" (Matthew 6:34)—until you apply verse 33, the verse right before it, which says, "*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*" (Matthew 6:33) You see, it is when we put God first that He takes care of our tomorrows.

Now, what Matthew chapter 6, verse 33, is really saying God is saying to us: He's willing to enter into a covenant with us. And, what God is saying is this: "If you take care of my business, then I'll take care of yours." Now, that's pretty good, isn't it? God says,

“If you just look after my business, you just put my kingdom first, *“seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and”*—then—*“all these things shall be added unto you.”* (Matthew 6:33) What things is He talking about? The things that you need, the necessities—food, clothing, health—whatever it is you need. *“My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 4:19) But, you must seek God first.

Now, I would like to say to everybody that is listening to me that Matthew 6:34 is something you can just take and practice and live happily ever after, but I can’t say that to everybody who is listening to me. I can only say that to people who first of all have practiced Matthew 6:33, who have sought first the kingdom of God, who have put Him first. Is Jesus Christ Lord in your life? Do you know Him? Have you surrendered your life to Him? Have you turned everything over to Him? That’s the only way you can live in Matthew 6:34: *“Take...no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”* (Matthew 6:34)

† Alexander Maclaren was a Scottish preacher of yesteryear and one of the great expositors of the Word of God. And, he said that his favorite verse, his life verse, was this verse in Deuteronomy chapter 33: *“As thy days [are], so shall [be] thy strength.”* (Deuteronomy 33:25) And, he said it had a special meaning to him when he was an eighteen-year-old boy. He said that he received his first job, and he lived in a little village outside the big city; and he had to go to the big city to work and stay there for a week, and he had to walk to work, which was about six miles away. And so, he went, and his father walked with him. And, they walked through a deep, dark ravine, a very foreboding valley, and then up and out the other side, and then on to the big city.

His father said to him, “Alex, when your work is over this week, on Saturday night, I want you to come home.” And, young Alex said—this sixteen-year-old boy said—“Dad, I’ll be tired Saturday night. I’ll come home, Dad, Sunday morning.” And, his dad said, “No, Alex, this is the first time you’ve been away from home, and my old heart is going to miss you. I’ll be longing to see you. Please, Alex, come home Saturday night, as soon as you finish.” What Alex didn’t tell his dad was this: that there had been some terrible things happen in that deep ravine, and he was afraid. He didn’t want to go down into that thing at night by himself, down into that inky black darkness by himself. And, he was fearful. He was afraid, in a way, to tell his dad that. But, he just swallowed hard and said, “All right, Dad, I’ll come home Saturday night.”

And, all of the week he was tossing, anticipating that problem, worrying about it and worrying about it. And, the Saturday night came, and he made his way. And, he stood there on the brink of that dark ravine and looked at it, and it looked so black and so forbidding and foreboding that his chin started to quiver and the tears started to run. He didn’t have the strength to enter into it. And then, he heard a noise, and he saw a figure,

a shadowy figure, coming down. But, he noticed something about the features, the way the footfalls fell, that looked familiar. It was his dear father who had come to meet him. And, his dad said to him, “Alex, I just”—he didn’t say a word about the boy being afraid, but he said—“Alex, I missed you so badly I just thought I’d come to meet you and walk home with you.” Alex said, “Oh, with that grand old man by my side,” he said, “the two of us went shoulder to shoulder down into that valley, and,” he said, “I wouldn’t have fear of anything that walked, with my father by my side.”<sup>f</sup>

And, I believe that’s what this text is all about, my friend. Oh, the things that we worry about! Oh, the things that we anticipate! Oh, the unknown—the deep, dark forbidden valleys that we think that we might have to go through! I want to tell you that when you know the Lord Jesus, when you get there, He will be right by your side. He will go through that valley with you. And, He has promised that He will never leave you nor forsake you. (Hebrews 13:5)

Why don’t you stop worrying about tomorrow? Why don’t you stop facing the future with fear? Why don’t you live today and enjoy the blessings of today and face the burdens of today with the strength of today? “[For] as [your] days [are], so shall [your] strength be.” (Deuteronomy 33:25) And, “take...no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” (Matthew 6:34)<sup>f</sup>

# Tolerance: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: August 21, 2005**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 7:1**

## Outline

Introduction

I. A Time of Discrimination

II. A Time for Toleration

III. A Time for Examination

Conclusion

## Introduction

Well, amen. What a joy it is to be here this morning. I was sitting here thinking about Dr. Steve Gaines and the privilege and the responsibility and the opportunity that God has given to him and to us. On September the 11th, Dr. Gaines will be here to preach his first message as the pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church. And I will be here rejoicing and I thank God for His good hand upon this church.

Let me say a word, a personal word. Thank you for your prayers. Thank you for your love. Thank you for your cards. Thank you for your words of encouragement. We are doing wonderfully well. You are praying and God is healing. I sincerely believe that and I thank you and I thank our Heavenly Father for His goodness to us.

Would you take the Word of God, the inerrant, infallible, Word of God, and turn to Matthew chapter 7. When you've found it look up here and let me just tell you a word or two. The new religion in America is tolerance. Tolerance. It used to be that the best-known verse was John 3:16. But no longer. The verse that people will quote to you almost more than any other verse is Matthew 7:1, "Judge not that you be not judged." And today, the only sin in Americas is to call sin, sin. I'm going to speaking today on this subject: Tolerance: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly.

Now, tolerance, as we learned it, as we grew up with it, is a good word. I'll call it the old tolerance. Let me tell you what Webster said that tolerance was. Webster said what tolerance is. Webster said, "To recognize and respect other's beliefs, practices, etcetera, without sharing them and to bear or put up with someone or something not especially liked." That's what tolerance is, and that's a good virtue.

The children were studying the Ten Commandments, and they said, "Now, apply these, boys and girls, to living at home. What commandment would apply to living with brothers and sisters?" A little boy lifted his hand and said, "Thou shalt not kill." The things, at home, we have to tolerate. We don't always like them. They're things at work we have to tolerate. There're many things in society that we do not approve of, believe in, but we tolerate. There're many other kinds of beliefs that we do not share, but we tolerate, and we ought to tolerate. That is good tolerance.

But there's a different tolerance that's come today that's become the new religion in America. And it does, does not simply mean that we put up with, we bear, or we forbear. It is an uncritical tolerance that accepts all truth as equal. That is, you cannot say today, "This is right and that is wrong." If you do that, you are intolerant and to be intolerant is the great sin in America today. Now, obviously, we should respect all people, and if we disagree with them, we should live with them as much as possible, peaceably. We must hold true to our faith. I would not force my faith on anybody if I could. And I couldn't if I would. I believe in absolute total freedom to choose in religious things. But there is an uncritical tolerance that our boys and girls are being taught in school. And you need to understand this, this uncritical tolerance, listen, that accepts all truths as equal.

There used to be a time, when you, if you preached, you would preach on the inerrancy of the Word of God, or the virgin birth or the bodily resurrection. Someone would say, "I don't agree with that." And you could argue. And you could discuss and you could philosophize. And you could take the Word of God and other sources and go back and forth trying to determine what is true and what is not true. But, that's not so today. If you were to tell someone, today, "I believe in the virgin birth. I believe in the absolute sinless deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe in His vicarious death upon the cross." Today, with the new tolerance, you would not be argued with. They would say, "That's, that's wonderful. That's your truth. Now let me tell you my truth." And when you get down to it, there is no fixed standard for anybody's truth. All truth's today are considered equal.

Now, the old tolerance says that people have a right to their opinions. The new tolerance says all opinions are right. And so, if you say, "Jesus Christ is the only way." You're in trouble. If you say that there is a fixed standard of right and wrong, then, today, you're going to be looked down as an ogre, a sinner and intolerant. The new tolerance says we're not merely to allow, listen, we're not merely to allow, we are to endorse all truths a morally equivalent. The new tolerance doesn't say we're to forbear. The new tolerance says we are to approve. And therefore, you're children and our children are being put in to classes today, and I'm not exaggerating, sensitivity classes, where they're taught that sexual preference, one sexual preference, as over against

another sexual preference and it's just a matter of equality. And we're to approve all sexual preferences. One form of marriage as over against another, so-called, form of marriage, for example, two people of the same sex, all of these things are to be looked upon and morally equivalent. And we are learned, we are taught now to accept under the guise of tolerance, these things.

Now, let's look at the Word of God—Matthew chapter 7 and verse 1. I told you that, Matthew chapter 7, verse 1, is perhaps the most quoted verse today. And if you were to say, "This is right and this is wrong." Someone one would say, "Jesus said, 'Thou shalt not judge.'" Well, let's read it. Read it in context. "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And, why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye," and the mote, here, means like a speck of sawdust, "and, behold, a beam," that is a log, "is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye. Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you."

There are three words that I want you to keep in your heart and in your mind as we study the Word of God, this morning. The first word is the word discriminate. The second is the word tolerate. And the last word is the word to examine. I want us to learn how to examine. So, these three words, discrimination, toleration, examination, are the backbone, the spine of what I want to say today as I talk to you about tolerance, the good, the bad, and the ugly.

## **I. A Time of Discrimination**

Now, there should be a time of discrimination. Now, discrimination has become an ugly word. But it's not always ugly. If you don't teach your children to discriminate, you have failed as a father or a mother. To discriminate means to see what is good and to see what is bad. So, discrimination is simply evaluation, elimination, appropriation. I evaluate. This is good or this is bad. I eliminate. I turn from that which is bad. I appropriate. I choose that which is good.

Now, people say that Jesus said we're not to judge. May I tell you frankly, clearly, plainly, that is not so. Jesus taught us to judge. Let me give you some Scripture now, that, where Jesus very clearly and very plainly teaches us, to judge. For example, in John chapter 7 and verse 24, "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment." Don't tell me that Jesus said, told us not to judge. He says, "Judge

righteous judgment.” And then in Matthew chapter 7, this same chapter, again, verses, 15 and following, “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravaging wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs or thistles?” What’s He saying in verse 16? He said, “You know, you can’t gather grapes from thorns and figs from thistles. You just cant do that.” Now, what He is saying is you have to learn that there is a difference between right and wrong. In this same context, where our Lord says, “Judge not that you be not judged.” He said, “Don’t give that which is holy to dogs. Don’t cast your pearls before swine.” Sounds to me like you have to discriminate to find out where the dogs and the hogs are. Who they are. What they are. The Bible clearly and plainly teaches discrimination.

Let me give you some verses outside of the context. First Corinthians 2 verse 15, “He that is spiritual, judgeth all things.” Are you spiritual? Then you’re going to learn to judge all things. The word here judge comes from the word krino, and it has a number of different meanings. It can mean to separate. It can mean to choose. It can mean to select. It can mean to determine. It can mean to condemn. And the meaning must be determined by the context. And so, when the Bible says, “he that is spiritual, judges all things,” the word here is, he discerns. He understands. He sees through. He makes the evaluation. He makes the discrimination. He judges all things.

First John 4, verse 1, again, the same idea, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits,” test the spirits, “whether they are of God.” Don’t go around with pudding in between your ears saying, “Well, I’m not going to say that anything is right or anything is wrong because Jesus said not to judge.” To the contrary. Jesus said, “Judge righteous judgment.” “He that is spiritual judgeth all things.”

Now, you see, there is a difference between your own personal evaluation of things and the Word of God. For example, if I were to say, from myself to Ken, there is fifteen feet right now. That would be about right but it wouldn’t be exact. If I were to take a tape measure and measure from here to there and say, “It’s fifteen feet and six inches.” Then that’s not an evaluation and, and, a judgment that comes out of my own heart and mind. That is a measurement.

Now, there are certain things that are right and there’re certain things that are wrong. Now, listen to me very carefully, I know they are right and wrong because of God’s yardstick, the Bible. It’s not my own opinion. Listen to me, adultery is wrong, because God said so. Fornication is wrong because God said so. Sodomy is wrong because God says so. Stealing is wrong because God says so. Lying is wrong because God says so. Drunkenness is wrong because God said so. We have God’s Ten Commandments. These are measurements.

Today, our world hates moral absolutes. Our world hates for anybody to say, “This is

right and this is wrong.” And, if you confront society with the kind of preaching I’m going to do today, and am doing today, people will call me, believe it or not, they do, bigoted. Can you imagine that? As sweet as I am. Bigoted. Narrow. Prejudicial. Arrogant. Self-centered. Narrow minded. Fundamentalist. Too much fun, too much damn, and not enough mental. That’s what we’ll be called. And I’m telling you, ladies and gentlemen, we need to teach our boys and girls there is a right and there is a wrong. Now, some people call that kind of talk, unloving. But contrary. “To fail to lift up your voice like a trumpet and show my people their sin is unloving.” Put in your margin Leviticus 19 verse 17, listen, “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart...rebuke thy [brother], and [he shall, and] not suffer sin upon him.” Let me give you that again because I boggled it a little. Leviticus 19:17, “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart...rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.” Now, what’s He saying? He’s saying that to rebuke sin is loving. To fail to rebuke sin is hate. Love says that we must speak clearly. The preacher who loves is not the preacher who glosses over sin. The preacher who loves is the one who speaks clearly.

So, the first point is simply this: there is a time, ladies and gentlemen, where we have a discrimination. That is we look at life and we discriminate according to the Word of God. This is right and this is wrong. We make that discrimination and after that discrimination then there’s an appropriation, we choose that which is right. There is an elimination; we refuse that which is wrong.

## **II. A Time for Toleration**

Now, here, let’s, let’s shift gears. And, and, not only is there a time for, discrimination. But there is a time for toleration. I’m talking about good ole fashioned toleration. Now, when, when out Lord says here, “Judge not that you be not judged.” He’s talking about people being intolerant of false in other people. He’s not saying that we deny faults in other people. As a matter of fact, He said once we get the log out of our own eye, we’ll see more clearly how to get the speck out of our brother’s eye. He’s not saying there’s no speck. He’s not saying it doesn’t need to be taken away. But what He is saying is, “You are forbidden, you are forbidden to exercise unmerciful, self-righteous, condemnation of another person. Hypocritical judgment, especially when you, yourself, are guilty of doing the same thing.” Let me give you another verse that I think is a good commentary on Mathew 7 verse 1, also from the Gospels, Luke chapter 6 verses 36 and 37, “Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.” Now, this is simply an extrapolation of Matthew 7 verse 1. What He’s saying is, Brother Mark, if I have some problems, notice the if. I do. I have some



big ones. I need your mercy. I need your help. I need your forgiveness. I need your love. I need your support. I don't need your judgment. I don't need your condemnation. That doesn't mean I expect you to say, "Oh, whatever you're doing is alright." If what I'm doing is not all right, if it is sin, you need to lovingly rebuke me, but you have no right to judge me. Number one because you haven't got what it takes to judge me. I don't have what it takes to judge you. The Bible says concerning this kind of judgment, in John chapter 5, verse 22, "Even the Father judgeth no man but hath committeth all judgment to the Son." When you judge other people without mercy, not whether or not what they're doing is right or wrong, but when you judge them in a condemning way, in an unmerciful way, what you're doing is usurping the rights and the prerogatives of the Lord Jesus Christ. And what you're also doing is, you are acting like the devil. The Bible tells us that it is the devil who is the accuser of the brethren. Don't go around judging other people, condemning other people, examining their motive. There is no one big enough, no one just enough, no one loving enough to judge us but God Himself. And surely the judge of all heaven and earth with do right.

Now, why is it that we tend to have this merciless judgment? Why is it that we tend to be intolerable when we ought to tolerate other people lovingly? Well, one of the reasons, very frankly, is the sin that's in our own hearts and our own lives. That's what Jesus Christ is talking about here. He said, "You're looking for a speck of sawdust in your brother's eye, and you've got a saw log in your own eye. You are a hypocrite." Now, why do we see fault in other people? It's a form of projection many times because of the sin that's in our own lives, we hope, somehow, to make ourselves better by condemning somebody else that if we pull them down we've pulled ourselves up just a little bit. And, therefore, a person to see a speck of dust in somebody's eye, has to be looking pretty close, wouldn't you agree? Especially if he's got a saw log in his own eye. What he is seeing is what he is looking for. Hoping to find.

It's amazing what people, find. If you come to church this morning looking for fault, you can find it, beginning with the man standing in the pulpit. You will get what you look for. Remember they little nursery rhyme? Pussycat, pussycat, where have you been? I've been to London to see the queen. Pussycat, pussycat, what saw you there? I spied a little mouse under her chair. Now, here, here's Westminster Abbey with the sainted dead and, and the spires, and, and the glorious accouterments of that place. And there's the Queen of England, in all of her royalty, and the cat sees a mouse. Ha, ha, they're people today who might fail to understand this music. By the way, that's great music. My help cometh from the Lord. But they'll find a mouse under a chair somewhere because that's what they're looking for.

If you wanted somebody to give you a review of the landscape and report back, say,

fly over the fruited plain and come back. Don't send a buzzard because a buzzard would come back and his report would not be on the fluffy clouds and the green meadows and the sparkling brooks, and the magnificent snow-capped mountains. He would come back and he would report and this is what he would say, "I saw a dead cow with maggots in it." That's what a buzzard's looking for.

You see, there are people who are just simply looking for a speck in somebody else's eye, because they have a log in their own eye. We need to examine ourselves. That's the reason, the Lord, tells us so much that we're to be merciful. Because we are the ones that need mercy.

They tell a story of a grandmother who was always going around dusting—dusting, dusting everything. She saw that everything had dust. Finally, somebody said, "Grandma, give me your glasses." And looked at them, they were covered with dust.

And so, that's, that's what happens, sometimes. The reason we, another reason that we are so judgmental is because of our own insecurity. We think somehow that if we pull somebody else down, we can make ourselves better. If we can just make them conform to our opinion of what they ought to be, and make them like us, then somehow we feel that we are all right. Procrustes was an ancient chieftain in mythology. And what Procrustes would do is he would capture those who invaded his kingdom and would bring them into his cave. And there, in his cave, he had an iron bedstead. And according to mythology, Procrustes would put his captures on that iron bed. Now, if they did not fit the bed exactly, if they were too short, he would put them on the rack and stretch them until they would fit the bed. If they were too long, he would cut part of them off until they would fit the bed. Well, Procrustes bed is still with us today.

We have those who measure other people, by themselves and the reason for that is our own insecurity. Now only our iniquity and our insecurity, but I'll tell you another reason, that we've failed to, to love people and be merciful to people and it is because of our ignorance. We judge people when we don't know enough to judge them. We don't know their hearts. We don't know their problems. We don't know their background. We don't know their temptation. We don't have all the facts.

Some years ago, it's worth repeating right now, of a woman who was waiting for an airplane. So she went to the little concession stand there and bought a bag full of cookies, and sat down in the waiting room. And another man sat down beside her. The cookies were in between the two of them, unopened. This man reached over and unopened the cookies and took one out and began to eat it. She thought what unmitigated gall and nerve that he would do that. And so she just reached in and got one and ate it herself and gave him a dirty look. He just smiled, reached in and got another. They traded back and forth until there was one cookie left in the bottom and

with a smile; he broke it in half, took one half and left her the other half. She thought as she got on the airplane, "I've never seen a person as arrogant as that man was." But when she opened her purse, there was her bag of cookies unopened.

You see, look, sometimes we judge other people because of our sheer ignorance. Now, Romans chapter 14 verse 4 says, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand." Another reason that we unmercifully judge other people and fail to tolerate them is because we're insensitive. We just don't love as we ought. Jesus did not come to condemn. He came to save. "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which is lost." John chapter 3 verse 17, "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."

You see, when you judge other people, that's not what they need. They don't need you to point your finger at them and tell them what they're doing and what they're doing wrong. When Jesus saw Zacchaeus up in that tree, you remember the story. Zacchaeus climbed a tree. He was a little tax collector, short of stature. Climbed up in a Sycamore tree down at Jericho so he could see Jesus pass by? What did Jesus do? Jesus did not point His finger up in that tree and say, "Zacchaeus, you black hearted son of the devil. You thieving, conniving, dishonest tax collector. Get down out of that tree. I've got a thing or two I want to tell you about your sin." Jesus said, lovingly, "Zacchaeus, come down. I want, I want to go to your house with you. I want to eat with you. I want to have fellowship with you." Now, friend I want to tell you very clearly, if you have a judgmental spirit, you're living dangerously. Put this down, James 2 verse 13, "For he shall have judgment without mercy, that shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment." Put this verse down, Matthew chapter 6 verse 15, "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive [you] your trespasses."

So you need to get out of the FBI, Fundamentalist Bureau of Investigation. Get off the Sin Seeker Committee and show mercy. There are people in this city who are hurting, in the church and out of the church. They don't need your condemnation. They need your mercy.

Now, last of all, there, there is a time for discrimination. There is a fixed standard between right and wrong. Don't let that be blurred. There is also a time for toleration. It is not to deny that there is a right. It is not to deny that there's wrong, but it is to say, "I myself am a sinner. And I know you are, but I love you. Let me help you. let me help get this speck out of your eye." The Bible doesn't say we're not to get it out. To the contrary, we are to help get it out. But not with a log in our own eye.

### **III. A Time for Examination**

Now, the third thing, and very quickly. There is a time for examination. Examine yourself. That's what our Lord is teaching us here, in Matthew chapter 7, look in verse 3, "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" Examine. Get your heart right with God. They hardest that you need to be the hardest on is you. The person that you need to be the most merciful to is me and the person sitting next to you and the people in your family. But consider, is there a log in your eye today. Is there sin, unconfessed, unrepentant of, be done with it. As I stand before you this morning, there's no known unconfessed, unrepentant of sin in my life. Now, I'm light years from perfection. But there's no sin that I harbor. I would be a sheer unmitigated fool to stand up here and try to preach with a heart that's not clean and not pure. But, daily, I examine my heart, my life and I ask the Lord to help me to examine. Search me, oh God and know my heart. Try me and know my ways and see if there be some wicked way in me. And lead me in the way everlasting.

### **Conclusion**

Now, I want to tell you some good news, I'm finished with the body of this sermon. But the Bible says, "Judge not that you be not judged." Let me talk to you a little but about judgment. Our judgment was taken by the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross at Calvary. Therefore, you can I do not need to endure judgment because Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in agony and blood, died for us. And therefore, Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation, not judgment, to those who are in Christ Jesus."

Bow your heads in prayer. Father God, help me today to examine my own heart. Don't let me, dear Lord, be a hypocrite, preaching to others, trying to get sawdust from their eye when there's a log in mine. Help us, dear Lord, to know how to discriminate between right and wrong and teach our children. Help us, dear Lord, to know how to tolerate those who are not perfect as we're not perfect but to show love to them, Lord, and to help them, and to gently remove the speck that may be in their eye. And, Heavenly Father, help us all to see ourselves, as we really are, if there may be, indeed, some sin in our own lives that needs to be dealt with.

Now, keep your heads bowed. Friend, the most important thing is not to be a church member, not to be a nice person, not to be religious. The most important thing is to have a personal relationship with God, through the Lord Jesus Christ, to have your sins forgiven, put under the blood of Christ. To have the Holy Spirit in your life to give you comfort and peace and joy and to know that when you die, you're going straight to heaven. And all of this is in the Lord Jesus Christ when you receive Him, by faith, as

your Lord and Savior. The Bible calls that condition that I described as being saved. Being saved. And the Bible says, “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.” So, let me help you to believe on Him right now. I didn’t say believe about Him. Facts about Jesus don’t save anyone. To believe on Him. You can believe an airplane can fly but you don’t believe on it until you get on it. You don’t really trust it until you get on it.

May I lead you in a prayer? Right where you are. Forget that anybody else is here if you can and pray silently and fervently something like this, “Lord Jesus, I need you and I want you. I believe that you are the Son of God. I believe that you’ve paid for all of the sins on the cross. Thank you for such suffering. Thank you for doing that for me. I believe that you were raised from the dead. I believe that you can save me and will save me if I trust you. And I do, right now, in this chair, this morning, at this moment, right now, I receive you into my life as my Lord and Savior. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Save me. And begin, now, to make me the person you want me to be. I belong to you and you belong to me. I love you Jesus. Give me the courage to make this public. In your name I pray, Amen.”

Now, look up here, we’re going to sing what we call a gospel invitation. And what we’re going to do is, we’re going to ask those of you today who would like to declare openly and publicly and unashamedly your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, to leave your seat and come forward. You say, “Oh, Pastor, there are so many people there.” Friend, Jesus hung naked on a cross before a bigger crowd than this. Don’t be ashamed of Him. These people here love you and they love Him and they will rejoice when they see you coming. That’s what we live for. That’s what this church exists for.

Now, all across the front here will be a man of God, a minister of this church, standing at the head of each of these aisles to welcome you when you come. Those of you in the balcony, there’ll be a minister under that banner there, in the corner, to my right that says “Redeemer,” or this one over here that says “Messiah.” Waiting to welcome you. You just move in that direction. “Well, Pastor, what would I say when I go down there? I’ve never done that.” Just say, “I’m trusting Jesus.” And what we will do is rejoice with you, give you some Scripture to stand on. Seal this in prayer. Maybe you’ve made your decisions long before our prayer time this morning but you have denied Him the glory and you the joy if you’ve failed to make it public. As a matter of fact, if you willingly refuse to make it public, I doubt that you’re saved at all. Jesus said, “If you’re ashamed of me, I’ll be ashamed of you.” It’s just that simple. So, I want to invite you to come this morning and do what you would do if you know this would be the last service that you would ever be in.

And then they are many precious friends, you’re saved and you know it. You need a

church home. I'll tell you, knowing what I know, if I lived here, I'd be a member of Bellevue in a heartbeat if I were not already a member, unless God absolutely directed me somewhere else. So if you need a church home, a great fellowship, a place of service and a place of discipleship, I want you when we stand and sing to come forward also. And I want you to tell the minister something like this, "I want to place my membership here." And, to come, you just come. You may be saved and not a member anywhere. You may just want to come and say, "Look, I want to have believer's baptism and be a part of this fellowship." Just tell Him what's on your heart. No one will leave during the invitation unless it is an emergency. And, many times, there are emergencies and I understand that, you're perfectly free to go if you must. But otherwise, stay and pray and as soon as we begin to sing, don't look around to see what someone else is going to do. If possible, you be the first one.

Lord God, bless in this invitation. In the holy name of Jesus. Amen and amen. You step out and come.

# Tolerance: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: August 21, 2005**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 7:1**

*“Judge not, that ye be not judged.”*

MATTHEW 7:1

## Outline

Introduction

- I. There Is a Time for Discrimination
  - II. There Is a Time for Toleration
    - A. We Judge Others Because of Our Iniquity
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    - C. We Judge Others Because of Our Ignorance
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## Introduction

Choir, that was absolutely magnificently beautiful and wonderful. And, indeed, my help, your help, our help, cometh from the Lord.

I want to thank you for your prayers for me. And, I want to tell you that you are praying and God is healing, and I am looking forward to total, complete, wonderful healing, and its coming from God. Thank you so much for your prayers. And, in the meanwhile, God has been merciful and so many people ask me, “How are you feeling?” Believe it or not, I’m feeling great, and I praise the Lord for that. That, in itself, is an answer to prayer.

September the 11th, our new pastor will be here. And I, as I sat on the platform at the early service, and then this service, I was thinking, “What a wonderful church this is! What a great future God has for us under the leadership of Dr. Steve Gaines!” And I’m going to do my best. You’re going to do your best. I’m going to do my part. You’re going to do your part. And God is going to pour out blessings that we’ve never even dreamed about upon our dear church.

Take the Word of God, and turn to Matthew chapter 7, if you will. And, when you’ve

found it look up here. I want to talk to you a little bit about a new religion that is in America. And that new religion is the religion of tolerance. Tolerance is the buzzword today. Today we're to be tolerant of everything, everybody, no matter what. And the only sin is to call sin, sin. And, the best verse now, known to people is not John 3:16. But the one I'm going to read to you here from Matthew chapter 7, "Judge not that you be not judged." And if you call something wrong or if you point out sin, some will say, "Judge not that you be not judged." They don't have a clue as to what this verse is talking about.

Lets read it in context. "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." That is, it's coming back to you. You get your little homemade yardstick and begin to measure other people, and it's going to turn into a boomerang.

I heard about a man who bought a new boomerang, killed himself trying to throw the old one away. What He's saying here is what goes around comes around. "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote," that is, the sawdust, "in thy brother's eye, [and] considerest not the beam," that is, the log, "that is in thine own eye. Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye and, behold, a beam is [on] in thine own eye?" Now, I don't want somebody trying to get a speck of sawdust out of my eye when they've got a crosstie in theirs. They'll probably take mine out while they're doing it. "Thou hypocrite, first cast the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." He's not saying we're not to get a mote out of our brother's eye. He's saying, "Don't try to do it when your blind when you've got a log in your own eye." "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." Thus saith the Word of God.

I want to tell you again that we have a false concept today in America of tolerance. Now, tolerance in the good sense, old-fashioned tolerance, before the new tolerance got here, is not bad at all. Webster says this, tolerance is, "To recognize and respect other's beliefs, practices, etcetera, without sharing them and to bear up or put up with someone or something not especially liked." Now, that kind of tolerance is a wonderful tolerance. And we need it. Sometimes we need it at home. Children were studying the Ten Commandments, and, and the teacher said, "Now, apply this at home. What commandment, for example, would help brothers and sisters?" A little boy said, "Thou shalt not kill." Sometimes there are times when we have to be tolerant of things that irritate us in society and so forth.

Now, there is, in America, a wonderful tolerance and that's what makes America great. Legal tolerance. In America, you are free to believe whatever you believe or not



to believe anything at all. And I join you in saying I'm totally, one hundred percent, with every inch and ounce of me against any kind of forced religion. I need to tolerate your religion. You need to tolerate my faith. That doesn't mean that I approve of it. But, I would not force my beliefs on you if I could, and couldn't if I would. We have this, spiritual tolerance. We have legal tolerance. We, we have social tolerance. We respect all people. Doesn't mean that we necessarily like all people, but we love all people and we're to trust all people, sinners, saints alike in our love. Of course we have a special love for the children of God. But the point that I'm trying to make is this; we should live with courtesy and kindness to all people. That's tolerance. And we need to get rid of our self-righteous bigotry.

I'm going to speak to you today about Tolerance: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly. Because there is a new tolerance that is being taught today and it is an ugly tolerance.

The new tolerance doesn't say that this is right and this is wrong, this is true and that is false. They say that there is no fixed standard of right and wrong and that all truths are equal. For example, there used to be, back when I first started preaching, you could make a theological statement and people would argue with you. You could say, "I believe the Bible is the inerrant infallible Word of God." And somebody else would say, "I believe they're mistakes in the Bible." You could say, "I believe that Jesus is the virgin born Son of God. God in the flesh." And somebody would say, "I believe that He was a good moral teacher but I don't believe that." You can say, "I believe that salvation is by grace through faith." And somebody else would say, "Oh no. Works are involved." And you can get into some arguments. And, you could say, "This is right and this is wrong. And somebody else would say, "This is right and that is wrong." That's not the way it is today. You say, "I believe that the Bible is the Word of God, Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and we're saved by faith in His name." And they say, "That's wonderful. That's wonderful. That's your truth. Now let me tell you my truth." Now, catch this, its very subtle, but you need to understand it. Today, with the new tolerance, all truths are equal. And you say, "This way is right and this way is wrong. You are intolerable. You have judged and Jesus said, 'Judge not.'" Now, the most quoted verse today, I say, is no longer John 3:16, but Matthew 7:1, "Judge not that you be not judged." Now, the new tolerance says that all opinions are right. Not that you have a right to your own opinion. But all opinions are right. Now, we used to talk about pluralisms in America. And we have many different beliefs. We have Jews, Christians, and Muslims, and Hindus, and they practice their own faith in America and that's pluralism. But the new tolerance doesn't like pluralism. It likes syncretism. Everything now is meshed together. And there is no difference. You have no right to stand up for this way or that way.

Now, the old tolerance is forbearance. The new tolerance is approval. And children, this very day, this very week, will be taught in schools, "You cannot disapprove of

somebody else's lifestyle." If a person has a sexual orientation towards homosexuality, and you have a sexual orientation, they call it, toward heterosexuality, you must understand that this is not wrong. They're all right. If you believe, for example, that marriage is a man and a woman in a holy commitment, that's fine. But if we believe that two men or two women can get married that is a lifestyle that they have chosen and its not up for you to say that it is wrong. It would be wrong for you to say that it is wrong.

And, so, that's the new tolerance today. Now, you say, "Pastor, that's, that's incidental." No, my friend, your children today are being taught, in school, that the worst sin that they can commit is intolerance. But, it is the tolerance that they're taught is to tolerate evil and sin and not to make a difference.

Now, I want us to take this passage here in Matthew chapter 7. And I want us to look at it and learn from it and apply it. I pray that we will apply it in our own lives and God help us to teach our children.

## **I. There Is a Time for Discrimination**

They're three basic things I want to lay on your heart this morning. First of all, there is a time for discrimination. There is a time for discrimination. Now, when our Lord says here, "Judge not that ye be not judged," the Greek word is *krino*. And it has a dozen or more shades of meaning. It means to separate, to choose, to select, to determine, to condemn. You have to determine by its context. Now, sometimes people say, "Jesus said we should never judge." He did not say that. You have to understand the context of what Jesus is talking about here is Matthew chapter 7 and verse 1. To the contrary, Jesus has commanded us to judge. He's commanded it. Put in your margin here, John chapter 7, verse 24, "Judge ye," "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment." Jesus said that. Judge righteous judgment. In this passage, for example, that was just read before you. Our Lord is talking about logs, hogs, and dogs. He said, "Don't try to get a piece of sawdust out of somebody else's eye when you've got a, a crossbeam in your own eye." And He says, "Don't, don't give that which is holy to dogs. Don't cast pearls before swine."

Now, friend you have to be able to discriminate. You have to say, "What is a log?" You have to say, "What is a hog?" You have to say, "What is a dog?" Later on, in this same chapter, He's talking about, "You know things by their fruit." So, our Lord, here, is not against discrimination. One of the most important things that we can do is to teach our children to learn to discriminate. I'm not talking about unfair discrimination where we try to discriminate on the basis of race, or the basis of origin, or, or religion. That's wrong. But to discriminate between right and wrong, is so very necessary. Now, today, if you come along and say there's a fixed standard between right and wrong, you're the one who is the criminal. You're the one who is the heretic. You've sinned against the

new religion. No, we are to learn to discriminate. All of successful living is discrimination, elimination, and appropriation. I look, when I go reading, or when I go shopping or whatever I do. I, first of all, I discriminate, is this good or bad? Then, I eliminate to get rid of the bad. I appropriate to choose the good. So, there is a discrimination that is good, but in today's society, people will come down on you like a hammer when you say there is a fixed standard between right and wrong.

Now, if I were to say from myself to Carter Threlkeld over there, Carter, I love you. If I were to say from myself, where I am, to Carter, there's fifteen feet. That's approximately right, maybe a little more. But, I'd say, from right here, fifteen feet. But then, I could be wrong because that is my judgment. That is what I consider, that's my opinion. But if I were to take a tape measure and measure from here to there and say its fifteen feet, six inches. That's a measurement, not a personal judgment. That is a measurement. Now, what is the standard that we use as a measurement? Some people will accuse you of judging subjectively when you're simply using the Word of God. Jesus said, "I didn't come to destroy the law and the prophets," over in Matthew chapter 5 before He talks about Matthew chapter 7. He said, "I didn't come to destroy this but to fulfill it." Listen to me, ladies and gentlemen, there is a fixed irrevocable standard of right and wrong and it is fixed by the Word of God. Now, listen carefully. Adultery is wrong because says so. Fornication is wrong because God says so. Sodomy is wrong because God says so. Thievery is wrong because God says so. Murder is wrong because God says so. And if you say so, that doesn't mean that you have become a judge. It means that God has given us a standard and with that standard we judge, as Jesus said, righteous judgment. And don't let anybody ever tell you that you're not to judge where you discriminate between that which is right and that which is wrong. That is to take this verse completely, totally, one hundred percent out of its context. This verse assumes that there's right and wrong and that the wrong may be in your own eye and you have to get that out before you get the wrong out of your neighbor's eye, your brother's eye, the speck of sawdust. But there is a fixed standard of right and wrong and that is quickly receding over the horizon and there are people today who do not like for you to say there are absolutes in any area.

Now, you speak up and confront society with this and they will come down on you like a hammer. The only sin today is to call sin, sin. There are people who, you know, who listen to me, if they do, maybe later on a tape or on television. Maybe somebody here today, say, "You're arrogant. You're bigoted. You're opinionated. You are narrow. You are judgmental and you are intolerant." No, my friend, I believe the Bible is the Word of God. And I believe there is a standard that is forever fixed and we must teach our children to discriminate, to learn the difference between right and wrong and not let people homogenize everything and say, we used to say you have a right to your

opinion. Today we're told that all opinions are right. You have your truth, I have my truth and what that does is to literally do away with any fixed standard of truth at all. Now, we, we have to speak clearly about these things even when we are impugned and called intolerant. Leviticus chapter 19 verse 17 says, "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart...rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him." That is, if you don't tell people what is right and wrong from the Word of God, you hate him. Love tells the truth.

## **II. There Is a Time for Toleration**

So, first of all, there is a time for discrimination. There is a time for discrimination. Number two; there is also a time for toleration. Now, what our Lord Jesus Christ is talking about here in Matthew chapter 7 and verse 1 and following is toleration. The right toleration, old-fashioned toleration. Toleration that bears and forbears. Toleration that is merciful toward others and sympathetic towards their hurts and their wounds. What our Lord has forbidden is an unmerciful, self-righteous condemnation of another person. Hypocritical judgment. Let me give you a, a verse that makes even Matthew 7:1 more clear and its found in Luke chapter 6 beginning in verse 36, "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." Now, listen, the key here is mercy. Now, listen, "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven." Now, hat kind of a judgment did Jesus, proscribe and forbid in Matthew 7:1 and in, Luke, chapter 6? It is unmerciful judgment. Not that we jettison a standard between right and wrong. That standard is fixed. That is the Word of God. But many of us, all of us fail from time to time. And what we need is not condemnation from one another. What we need is mercy from one another. And we do not need to accept the prerogatives of Almighty God by setting ourselves up as judge, jury, and executioner. Judgment belongs to God in that sense, and the Bible says in John chapter 5, "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." It's not up for you to take His place and to play God. Actually when you begin to condemn somebody with that kind of a judgment, you are playing the devil because it is the devil that has the spirit of accusation, and that's what our Lord is warning against. What He's saying is there needs to be toleration. There's nobody in this audience big enough, strong enough, wise enough, good enough, insightful enough to judge me. Nor am I big enough, good enough, wise enough to judge you. I cannot tell your heart. I don't know your hurts. I don't know your temptations. I don't know your struggles, only God does. And He is merciful and I thank God that He is merciful. And that's the reason our Lord says that we don't need to go around picking specks out of our brother's eye.

### **A. We Judge Others Because of Our Iniquity**

Now, do you know why, we judge other people? Number one, it is because of the sin that's in our own lives. The sin that's in our own lives. Our Lord is saying, "You've got a

log in your eye and here you are trying to pick a speck out of somebody else's eye." Have you ever thought about that? It's really humorous. People think that Jesus didn't have humor. Friend, the Bible's full of humor. I mean, you, you talking, Jesus talking about a camel going through the eye of a needle. You talk about a person with a saw beam in his own eye trying to pick sawdust out of somebody else's eye. It's really kind of ridiculous. It's irony what our Lord is talking about. Now, if you've got a log in your eye, ha, you can't see to get sawdust out of somebody's eye. A speck, or what the Bible, here in King James calls, a mote. The only way that a person could see a mote in his brother's eye, now, Carter, I'll use you again, if I'm standing over here, I can't tell whether you've got a mote in your eye or not. So I have to say, Aha! I saw a mote. Why did I see it? Because I'm looking for it.

You know the little nursery rhyme we used to have? Pussycat, pussycat, where have you been? I've been to London to see the queen. Pussycat, pussycat, what saw you there? I spied a little mouse under her chair. Now, here's the cat gone to London. There's the, the London, the Tower Bridge. There are the royal jewels. There's Westminster Abbey with all of its sainted dead. There's the Queen and all of her regalia, and what does the cat see? A mouse, under a chair. Why? Because that's what the cat's looking for. If you were to send somebody out, to survey America and fly from coast to coast, don't send a buzzard. He'll come back with a report and he won't tell about the lakes and the mountains. He won't tell about the meadows. He won't tell about the golden grain. He won't tell about the flowing streams. How would the buzzard report? He'll say, "I saw a dead cow with maggots in it." Why? That's what the buzzard's looking for.

You see, a person who finds a speck in his brother's eye is looking for it. He's examining. He thinks he's a member of the FBI, the Fundamentalist Bureau of Investigation. He's looking for it. And this hypocrite, this hypocrite who mercilessly judges another person has a cross in his own eye and that's why one of the reasons that he does it, the sin that is in himself and we see in others what is often in ourselves.

### **B. We Judge Others Because of Our Insecurity**

Another reason that we are so judgmental and fail to be tolerant of others is our own personal, not only our iniquity, but our insecurity. We, ourselves, are insecure and I think if I can find fault in this man then somehow it justifies the fault that is in me. And if I can make the two of us more equal, then I feel better.

In ancient, mythology, there was a robber, chieftain, Procrustes. And according to the story, Procrustes, when someone would come into his territory, he would capture them and bring them into his cave where he had an iron bedstead. And he would put them upon this iron bedstead and measure them. If they were not long enough to fill the bed, they would be put on the rack and stretched. If they were too long they would be

trimmed down to size and part of their body would be lopped off. Because, he said, “This is my measurement and I’m going to measure you by this. You’re going to be just like I want you to be.” I think that bed is still around. Many of us are trying to put people in our own mold, by our own standards, rather than by the standard of the Word of God and the reason is that we, ourselves, are so insecure that we think if we can find fault in other people, somehow, that makes us better.

### **C. We Judge Others Because of Our Ignorance**

Another reason, just our sheer ignorance. That’s the reason I said nobody is wise enough, big enough, strong enough to judge because you don’t know the circumstances. They accused Paul of doing certain things. And Paul said, “Look, it’s, it’s a small thing with me that you judge me. I don’t even judge me.” He said, “Well wait until the Lord comes and then every man will have praise of God. How can you judge my heart when I don’t even know my heart?” You don’t fully know your heart. We can look into the hearts and minds of other people. We, we’re ignorant. We don’t have the facts.

I’ve told you a story years ago that bears repeating this morning, about a woman in the airport. Supposedly, it’s a true story. She was waiting for an airplane and so she was going to read a little bit. She went to the little concession stand and bought a bag of cookies, and sat down there in the terminal. And a man sat next to her. The cookies were between them in a bag. This man reached over and unopened, himself, the bag of cookies. She thought, “That’s very strange.” And then he reached in and took one. She thought, “What arrogance.” She was embarrassed to say anything, but she, something rose up in her, so she reached in and got a cookie and ate it. He just smiled, reached in and got another one and ate it. She reached in and got another one and ate it. Back and forth until there was just one cookie in the bottom of the bag. This man, with a smile, reached in and broke it in half and ate that half and left her the other half. She was steaming when she got on the plane. She said, “I’ve never seen such arrogance in my life.” Then she opened her purse and there were, was her bag of cookies.

We don’t have the facts sometimes. We’re not able to, to judge as, as we think that we’re able to judge. And Paul, again, said, in 1 Corinthians 4, verse 3, “But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: for, I judge not myself.”

### **D. We Judge Others Because of Our Lack of Compassion**

Another reason that we do judge and that we won’t tolerate is because of our lack of compassion. Friend there are people that are hurting, all over in our city, in your neighborhood, in your family, they don’t need from you a merciless, judgmental spirit. They need mercy. They need love. They need understanding. It does not mean that you approve their sin. No, there is a fixed standard of right and wrong. But, O God, help us

to learn sweet tolerance in the good old-fashioned sense. When Jesus saw Zacchaeus, the little tax collector, who had run ahead, wanted to see Him when He passed by and climbed up in a Sycamore tree that he might see Jesus. Zacchaeus was a thief, and extortionist. Jesus could have excoriated him. But Jesus, when He saw Zacchaeus up in the tree, didn't point a finger at him and say, "Zacchaeus, you black hearted son of the devil. You thief. You scoundrel. You sinner, get down out of that tree. I've got a thing or two to tell you." He didn't do that. He said, "Zacchaeus, come down. I want to go to your house and eat with you." I'll tell you folks, there are a lot of people out there, they don't need your judgment. They don't need your criticism. Well, you say, "But they're sinners." That's exactly right and what do sinners do? They sin. You don't blame them for acting like sinners. You don't lower the standard. But what you do is to love.

Now, don't have a judgmental spirit. Listen to this promise from God's Word in James chapter 2 verse 13, "For he shall have judgment without mercy, that shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment." Again, Matthew chapter 6, verse 15, before we get to Matthew 7, Jesus said, "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." So, I think we need more watchmen and less watchdogs, don't you?

Now look, there is a time for discrimination. There is a fixed standard of right and wrong that's being blurred in today's society. There is a time for toleration. People who are caught up in wrong, people who have failed, don't need our judgment, that's the job of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul said, "Who are you to judge another man's servant?" They need our love. They need our help. Yes, indeed, we can help get the speck out of their eye. Jesus said, "Don't," Jesus did not say, "Don't take a speck out of your brother's eye." Jesus said, "Do it with clear eyesight. Then you will see more clearly how to do it."

### **III. A Time of Examination**

Now, last of all, and very briefly, not only should there be a time of discrimination and a time of toleration, but, according to Scripture, there needs to be a time of examination. Examination. What our Lord is saying is that you examine yourself. You see if there is a log in your own eye and get that out. Now, rather than me judging you, I need to judge me. I need to be very gentle on you and very harsh on myself. And the Bible says that we're not to judge our brother but judge this rather that no man put a, a fence or cause a stumbling in his brother's way.

Why don't you just go to the Lord and say, "God, deliver me from carping and criticizing and judging. And, Lord, search me and know my heart. Try me and know my way and see if there be some wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting."

Michelangelo was one of the greatest sculptors of all time. He lived many, many

years ago, but his statuary is known and loved and prized today. I read an interesting story where Michelangelo, one day, was walking through the streets of Florence, Italy and he saw a massive piece of marble by the side of the road. It had been thrown away, discarded by the, the quarry. Michelangelo said, "I want that piece of marble. Bring it to my studio. There is an angel in that block of marble and I'm going to liberate him and set him free."

You know, I'm very much like that old piece of marble, so are you, but without the Lord Jesus. But aren't you glad that He sees us, not only for what we are, but what we can be by the touch of His hand.

## **Conclusion**

Bow your heads in prayer. Lord, I just pray, today, that you'll help us to be wise and know how to discriminate between good and evil and never lower the standard. I pray, Lord, that you'll give us a sense of compassion toward others who don't meet the standard and help us to lovingly tolerate. And, Lord God, I pray for my own life and we pray together that you'll help us to do some self examination and rather than examining others, Lord, to deal with our own problems.

Now, while heads are bowed. Friend, I've been talking to Christians today, those who are saved and all of the Word of God, as truthful as it is, can never really apply to your heart and to your life until you know the Author. Do you know the Lord? Christianity is not behavior modification. It is a personal relationship with God through Christ. The Bible calls it being saved. The Bible calls it being converted. The Bible calls it being born again. The Bible calls it being justified. All of these are just different ways of expressing a Bible truth that we can come to God and our sin can be forgiven. An established relationship can be made. We can have joy and peace and purpose. We can have fellowship with brothers and sisters. We can have heaven for our home.

Would you pray and ask Christ to come into your heart right now? I invite you to pray silent but fervently, "Dear God, I need You and I want You. I recognize that I am a sinner. I'm like that ugly piece of marble, but Lord, You can make something out of me. Lord, I yield myself to You. Jesus, You died to save me. You shed your blood for me. You were raised from the dead to show and to prove You're the Son of God. Lord Jesus, this morning, right now, this morning, in this seat, right now, right now, I receive You by faith as my Lord and Savior. I just don't believe that You were a historical person. I trust You now. I commit my life to You now. I receive You now into my life as my personal Lord and Savior. Begin now to make me the person You want me to be because now, I belong to You and You belong to me. Thank you Jesus. I love You. Amen."

Now, look up here. Friend, if you prayed that pray, may be right now, may be before,



and you don't have to use those words, but if you've said, as best you know how, I give all I know of me to all I know of you, Jesus. Here's what I'm going to ask you to do. I'm going to ask you to do something that will help settle it and seal it. I'm going to ask you to leave your seat and come forward in this service. You say, "Pastor, why?" Because the Bible says, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." As a matter of fact, Jesus said, "If you're ashamed of me and of my Word before this sinful and adulterous generation, I'll be ashamed of you when I come in the glory of the Father with the holy angels." But Jesus said, "If you will confess me before me. I will confess you before my Father." Would you like your name called in Heaven today? Would you? Would you like to say, for Jesus to say, "Look, Father, there is Susan. She belongs to me." You see, Heaven is watching this service. Heaven will see what you're doing today. So, when we stand and sing, all the way across the front of this auditorium, at the head of each aisle, will be a man of God who will welcome and receive those of you who come. Those of you who are in the balcony, if you look to your left and to your right, there're banners in the corners there. There will be a man of God, waiting under that banner, to welcome and receive you. "Pastor, what shall I say when I go down there?" Well, say, say, "I'm trusting Jesus." If you can say it and mean it. "What will happen? I've never done that." Well, we'll rejoice. The whole church will rejoice. We'll give you some Scripture to stand on, answer any questions, seal it in prayer. What a time it will be. And God brought you here today for this moment. The Bible says, "Boast not thyself of tomorrow for you don't know what a day may bring forth."

Others of you, who need a church home, and you don't have one, may I lovingly invite you to become a part of the Bellevue family of friends, the family of God called Bellevue—a place of discipleship, a place of service, a place of fellowship. I invite you to come. "Pastor, what would I say when I go down there?" You say, "I want to place my membership here." And we'll take it from there and show you how you may become a member of this wonderful church.

Let's stand for prayer. Father I pray now, in the strong, strong name of Jesus. O God, O God, dear God, open hearts. Draw people, not only to a personal faith, but to a faith that is unashamed. Lord, bring men, women, boys and girls, openly and publicly to Jesus. Lord, it is our sincere prayer. In His name."

Now, as we begin to sing, don't look around to see what anyone else is going to do. You be the first one, if you can, to say yes to Jesus. Let's sing.

# When Yardsticks Become Boomerangs

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: March 28, 1993**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 7:1-6**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. We Are to Apply Wise Discrimination
- II. We Are to Avoid Wicked Condemnation
  - A. We Judge Others Because of Our Iniquity
  - B. We Judge Others Because of Our Insecurity
  - C. We Judge Others Because of Our Ignorance
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Conclusion

## Introduction

**T**ake God's Word and turn now to Matthew chapter 7. We're continuing through the Sermon on the Mount, and today we come to a very interesting passage of Scripture. We're going to read Matthew chapter 7, verses 1 through 6, in a moment. The title of my message is a little of different today: "When Yardsticks Become Boomerangs." You'll find out why I called it that in just a moment.

Let's look in verse 1. Our Lord says, *"Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye. Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you."* (Matthew 7:1-6)

Now, so far in the Sermon on the Mount our Lord has been talking about our relationship to God, and our relationship to things. And now, in chapter 7, He begins to talk about our relationship to other people, and He begins speaking about I suppose one of the most treacherous things in human nature. It is our human nature to put other people

before us, that we might judge them. We want to measure, adjudicate them guilty, and then in our hearts and minds condemn them. And we all have our measuring rods. We all have our tape measures. We all have our yardsticks by which we measure and then judge other people. But our Lord says that that yardstick will become a boomerang. That is, the very yardstick that you use to judge somebody else with is what you're going to be judged with. It's going to come back to you in a deadly way. I heard about a man who bought a new boomerang and killed himself trying to throw the old one away. That judgment of yours is the very judgment that you're going to be judged with later on.

Now, let's look at this verse, because there are a lot of questions in these verses that need some good answers.

## **I. We Are to Apply Wise Discrimination**

Number one: We are to apply wise discrimination. Now so often people are confused, because if you try to discriminate, evaluate, adjudicate any matter, there's always someone who will say, "*Judge not*"—"Judge not." Now the word that is translated "judge" here, *krino*, has a number of meanings—as a matter of fact, about a dozen shades of meaning. It might mean "to separate." It might mean "to choose." It might mean "to select." It might mean "to determine." It might mean "to evaluate." Or it could mean "to condemn." Now you're going to know which one—like many words, you have to see the word in its context.

Now our Lord is not telling us here that we are not to make evaluation and discrimination, because in these verses, verses 1 through 6, He tells us three things to look out for: logs, dogs, and hogs. He says, "You can't look for sawdust in your brother's eye, when you've got a log in your own eye." He says, "Don't give that which is holy to dogs." He says, "Don't cast pearls before swine." Now, evidently, you've got to know what a log, a hog, and a dog is. You've got to make some evaluation. You have to make some judgment. Our Lord is not saying that we cannot make discriminatory evaluations. As a matter of fact, that's the one thing that you must teach your children to do: how to measure the good and the bad; how to see what is right and choose what is right; how to see what is wrong and refuse what is wrong.

All judgment is not forbidden. Jot these verses down. John chapter 7 and verse 24: "*Judge righteous judgment*"—"Judge righteous judgment"—John 7:24. Why, in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, verse 15, the Bible says, "*He that is spiritual judgeth all things*"—"he that is spiritual." (1 Corinthians 2:15) A spiritual man knows how to evaluate, to discriminate, to choose what is right and to refuse what is wrong: "*judge righteous judgment.*" "He that is spiritual judges all things."

Now, there are some people who just think we are wrong and un-American if we don't just put our arms around everybody else, and say, "Your religion is just as good as mine." But the Bible says, in 1 John chapter 4 and verse 1, "*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but [test] the spirits*"—"try the spirits," "judge the spirits"—"*whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.*" (1 John 4:1) And our Lord Jesus Christ in this same chapter—you're in Matthew chapter 7, just fast-forward on down to verse 15. We'll get to it later on as we preach about it—but our Lord says, "*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*" (Matthew 7:15) I can just hear someone saying, "Oh now, Jesus, don't judge. Jesus, you just said, '*Judge not.*' Why, you don't have any right to call them false prophets. Lord, you don't have any right to call them ravening wolves." And what Jesus said—He said, "You'd better watch out: they'll get you. '*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. You shall know them by their fruits.*'" (Matthew 7:15–16) Anybody with his eyes wide open needs to make discernment.

And so our Lord is not saying here that it is wrong to make discerning discrimination. As a matter of fact, it is wise to do that. That's what you do every time when you go to the polls and vote: you judge. You say, "It should be this man, this woman"—"this man, this woman. I have to make a judgment." It's a shame Americans don't do it better.

We must examine our words. We must examine our actions. We must examine situations by the Word of God. So He's not talking about wise discrimination, nor is He talking about Bible measurements. There are certain things that are just wrong, plain wrong. And why? The Bible says so. Adultery is wrong. Fornication is wrong. Sodomy is wrong. Lying is wrong. Stealing is wrong. Pride is wrong. Hatred is wrong. Envy is wrong. That's not my judgment. That's God's Word. It's just that simple. And sometimes, if you stand up and you say, "Oh, these people who do these things are wrong," there's always some self-righteous person who will say, "Don't judge." I don't have to. God already has. God already has. That is the Word of God.

Now we live in a day that hates moral absolutes. They just hate them. And they hate theological absolutes. And when you confront society with absolutes, there's always someone who will say you are judging.

To call wrong what God calls wrong is not judging, nor is it unloving. I want to show you an interesting verse. Turn to Leviticus chapter 19 for a moment. Just turn to this one, because it's worth noting. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus—all right, that makes it the third book, doesn't it? All right, this one I just discovered, and it was an amazing verse when I saw it—verse 17. Listen. Look at it: "*Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart...*"—we'd all say *amen* to that, just say *amen*—"*Thou shalt not hate thine brother in thine heart: thou*

*shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.*" (Leviticus 19:17) Now, do you know what that verse means? That verse means, "If you do not point out sin where sin needs to be pointed out, you hate your brother."

There are those who will tell you it is unloving—it is unloving—to call sin sin. It is unloving not to call sin sin. We have a generation of young people who are being sucked down into the swirling sewers of sin, and nobody has the moral courage and—if you'll forgive the word—the guts to say, "That is wrong, because God says so." And if we love them, we will. If we love them, we will. If we love them, we will. It is not judging to do that, in the sense that Jesus is talking about. It is certainly not unloving.

So, when He says, "*Judge not,*" He's not talking about evaluation and discrimination between right and wrong. Nor is He talking about Bible standards, holding up Bible standards. Our Lord said, "Not a jot, not a tittle, till all be fulfilled." (Matthew 5:18) He's not talking about that. Nor is He talking about law courts where we have civil cases and criminal cases. Thank God for the law courts. They are ordained of God. Read Leviticus chapter 19. (Leviticus 19) Read Judges chapter 13. (Judges 13) You know, there are those people who would like for us to not have policemen. They don't want us to have judges and magistrates and all of that. Why, if there were no civil law, hell would have a holiday. The law courts are ordained of Almighty God. Read Romans chapter 13. (Romans 13)

## **II. We Are to Avoid Wicked Condemnation**

So, what is our Lord saying here? Well, He is saying that we are to apply wise discrimination. But now, secondly—listen—we are to avoid wicked condemnation. Now, let's see what He does mean when He says this in Matthew chapter 7: "*Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again*"—your yardstick will become a boomerang.

Now what our Lord is talking about here is unmerciful and self-righteous condemnation of another human being. Now you're in Matthew 7—Matthew, Mark, Luke—just turn to Luke for a moment. Just turn to Luke—quickly do it—Luke chapter 6 and verse 36, and we're going to find what our Lord means. Luke 6, verse 36—here's the parallel passage. Our Lord preached this sermon several times, and here He expands on it a little bit. Luke chapter 6 and verse 36—He says, "*Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not...*"—now you see the judging that He's talking about is unmerciful judgment—"*Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.*" (Luke 6:36-37) Here our Lord makes it very clear what He's talking about. He's talking about a censorious, unloving, unmerciful, condemning attitude toward another human being.

God is the only One who has the right and the prerogative to pass that kind of judgment. Jesus said, in John chapter 5 and verse 22, *“The Father judgeth no man, but hath committeth all judgment unto the Son.”* (John 5:22) The same Jesus Christ who wants to be your Savior will one day be your judge. But all judgment belongs to Him—that is, to condemn. And if you try to condemn another human being, what you do is to assert God’s authority. God has not appointed you to be the prosecuting attorney. As a matter of fact, the devil himself is the accuser, and when you do it, you are acting just like the devil.

The Apostle Paul, with that great mind of his, asked this question in Romans chapter 8 and verse 33: *“Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”* (Romans 8:33–34) Jesus Christ is the only One big enough, wise enough, strong enough, good enough, loving enough, all-knowing enough to redeem or to condemn. You don’t have the power to redeem anybody, and you don’t have the power to condemn anybody. And when you use unmerciful, unloving, unforgiving judgment toward another human being, again I say you are usurping the authority, the right, of Almighty God.

Now, why do we do this? I want to mention three or four reasons why human beings judge other people.

#### **A. We Judge Others Because of Our Iniquity**

First of all, because of our iniquity. Look, if you will, in verse 3: *“And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is thine own eye?”* (Matthew 7:3) Here’s a man with a saw log in his eye looking for sawdust in somebody else’s eye. Don’t tell me the Lord Jesus didn’t have a sense of humor. Here’s a man trying to practice spiritual ophthalmology, and he’s got a plank in his eye.

Now, who is the Lord talking to? He’s talking to hypocrites. Look in verse 5: *“Thou hypocrite.”* (Matthew 7:5) Learn this, friend. It is the hypocritical that are hypercritical. It is the hypocritical that are hypercritical.

You say, “Well, why do you say hypercritical?” Well, I want to ask you a question. You guys are taking notes—I hope you’re not writing a letter. All right now, look up here at me. They could be, you know. I sit by that guy right there. All right, have I got a speck in my eye? Huh? They don’t know. You know why they don’t know? Have I got a speck in my eye? Is there sawdust in my eye? They don’t know. Does anybody here know whether I’ve got a speck in my eye? You don’t know. You know why? You’ve got to get real close and look real hard to see it. I mean, in order for you to find out, you’ve got to come up and inspect me. Isn’t that right? You have got to get up close. If you see a speck in my eye, I’ll guarantee you

made an extra effort to find it, didn't you? I mean, you have to look for it. You have to get up and inspect me very carefully.

Now, wouldn't you be ludicrous if you had a big two-by-four in your eye, coming up here looking for a speck in my eye? That's what our Lord Jesus Christ is talking about. You see, listen. It is the hypocritical that are hypercritical.

People find what they are looking for. Every church has its own speck hunters. We've got some in our church. They specialize in specks, motes: examiners of other people. You always see what you're looking for.

You remember the little poem,

*Pussy cat, pussy cat, where have you been?  
I've been down to London to visit the Queen.  
Pussy cat, pussy cat, what did you do there?  
I frightened a little mouse, under her chair.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Isn't that something? There's the Big Ben, the Tower of London, the Palace, all of that, and this cat goes to London: what does he see? A mouse under the Queen's chair. Not the Queen—the mouse under the Queen's chair. Why did the cat see a mouse under the Queen's chair? Because that's what the cat was looking for.

Do you know you'll find this morning what you're looking for? If you came this morning to find a mote, if you'll get up close enough, you'll find it. If you came this morning to find some criticism, something to criticize, you can find it. If you come this morning to find some fault in the sermon, I'll guarantee you can find it. I'll tell you something else. If you came to find God, you'll find Him too. You will. You will get what you are looking for.

If you wanted somebody to survey the landscape for you, suppose you got a buzzard and you sent the buzzard out, and you said, "Mr. Buzzard, go survey the landscape." And he would fly over the meadows, and the streams, and the brooks, and the flowers, and the fleecy clouds, and come back, and you would say, "Mr. Buzzard, what did you see?" He'd say, "I saw a dead cow with maggots in it"—because that's what he'd be looking for.

You see, it's the hypocrite. It's the hypocrite who sees in others, really, what is in himself. All we see when we judge others—or what we see generally when we judge others—is a reflection of what is in our own hearts. That's what our Lord is saying. Here's a man with a saw log looking for sawdust.

I heard about an old grandmother who would go into the house, and she would dust, and then dust again, and then dust again—kept on dusting the furniture, and polishing the furniture, because she said, "It's dusty." Finally, they took off her glasses, and they were covered with dust. Why, what she was seeing was just simply herself.

Let me tell you what God says. Turn to Romans chapter 2 for a moment, and look, if you will, in Romans chapter 2. Boy, I'm telling you, if God doesn't excoriate the judgmental person here! Look in verses 1 through 3: *"Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself;"*—your yardstick becomes a boomerang—*"for thou that judgest doest the same things. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?"* (Romans 2:1-3)

In chapter 1 of Romans, the Apostle Paul is talking about the pagan, the ungodly, the sins of the flesh. (Romans 1) In chapter 2, he's talking about the religious man and the sins of the spirit. (Romans 2) There are many in this building today: you're dressed so nicely; you look so nice; you have a Bible; you're glad to judge the thief, the prostitute, the murderer, the pimp, the drug pusher, the pervert; you wouldn't do any of those things, but your heart is headquarters for hatred; you reek with pride; you're stuffed full of self-righteousness, and you judge other people. Jesus Christ had far more to say to the Pharisees, who were so full of self-righteous pride, about their sin than He said to the harlot, the thief, and the down-and-out. You know one of the great dangers in America today? We're egomaniacs strutting to hell, thinking we're too good to be damned—and we judge other people. We're full of lust and ambition and pride. Oh, we don't commit adultery; we don't steal. But God sees our heart. God sees the wickedness that flows out of our heart. The sin of the flesh can be so easily hidden in the heart. But God sees it.

You remember the story there in the Gospel of Luke? Two men went to the temple to pray: one a Pharisee, the other a publican. The Pharisee stood, and he prayed, "Father, I thank you that I'm not like other men. I tithe. I fast. I attend the worship service. And, God, most of all, I thank you that I'm not like this publican." Publicans—they were the tax collectors and the offscouring of society. And Jesus said, "The old publican, he was praying, he wouldn't even lift his eyes to heaven. He beats himself upon the chest, and he says, 'O God, be merciful to me a sinner.'" Actually, the Greek says, "the sinner." He saw himself as the worst sinner of all. "Lord, I thank you that I am not like other men—like this man." And Jesus said, "That man went home justified. The other man just went home." (Luke 18:9-14)

Everybody's going to leave this church this morning. Some are going leave dignified, and some are going to leave justified. We're so full of our self-righteousness. Read Romans 2. Our Lord swings His guns upon the self-righteous.



## **B. We Judge Others Because of Our Insecurity**

I'll tell you another reason that we judge: not only because of our iniquity, but because of our insecurity. Envy digs the mud that jealousy throws at success. We're so insecure. We want to judge other people by our standards, because if we can get them to look like us, act like us, and do like us, then we feel better. Somehow it makes us feel better.

In Greek mythology, there was a chieftain. He was a robber, and his name was Procrustes. And he would go out and capture people, and drag them into his cave. And in his cave he had an iron bed. Have you ever heard of the iron bed of Procrustes? And he put people on the bed—that's what he measured them with. If they didn't fit his bed, if they were not long enough, he would stretch them until they would fit his bed. If they were too long, he would lop off their legs. And he made everybody fit the bed that he thought was just. Now we do that. We have the bed that suits us, and we say, "Everybody else has got to be just like me." You'd better thank God that they're not.

## **C. We Judge Others Because of Our Ignorance**

Many times, because of our iniquity, we judge. Many times, because of our insecurity, we judge. Many times, because of our ignorance, we judge. We judge people. We don't know enough. That's the reason that I'm so glad that God is the judge. The Apostle Paul, there in 1 Corinthians, mentions some people who were judging them. You know that people always like to judge preachers. They think that's they've been called of God to do that, you know? And many of you are just sitting out there kind of evaluating me right now. And they were judging the Apostle Paul. And do you know what the Apostle Paul said to them? He said, "It's a small thing with me that you judge me." He said, "I don't even judge me." He said, "We'll wait till the Lord comes and makes known the counsels of men's hearts. Then shall every man have praise of God." (1 Corinthians 4:3-5) What did he mean by that? He said, "I don't even know enough to judge myself. So how on earth are you going to judge me, if I can't even judge me? I'm on the inside, looking out. You're on the outside, looking in." And Paul said, "I can't even judge me. How are you going to do it?" You see, our ignorance causes us to judge other people.

I was reading about a lady—she went into the airport, waiting on her plane. She thought she would have some cookies and a cup of tea. So she went into the little shop like they have there, and bought her a bag of cookies, went and sat down, put the bag between herself and the man who was sitting next to her, had a cup of tea; and she noticed that the man sitting next to her just reached over and opened her bag of cookies and took one out. She thought, "Now, that is some nerve." She said, "I'm going to eat my cookies anyway." So she reached in and took a cookie, and began to eat it. And he finished the one he ate, and

reached in and got another one. She didn't know what to do. She was embarrassed. But she would take one. And he would take one. Finally, there was one cookie left. He reached down and broke it in half and ate it. She was so steamed. She thought, "Of all of the gall! The nerve of that guy!" Anyway, she gathered her stuff, the plane was called, she sat down on the plane, still steamed, opened her purse to get a tissue, and there was her bag of cookies.

None of us is wise enough to judge another person. We don't have all of the facts, even when we're certain that we do. Thank God there's One good enough, One wise enough, One loving enough to judge me and to judge you. And the Bible says, "Shall not the Judge of all heaven and earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25) Put this verse down in your margin—Romans 14, verse 4: "*Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.*" (Romans 14:4)

#### **D. We Judge Others Because of Our Insensitivity**

I tell you another reason we judge: not only because of our iniquity and not only because of our insecurity, and not only because of our ignorance, but because of our insensitivity. Do you know the Bible says of the Lord Jesus, in John the third chapter, "*For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world;*"—to judge the world—"*but that the world through him might be saved.*" (John 3:17) Many times, we're quick to judge and condemn those that God wants to save. Maybe we do know all of the facts. Maybe they do deserve to burn in hell. But I don't want them to go there. Do you?

I cringe every time I hear one individual tell another individual, "You go to hell." Who are you to tell somebody to go to hell? If you know Jesus Christ, your heart ought to be yearning, burning, hoping that they go to heaven. And when you tell an individual to go to hell, it makes me believe, dear friend, you probably are headed there—because "with what judgment you mete, it will be measured to you again." And that yardstick is going to become a boomerang that's going to come right back to you. "*With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.*"

Our Lord is full of compassion. We're so insensitive, that we judge. When Jesus Christ saw Zacchaeus, that little man down there in Jericho who climbed a tree that he might see the Lord, that tax-gatherer—he was a thief—but Jesus, when He saw him, Jesus didn't say, "Hey, listen. You black-hearted son of the devil, you skinflint, get down out of that tree!" Jesus said, "Hey, Zach, come on down, buddy. I want to go have dinner with you today." Jesus loved him. Jesus did not condemn him.

## **Conclusion**

Well, what is our text telling us? We must apply wise discrimination. We must avoid wicked condemnation. We must apply wise discrimination: we've got to know the difference

between logs, and hogs, and dogs, and wolves in sheep's clothing. We've got to know that God has given us some standards. God teaches us that we're to choose what is right, and refuse what is wrong. But, oh, our hearts are to be filled with mercy and compassion and forgiveness with those who need it!

And if not, what is going to happen? Friend, if you want to a part of the FBI, the Fundamentalist Bureau of Investigation, I kind of feel sorry for you. Turn to the book of James. Look, if you will, in chapter 2 and verse 13—James 2, verse 13: *"For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy..."*—*"he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy;"*—but, oh, look at the next part of that—*"and mercy"*—*"mercy"*—*"rejoiceth against judgment."* (James 2:13) Don't you love that? When I stand before God, I tell you what I want. I want mercy. I need mercy. And I don't want to judge you, because if I do, I won't have any mercy. I want to see every man, every woman, every boy, every girl, as God sees them. And God loves them all: *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son."* (John 3:16)

God is a God of love. God does not rejoice in judgment. Yes, judgment will come. The hottest part of hell is reserved for the unmerciful. We look at other people, and we say they're unworthy.

Michelangelo, the sculptor in Florence, was walking past the quarry, and he saw an ugly piece of marble—misshapen, ugly. They had discarded it. They had thrown it out. It was useless. Michelangelo looked at it a while, and he said, "I want that piece of marble." And they said, "Sir, it's no good." He said, "I want it." He said, "There's an angel in that piece of marble. I can see him, and I'm going to set him free." And in that piece of marble, and out of that piece of marble, Michelangelo made the sculpture of a beautiful, beautiful angel.

Now we see people sometimes unworthy, unfit, fit only to be discarded. But God doesn't love us for what we are; He loves us for what we can be. God doesn't change us, so He can love us. He loves us, so He can change us. And God sees a saint in you today. You just put yourself in His hands.

# The Problem of Unanswered Prayer

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: May 23, 1982**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 7:7**

*“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”*

MATTHEW 7:7

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## Introduction

Matthew chapter 7 and verse 7—we’re going to be thinking today on “The Problem of Unanswered Prayer”—“The Problem of Unanswered Prayer.” Jesus has made a wonderful and a clear promise concerning prayer in Matthew chapter 7 and verse 7. He says, *“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.”* (Matthew 7:7–8) And, indeed, that is true. But I want to ask you a question. Will you be honest? Nod your head. Oh, sure, fine. How many of you have ever prayed and didn’t get your prayer answered? Lift your hand. Oh, come on now, folks. Be honest. If you want God to answer your prayer, you have to tell the truth now. All right—all right. A lot of us have prayed and not gotten our prayers

answered. And why? What is the problem of unanswered prayer? Did Jesus not mean what He said when He said, *“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and [he] that knocketh it shall be opened”*? What’s wrong? Has prayer failed? No!

Suppose you walk into your house this evening, and you flick a light switch, and the light does not come on. Would you say that electricity had failed? Or, would you say there was no Thomas Alva Edison who invented such a thing as the incandescent light? Or, would you say there is no power plant in the city of Memphis? Would you say that? No, you would say something is wrong. It could be one of many things. Maybe the light bulb burned out. Maybe the transformer has burned out. Maybe you didn’t pay the bill. It could be a lot of things. But you would not say that electricity did not fail just because you simply flicked the switch and the light did not come on. You would say, if you’re a rational, thinking person, *“Something is wrong. I need to find out what it is, because when I throw the switch, the lights don’t come on.”*

Now we’re going to talk this morning very simply and very plainly, and the message this morning is going to be extremely plain, I trust. But we’re going to look at our prayer life and see if we can discover why it is that sometimes we ask and don’t receive, sometimes we seek and do not find, sometimes we knock and it is not opened unto us. Where is the problem? What is the problem—the problem of unanswered prayer? And I want to give you seven reasons why sometimes our prayers are not answered. And lick your fingers, because we’re just going to turn all back and forth through the Bible. This is not primarily an expository message, but it is going to be a biblical message.

## **I. Savior-less Prayer**

And, first of all, I want you to turn to John the fourteenth chapter, and let me give you the first reason why prayer is sometimes not answered and people pray but God does not hear. In John the fourteenth chapter, we find the first reason, and it is what I call Savior-less praying—Savior-less praying. Look, if you will, in John chapter 14, verse 6: *“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man...”*—and might I say, not even you, sir—*“no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”* (John 14:6) The only way that you can come to God is through the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the way.

Have you ever been lost and asked a person to give you directions, and you stop there at a service station and you say, *“How do I find thus-and-such a place?”* *“Oh,”* he said, *“very simple: If you’ll just go up here to the third stop light and turn right, and go seven blocks, you’ll cross the railroad tracks. And then, count two more blocks and turn right, and you’ll come to a house with a white picket fence; and there will be a fork in the road. Now you can go right or left, but go left. And then, at the second intersection*

there, you'll notice a..." And by that time, your mind is so muddled you cannot remember any of it. And you just sit there and nod and act like you're paying attention when they left you back there at the Y in the road somewhere.

Well, that would be one way of giving directions. Perhaps a little better: A person says, "I'm going there. If you'll just get behind me, I'll drive you there." That's a little better. But suppose a person says, "Just get in with me. I'll take you there." Now, that is a better way. This person then does not become a way-pointer or a way-shower, but becomes the way. Jesus is the way who brings us to God.

Jesus said, "*I am the way.*" (John 14:6) And the Bible says in Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 18, "*Through him we...have access by one Spirit unto the Father.*" (Ephesians 2:18) By Jesus, we have access to the Father. Friend, if you don't come through Jesus, you don't come. Now, look. If you don't come through Jesus, you do not come. Jesus said, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*" (John 14:6) And, very frankly, the reason that some prayers are not answered is they are simply not asked in Jesus's name.

You're in John 14. Look in verses 13 and 14, as Jesus elaborates on this. He says in John 14, verse 13, "*And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son*"—"whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do." Look again in verse 14: "*If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.*" (John 14:13–14) Turn to John chapter 16, and look, if you will, in verse 23—John chapter 16 and verse 23: "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.*" Verse 24: "*Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.*" (John 16:23–24) Again and again, Jesus is saying, "I am the way. You have access to the Father through me. Ask in my name." But to ask in the name of Jesus does not mean merely to say, "In Jesus' name," when you pray. It is not some sort of a magic little formula that you tack on to the end of your prayer, sort of an *abracadabra* so that when you give an incantation, that makes it right. No, no, no, no! What does it mean to ask in Jesus' name? Well, it means, really, three things.

#### A. **Ask with His Approval**

First of all, it means to ask with His approval. You see, when a person signs his name to something, that means he approves it.

For example, if you're an inspector in a factory, and you go and you put your name on the product, that means, "Okay, this meets my standards; this meets my specifications." What little boy has not wanted a baseball bat because his favorite big-league star had put his name on it? It's a Ted Williams bat, or whatever it is. Of course, that's how you can tell how dated I am. But it's a baseball bat that he has signed. Your

favorite star has put his name on that glove, on that bat, on that ball. That means he approves it. It holds the standards that he holds.

### **B. Ask with His Acclaim**

And so, when we ask in Jesus' name, it means that Jesus approves that—Jesus approves that. He'll put His name to that, you understand. But not only does it mean to ask with His approval, but it means also to ask for His honor, for His glory. You see, name means approval; it also means a claim.

My Jewish friends have told me—and they've given me a certificate, my dear Jewish friends—they said, "Brother Rogers, we have planted a grove of trees in your name in Israel." Isn't that wonderful? So there's a grove of trees there—the Adrian Rogers' grove of trees. I like that, because I love that land so much. Now, why did they do that? They said, "That is in your name." In other words, "We're trying to honor you." And I receive that humbly and gratefully. That's a real honor to me. You see, "in somebody's name" means "for their honor."

So, when you're praying in the name of Jesus, not only do you pray with His approval, but you pray for His acclaim. You understand that?

### **C. Ask with His Authority**

But now, because you have His approval and His acclaim, then you have His authority. Name means authority.

You see, to "stop in the name of the law" means to "stop in the authority of the law," right? "Stop in the name of the law," or in the name of this, or in the name of that. If you take of paper, a check, and you sign your name to it, and give it to somebody else, they can carry it to the bank; and that gives the bank people the authority to take money from your account and give it to that person. See? Name means authority.

And so, when you pray in the name of Jesus, what are you doing? You're praying with the approval of Jesus. You're praying for the acclaim of Jesus. You're praying with the authority of Jesus. You understand? You see, it is not just simply saying, "In the name of Jesus. Amen." But, does Jesus approve this prayer? Is this prayer for His glory? Therefore, do I have His authority to ask? That's what He means when He says, "*Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*" (John 14:13) And, very frankly, very clearly, very plainly, the reason that some people are not getting their prayers answered is they've never been born again; they have never received Christ as their personal Savior; or else, if they have, they are not praying as they ought to for Jesus' glory, with Jesus' approval, and in the authority of the name of Jesus. You see, prayer is just finding the will of Jesus and acting as His power of attorney here on this earth.

## II. Spiritless Prayer

Now, let me give you a second reason. And we have eight, so we're going to have to listen in a hurry. Let me give you the second reason why sometimes prayers are not answered. We said, number one, because they are Savior-less prayers: You're not praying in the Savior's name. Number two, because they are Spirit-less prayers—Spirit-less prayers: You're not praying in the Holy Spirit.

Now, let me give you a verse—Ephesians chapter 6, verse 18. Some of these you may not be able to look up; just jot them down. And I hope you'll jot these points down and these scriptures. The Bible says in Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 18 we are to be *“praying always with all prayer and supplication”*—now, listen to this phrase—*“in the Spirit”*—*“praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.”* (Ephesians 6:18) Now, let me give you another verse, and this is from the Old Testament. And you just jot this down. In Zechariah chapter 12 and verse 10, the Holy Spirit is called in that verse, *“the spirit of grace and supplications.”* (Zechariah 12:10) The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of supplication. The word *supplication* means “prayer.” The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of prayer. And then, in Jude verse 20, the Bible says there in the book of Jude, *“But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost.”* (Jude 1:20)

You see, we pray through Jesus, but we pray in the Spirit. Now, if your prayers are not being answered, it may be therefore that you are not praying in the Spirit of God. You see, there's all the difference in the world when you pray in the flesh and those prayers don't get answered. But when you pray in the Spirit, those prayers do get answered.

Now, here's a verse I really want you to turn to. We'll just take time to turn to this one—Romans chapter 8, verse 26. Now, remember, we're talking about praying in the Spirit. Romans 8, verse 26—and here's a wonderful, wonderful promise. Look at it—Romans 8:26: *“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”* (Romans 8:26) What a wonderful, wonderful reason to pray in the Spirit! And, really, in Romans 8:26, there are two reasons given here why we ought to pray in the Spirit.

### A. We Ought to Pray in the Spirit Because of Our Weakness

Number one: Because of our weakness, for it says the Spirit, here, *“helpeth our infirmities.”* Now we're all infirmed. That word *infirmity* means “weakness.” Are you weak? Just nod your head. Sure you are! We're all weak—we're all weak. You say, “Oh, that's a deterrent.” No, it's a help. Paul said, *“When I am weak, then I am strong.”* (2 Corinthians 12:10) Thank God that you're weak, because when you recognize your



weakness, then you can depend upon your strength. And it is our weakness that enables us to depend upon our strength—and our strength is the Holy Spirit. *“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities”*—our weaknesses.

Now this word *help* is a very interesting word. It has a double prefix in front of it in the Greek, and it means, really, “instead of” and “together with.” Now, pay attention here for a moment, because it sounds almost contradictory. That is, the Holy Spirit does it instead of us, and then the Holy Spirit does it together with us. Now, there’s not a contradiction. It sounds like it, but there’s not a contradiction. When we pray, the Holy Spirit prays instead of us; but then He prays together with us. Now what that means in plain English is this—now, pay attention: He will not do it without us; but we cannot do it without Him. That’s what it means. He will not do it without us; we cannot do it without Him. What a wonderful partnership this word *helpeth* refers to!

Actually, this word is only used one other time in the Bible. It’s used in the Gospel when Martha was in the kitchen. You know, there was Meatloaf Martha and Meditating Mary. And Meatloaf Martha was in the kitchen cooking, and Meditating Mary was at the feet of Jesus. And Meatloaf Martha came out of the kitchen and said to Meditating Mary and said to Jesus, “Would you tell her to come help me?” (Luke 10:40) And she uses this same word: *“The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities.”* (Romans 8:26) “Will you tell her to come in this kitchen and take hold of things and get things done?” Aren’t you glad the Holy Spirit can do that—just come in there and help you to get those things done? He will not do it without you; you cannot do it without Him.

And the Bible says that He just makes groanings—He *“maketh intercession...with groanings which cannot be uttered”*—in this same verse. Look at it: He *“maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”* (Romans 8:26) That means that the Holy Spirit of God sometimes takes those things that we’re unable to articulate. This word *groaning* is a very interesting word, too, because it speaks of the groanings and the sounds that a woman would make when she’s in travail about to give birth to a child. It’s the same word here as a woman in travail about to give birth to a child. This is the way the dear Holy Spirit of God agonizes for us.

Isn’t that wonderful that we have such a friend who takes hold and He prays with us alongside of us? He knows our weaknesses, and therefore He makes groanings for us that cannot even be articulated and uttered.

## **B. We Ought to Pray in the Spirit Because of Our Ignorance**

But, you see, that’s one reason we need to pray in the Spirit: because of our weakness. Another reason is because of our ignorance. Look again in verse 26. The Bible says, *“For we know not what we should pray for as we ought.”* (Romans 8:26) Now, be honest, folks. There are lots of times we pray and we really don’t know what to

pray for.

Let me give you an example. Suppose you have a mother who's up in age, and your mother gets sick. And she's in the hospital, and you're praying for her. Now, what do you pray? Do you pray, "Lord, make her well"? If you're like most of us, we'll say, "Lord, make her well," don't we? But it might be God's will not to make her well, but to make her perfectly well; that is, to bring her to heaven, see? As a matter of fact, Jesus prayed for your mother: "Father, I [pray for them] whom thou hast given me, [that they may] be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory." (John 17:24) So it is God's will that one day we go to be with Him. We wouldn't want to deny them of that, would we? But we want them to stay here, too, don't we? Because we love them. And so we have that ambivalence within us. We don't know whether to pray, "Lord, let them stay," or, "Lord, let them go." Sometimes we really do not know how to pray. Now, be honest, folks. Sometimes we do not know how to pray in a situation like that, right? Right. And so the dear Holy Spirit has to make intercession.

Incidentally, I've noticed that many times we're far more interested in getting our sick loved ones well than we are getting our unsaved friends saved. You get in the average prayer meeting and ask for prayer requests: There are prayers for people who are sick, who are saints, that they might get well. *Could it be that we're more interested in keeping the saved out of heaven than we are the lost out of hell?* Think about that. I mean, how many times in the average prayer meeting are we saying, "O God, I pray for my neighbor, my sister, my brother, my father, my mother. They're lost. They're going to hell"? Oh, no. "Dear Lord, don't let Aunt Susie—don't let Mama—die and go to heaven." *Are we more interested in keeping the saved out of heaven than we are the lost out of hell?* But sometimes it is God's will to heal—there's no doubt about it. Sometimes if we would ask God, God would supernaturally heal our loved ones, but we don't know how to pray like that. But aren't you glad the Holy Spirit knows? And so, "*We know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit [Himself] maketh intercession for us.*" (Romans 8:26)

And it's just so wonderful! You see, I'm down here praying, and I might be asking God for the wrong thing, but my heart is right. It's a mistake of the head, not of the heart. And so the dear Holy Spirit is saying to the Father, "Now, Father, Adrian down there is asking for this thing. He thinks that's what he wants. But it's not what he really wants; it's not what he needs. This is what he needs, Father. And so, Father, while he's asking for this, give him that." Isn't that wonderful? And my prayer is answered—my prayer is answered.

You know, you see these big black things hung on the telephone poles. They're transformers. Sometimes they're put in concrete boxes, or underground, and so forth. What is that transformer? Well, that super-electrical power comes into that

transformer—very high voltage—and then it is transformed so it can drop down off the wire into your house, and into your fan, into your toaster, your hairdryer, and so forth. Now, if it did not go through that transformer, it would just blow those things, melt them, blow them to smithereens, blow the fuses, and so forth. But it has to go through the transformer. There is that energy; it is the same energy, but it has been transformed so it can be made adaptable and useable. The Holy Spirit is like that transformer. You see, your prayer is like that energy, and it comes through the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit takes that prayer energy—He transforms it; He adapts it; He makes it useable before the throne of God. So that's why we must pray in the Spirit.

Friend, God sees our hearts. And many times our heads are wrong, but our hearts are right. And so God the Holy Spirit just takes that prayer energy, and we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the blessed Holy Spirit makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Therefore, dear friend, not only must you be saved; you ought to be surrendered and filled with the Holy Spirit so you can pray in the Spirit. Many times our prayers do not get to heaven because they're not guided, inspired, and energized by God the Holy Spirit.

### III. Sinful Prayer

Sometimes prayers are not answered because they are Savior-less prayers: We're not praying in the name of Jesus. Sometimes they're Spirit-less prayers: We're not praying through or in the Holy Spirit. Now, let me give you a third reason that sometimes our prayers are not answered, and that is because it is sinful praying—sinful praying. You see, it is foolish to pray with unconfessed sin in our hearts and in our lives.

David knew better than to try to pray that way, because David said in Psalm 66, verse 18, *"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."* (Psalm 66:18) Now we talk about the great prayer promises. Friend, that's one of them. Not the kind of promise we like, though, is it? *"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."*

Now, Isaiah also knew better. And I want you to take your Bibles this time and turn to Isaiah chapter 1. I want to show you something. Did you know God is not always pleased when we worship? Isaiah chapter 1—I want you to look with me in verse 11: *"To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD:"*—and people coming to worship Him with sacrifices—*"I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?"* "Who told you to come in here?" God is saying. *"Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me..."*—here they were, burning incense to God; and not only was God not receiving it, God said, "It is abominable"—*"incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot*

*away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.*” God said, “It is abominable—it is iniquitous—when you worship.” Now He goes on to say in verse 14, “*Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth.*”—it’s not that God just doesn’t receive that worship; He hates it—“*they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them.*” And now, notice especially verse 15: “*And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you.*”—here’s a person saying, “O God”; and here’s God saying, “I don’t want to see that.” Why? Well, continue to read—“*yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.*” (Isaiah 1:11–15)

They were a sinful people, and God says, “Who told you to come in here and worship me that way? You bring me sacrifices. You burn this incense. You bring the fat of rams to me.” God says, “I hate it. I don’t want to hear it. You weary me. You make me tired. I’ll hide my face from that because of your sin.” Friend, I want to tell you that sinful praying just angers God. Not only does He not hear it; it’s an affront to God that we would pray with unconfessed, un-repent-ed-of sin in our hearts and in our lives.

Go on. You’re already in Isaiah. Look in chapter 59, verses 1 and 2. Some of us think, “Well, because God is not doing miracles anymore, He must be old; He must be sick; He must be tired.” But look what He says here in Isaiah chapter 59, verse 1 and 2: “*Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.*” (Isaiah 59:1–2) Now, friend, put a star by that—Isaiah 59, verses 1 and 2. It is not that God is weak; it is not that God is unable to answer our prayers. Isaiah knew better than to try to pray with unconfessed sin.

Ezra knew better. Jot this scripture down—Ezra 9, verse 6. Ezra prayed and said, “*O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens.*” (Ezra 9:6) Ezra said, “O God, I can’t even lift my face. I blush to try to pray with unconfessed, un-repent-ed-of sin.”

James knew better. James said in James chapter 5, verse 16, “*Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*”—not a sinful man; a righteous man. “*Confess your faults.*” (James 5:16) Many times, we’re praying for healing, and nobody is healed, because they’re not the prayers of a righteous man, a righteous woman, a righteous boy, a righteous girl. Many times, the reason our prayers are not answered is so simple: We have failed to confess our faults one to another and before a holy God. Prayer cannot be used as a smokescreen. So many times we just have the idea that God is just going to bless us anyhow. But He will not.

Remember that Joshua prayed before the Lord when Israel had been defeated. And

the armies of Israel ignominiously had fled before the enemies. Joshua is on his face before the Lord, and he says, “Lord, why did you bring us out here to die in the wilderness? God, have you forsaken us?” And God said to Joshua, “Joshua, get up off your face. Israel has sinned. Joshua, you’re down here praying, and squalling, and complaining, and blaming me. There’s sin in the camp. You want me to tell you why I haven’t answered prayer? You want me to tell you why there’s defeat? *‘He that covereth his sins shall not prosper.’* (Proverbs 28:13) And you’re not prospering because you’ve allowed sin to be in the camp.” (Joshua 7:6–15)

What I’m trying to tell you very plainly, friend, is that one reason our prayers are not answered is that these prayers are Savior-less praying: We’ve never prayed in the Savior’s name with His power, His authority, His acclaim, His approval. Another reason is Spirit-less praying: We’re not praying in the Holy Spirit of God; the Holy Spirit of God is not guiding, inspiring, motivating, leading our prayers. Another reason is sinful praying: there’s unconfessed, un-repented-of sin in our hearts and in our lives. And our sins not only are not answered; they literally, actually, anger God.

#### **IV. Selfish Prayer**

Now, let me give you a fourth reason—and that is selfish praying—selfish praying. The Bible says in James chapter 4 and verse 3, “*Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*” (James 4:3) One reason, very clearly, very plainly, that some prayers are not answered is these prayers do not have the glory of God as their chief aim. The person who is praying these prayers is only interested in his own personal self-aggrandizement.

Now, let me tell you something. God does not answer selfish prayers. He does answer personal prayer. It is not that you cannot ask anything for yourself. Indeed, you ought to ask for yourself. And, the Bible says, “If you need a fish, ask it. If you need bread, ask it.” (Matthew 7:9–11; Luke 10:11–13) “*Give us this day our daily bread.*” (Matthew 6:11) God wants to meet your personal needs; but there’s a difference in meeting your personal needs and meeting your selfish needs. You see, you don’t have the glory of God in your heart. This is the reason that the Bible says in Psalm 37, verse 4—here’s a wonderful promise— “Delight yourself in the Lord, and He’ll give you the desires of your heart.” (Psalm 37:4)

Now, you say, “Does that mean that I get a mansion with a swimming pool and a pink Cadillac?” No. Is that the desire of your heart? If it is, it shows me that you haven’t delighted yourself in the Lord. You see, listen. When you delight yourself in the Lord, what determines your desires is the thing that you delight in. You show me what you delight in, and I’ll tell you what you desire. “Delight yourself in the Lord, and He’ll give you the desires of your heart.” What is the desire of the heart of a man who delights

himself in the Lord? That God be glorified; that this man know and serve the Lord. You see, many times our prayers are not answered very clearly, very plainly, because “we ask, and receive not, that we might consume it upon our lust.” (James 4:3)

Now, go back to the scripture that I started with—Matthew 7, verse 7. Don’t turn to it. But Jesus said, “*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.*” (Matthew 7:7) You say, “Well, look. I asked; I didn’t receive. I sought; I didn’t find. I knocked; it wasn’t opened to me. Matthew 7:7 must not be true.” Well, friend, listen. No scripture is of private interpretation. (2 Peter 1:20) When you look at a verse like that, you have to see the context in which it’s found. Any text without a context is a pretext. You just simply take that text out of its context and you can make it all say almost anything. But, you see, Matthew 7:7 is a part of the Sermon on the Mount. And before He gave us Matthew 7:7, He gave us Matthew 6:33. And what does Matthew 6:33 say? It says, “*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*” (Matthew 6:33) “*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, it shall be opened unto you*”—to the person who is delighting himself in the Lord, to that person who is seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. But if a man is seeking his own kingdom, if a man is not abiding in—dwelling in—the righteousness of Christ, he cannot take Matthew 7, verse 7, and apply it to his own heart.

I find some examples of some prayers that were not answered in the life of Jesus when people came to Jesus when He was here on this earth in the life of His flesh. In Luke chapter 12, verse 13—let me share with you: “*And one of the company said unto him,*”—that is, to Jesus—“*Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.*” That is, “Here’s something I want you to do for me, Jesus. I’ve got a brother. And our father evidently had left a will, and the brother, he evidently would not divide the inheritance.” Now here’s what Jesus answered. How did Jesus answer this man who came to Him with this request? “*And he said unto him...*”—I’m reading now in Luke 12:13 and following—“*And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*” (Luke 12:13–15)

Jesus looked with a penetrating look right into the heart of this man who had asked Him for something, and Jesus knew that that man was motivated by one desire. What was it? Covetousness. He asked. He did not receive “because he asked amiss, that he might consume it upon his lusts.” (James 4:3) He was a covetous man, and Jesus said, “I’m not going to be a part of your covetousness.”

Many times we ask, because we ask wrongly, they are selfish prayers. Again, I read where the mother of James and John came to Him, the sons of Zebedee, and said,

“Jesus, I have a request. I want one of my sons to sit on your right hand and one of my sons to sit on your left hand when you come into the kingdom.” Jesus said, “You don’t know what you’re asking.” (Matthew 20:21) Jesus rebuked her. Why? She “asked amiss, that she might consume it upon her lust.” She was on an ego trip. She wanted her sons to sit one on the right hand and one on the left. She wasn’t concerned about the glory of Christ; she was concerned about the glory of her little boys.

Many times we pray, but our motivation is wrong. And, my dear friend, God is not up in heaven just to stroke your ego; God is not up in heaven just to pamper your whim. That is not the reason that God answers prayer.

## V. Stubborn Prayer

And so, one reason that prayers are not answered: They’re Savior-less prayers. Another reason: They’re Spirit-less prayers. Another reason: They’re sinful prayers. Another reason: They are selfish prayers. I want to give you another reason that prayer is sometimes not answered: because it is stubborn prayer—stubborn prayer. Turn with me to 1 John chapter 5 and verse 14—1 John. That’s not the Gospel of John, but 1 John chapter 5 and verse 14. Look at it: *“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.”* (1 John 5:14) Now, stubborn prayer and selfish prayer may be akin, but not exactly the same. What is stubborn prayer? Stubborn prayer: That is prayer that is not willing that God’s will be done.

Now, let me tell you something about prayer, dear friend. *Prayer is finding the will of God and getting in on it.* Prayer is not some sort of an exercise where you twist God’s will and bend God’s will to fit your will. Prayer is not talking God into doing something that He ordinarily would not want to do. Prayer is just finding what God wants to do. Remember that I’ve told you before, *the prayer that gets to heaven is the prayer that starts in heaven.* We close the circuit. *“This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will...”* So, therefore, you must be praying in the will of God.

How do you know the will of God? You must pray in the will of God. How do you know the will of God? Well, one thing we’ve said already: that the Holy Spirit makes intercession for us. But the Holy Spirit makes intercession only for those who are willing for God’s will to be done. You see, in order to know the will of God, for the will of God to find you—because it finds you; you don’t find it—for the will of God to find you, there must be this surrendered heart. Jesus said in John chapter 7, verse 17, “If any man wills to do God’s will, he’ll know it” (John 7:17)—that is, if your will is surrendered. But if you’re stubborn...

Suppose I were to ask you, are you willing to do anything God asks you to do right

now? What would be your answer? Oh, well, you'd nod yes, because that's the thing to do in church. But suppose I were to ask you a specific thing. Suppose I said, "I know the will of God for your life." And suppose I did know it and you knew that I knew it. I'm not saying I do, but suppose I did, just for the illustration. Suppose you knew that I had a hotline to heaven so that I knew precisely what God wanted you to do, and I were to come to you and say, "Now God has something He wants you to do. Will you do it?" You know what many of you would say? "Well, I don't know. Tell me, what is it?" "Yeah, tell me, so I can see if I'll do it." You know what you ought to say? "Yes, I'll do it. What is it?" All right? "Yes, I'll do it. What is it?" You see, dear friend, the way to know the will of God is to do the will of God even before you know the will of God, which is to surrender to the will of God. Just simply say, "God, I'll do it, whatever it is. Here's a blank sheet of paper; I've signed my name at the bottom."

Friend, praying in the will of God does not mean fewer blessings for you; it means more blessings for you. *God wants for you what you would want for yourself if you had enough sense to want it.* He's a good God. He loves you. He doesn't need anything. Everything already belongs to Him. He's not trying to get something out of you; He's trying to give something to you. He loves you. God's will is for your blessing and for His glory. *"The LORD God is a sun and shield...no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."* (Psalm 84:11) But many of us are stubborn. We have not laid our lives before the Lord, and we've not said, "Dear Lord, I want to do your will, whatever it is. Now, show me your will, so I can pray in your will."

Very frankly, friend, one reason that your prayer may not be answered is you don't have a surrendered will and you're not willing to do the will of God as He reveals it to you. You say, "Well, I'm just afraid what He might ask me to do." Friend, never be afraid of that. *"He that spared not his own Son...how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"* (Romans 8:32) God loves you enough to send Jesus. You never have to doubt His love again. Romans 12:2 says, "The will of God is good, perfect, and acceptable." (Romans 12:2)

## VI. Spiteful Prayer

All right, let me give you another reason. I'll give you another reason sometimes that our prayers are not answered: not only because of selfish praying; and not only because of stubborn praying; but spiteful praying—spiteful praying.

Turn to Mark chapter 11 with me for a moment—the Gospel of Mark. In Mark chapter 11, let's look in verse 25. Now, either jot these scriptures down or mark them in your Bible somehow so that you'll not miss them—Mark 11 and verse 25. Jesus said, *"And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will*



*your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.*” (Mark 11:25) Now, if you have spite in your heart—if your prayer is spiteful praying—prayer with malice, prayer with an unloving, unforgiving spirit—you might as well forget it: God is not going to hear your prayer. You see, if you’ll not forgive others, He won’t forgive you. And if you don’t get forgiven, then there’s sin in your life. And if there’s sin in your life, your prayer can’t be answered. Just that simple! As I said a few Wednesday nights ago when I spoke on forgiveness, *the man who will not forgive destroys the bridge over which he himself must travel.* An unforgiving spirit, therefore, is unforgivable. If you’re unwilling to forgive men, God is unwilling to forgive you. And if God does not forgive you, your prayers cannot get through.

Now we have a psychiatrist sitting here on the front row, and I think he will agree with this. I haven’t talked to him about it. I don’t want to put him on the spot. But there’s something about our carnal nature that gives us a little pleasure hating those who’ve done us bad. We kind of enjoy that a little bit. I don’t know what there is that we kind of enjoy hating people. As a matter of fact, we feel they deserve it. And so we kind of get a carnal satisfaction out of hurting them, or hating them, or seeing them suffer and not wanting good to happen to them. Now, if we get this carnal satisfaction, we may have that for a little bit, but even that carnal satisfaction doesn’t bring real joy. But I want to ask you, is it worth the price of your prayer not being answered? Is it? That carnal satisfaction of harboring a hurt, nursing a grudge, feeding a fever, is it worth it? Oh, how foolish we are!

And, many times—listen to me—many times the thing that is doing that is the relationship of husband to wife and wife to husband. The Bible says in 1 Peter the third chapter and the seventh verse—listen to it; every man in this building, listen to it—*“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them”—your wives—“according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.”* (1 Peter 3:7) Some of you I don’t think were married by the justice of the peace; you were married by the Secretary of War. You are just constantly at one another’s throats. And you say, “Why doesn’t God answer my prayer?” God says, “You’re to honor your wife as unto the weaker vessel. You are to dwell together as heirs of the grace of life, that your prayer to God be not hindered.” Spiteful prayers are not answered. And, oh, how we need to get that out of our hearts and out of our lives! And only the Holy Spirit can take it out; but He will, if we confess our sin. *“He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* (1 John 1:9)

## **VII. Stingy Prayer**

Now I want to mention the seventh of these eight reasons why sometimes our prayers

are not answered—and the seventh is what I call stingy praying—stingy praying. Proverbs chapter 21 and verse 13—are you ready for it?—“*Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard*”—“*Whoso stoppeth his ears at the [crying] of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.*” (Proverbs 21:13) If you’re one of these persons who has a stingy spirit, an un-giving spirit, then God cannot give to you.

There is a law of sowing and reaping that is just as plain as the law of gravity or centripetal force. It operates in our world. The Bible says in the book of Luke chapter 6, verse 38, “*Give, and it shall be given unto you*”—“*Give, and it shall be given unto you.*” (Luke 6:38) You want God to give to you? Do you give? Are you a giver? Do you think that you’re just like a sponge to soak up everything and take it in and never give it out unless you’re squeezed? No wonder God cannot answer your prayer!

You see, again, we are so great at taking these promises of the Bible and taking them out of context and trying to stand on them. One promise that everybody likes is Philippians 4:19, that says, “*But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*” (Philippians 4:19) Oh boy, we like that one, don’t we? “God’s going to supply all my needs.” All right, fine. But to whom did God say that God would supply all their need? Read it in its context. That is verse 19. Go back and look at verse 14. And here’s what God said. He was talking to the church at Thessalonica, and this is what He said: “*Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.*” Now the word *communicate* does not mean that they called him on the telephone; it means that they gave. They sent money to help Paul. Paul was a prisoner, and they took up a collection. They helped him. And he goes on to say, “*Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving,*”—he said, “When I started out on my missionary work, when we first start preaching the gospel, man,” he said, “I had to do it alone. No one helped me.” But then, he goes on to say—“*but ye only*”—“you were the one church that did it.” “*For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity*” (Philippians 4:14–16)—which really means, “Over and over again, you were taking offerings for me—over and over again. And I know you had needs, and I know that you had your own responsibilities. But,” Paul said, “you kept giving to me. You saw my necessities. Over and over again, you were investing money in missions.” And then, he said, “Because you have given to me, God’s going to give to you. My God shall supply all your need. You supplied my need; and God’s going to supply yours.”

Now, what God was saying? Now, pay attention. God was saying people who are investing their money in the work of the gospel and the preaching of the gospel can then say, “God will supply my need.” But you’re sitting here with God’s tithe in your

pocketbook. You don't tithe. You don't sacrifice. You don't give. Why should God give to you? Why? *"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together."* (Luke 6:38) Prayer is not some way that a tightwad can have everything he wants. Stingy praying does not get through. And, oh, my dear friend, when we learn how to give, when we get the spirit of giving!

One man went to church and the pastor preached on giving. And the man got incensed; he walked out. He said, "Give, give, give! That's all I ever hear!" And the pastor said, "Thank you for the best definition of the gospel I ever heard of. That's it: Give!" *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son."* (John 3:16) *"Give, and it shall be given unto you."* I want you to listen again: *"Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard."* (Proverbs 21:13).

## **Conclusion**

Let's bow our heads.

# A Praying Church

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: January 23, 2005**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 7:7–8**

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Desire Factor

II. The Direction Factor

III. The Determination Factor

Conclusion

## Introduction

That is my prayer. That is my desire for me, as an individual, and for all of us as a church.

We've been talking about, the kind of church that we ought to be, the kind of church that I've tried to teach you to be in these years that God has given me the wonderful privilege of being your pastor.

This morning, I want you to open, God's Word, if you will, to Matthew chapter 7, and in a moment, we're going to look at verses 7 and 8. I know they are very familiar to you. But the church that I want to be talking about today, our church, Bellevue Baptist Church, needs to be a praying church.

We've talked about a unifying church, or a unified church, and a steadfast church, and other things; but, today, a praying church.

Bellevue will be no greater, no better, no more useful than her prayer life. And her prayer life is not going to be any better than your life because you are the church. And don't ask yourself is Bellevue a praying church? Ask yourself this question: Am I a praying Christian?

If you could ask the Lord Jesus Christ for anything you wanted, what would you ask Him for? Would you say, "Lord, teach me to preach," or, "Lord, teach me to sing," or, "Lord, teach me to lead?" The disciples prayed, asked this: "Lord, teach us to pray." And the Lord gave them some words here and I want you to listen to them. This is, Matthew chapter 7, verses 7 and 8. Listen carefully. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

These are not the words of Adrian. These are the words of Jesus: undeniable,

impeccable promise. Our Lord says we're to ask, to seek, and to knock.

When we ask, that speaks of our desires. When we seek, that speaks of God's direction. And when we knock, that speaks of determination. And what we need to do is to bring desire, direction, and determination together into a burning laser point to get our prayers answered before God. Now, I want to tell you, folks, listen to me. The greatest problem that you have in your life is not unanswered prayer; the greatest problem is unoffered prayer, unasked prayer. The Bible says in James chapter 4 and verse 2: "...we have not because we ask not."

You see, not to pray is not only to miss a blessing; it is rebellious. Our Lord has commanded us to pray. Quickly jot these scriptures down:

Luke 18, verse 1. And he says in here that "men ought always to pray..." Now, who said that? Jesus said that.

Mark chapter 14 and verse 38. Jesus said, "Watch and pray..." Watch and pray.

And the Apostle Paul said in Philippians chapter 4, verse 6: "Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your request be made known unto God."

There's no substitute for prayer. Not enthusiasm. Not eloquence. Not energy. There is no substitute for intercession and for prayer. And the reason that many of us fail, the reason that, that many of us are poverty-stricken in our spiritual life is we've never learned to pray. May God help you to pray, may God help me to pray, so this church will be a praying church.

Now, listen very carefully. Why does God ask us to pray? It's a good question. I mean, doesn't, isn't God good? Doesn't God want to do good things? And doesn't God know everything? So why should we pray? Or put in an ancillary verse over there in Matthew 6. We're in Matthew 7. Go back to Matthew 6. Jesus said here in verses 7 and 8: "But when you pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be ye not therefore like unto them—now, watch this—for your Father knoweth what things you have need of before you ask him." That's very interesting. God knows before you ask. Well, that just begs a question then—why should we ask?

Well, number one: Not to impress God. Don't use vain repetition. You don't, you don't have to a junior-size Shakespeare in order to pray with your little flowery praises. We don't pray to impress God. And we don't pray to inform God. God already knows what things we need. He knows everything that you need, and there's nothing you can tell Him that He does not already know.

So if you don't pray to impress God, and you don't pray to inform God, why do you pray? Do you pray to instruct God? Absolutely not! Prayer is not some way where you

bend God's will to fit your will. You don't instruct God in prayer.

Why do we pray? To invite God, to invite God to be a part of our lives so we can delight ourselves in the Lord. The Bible says there in 2 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 1, that we are "...workers together with him." God loves us so much that God gives us the privilege of participating in His kingdom work through prayer. Now, God can work without our prayers, but we cannot work without God, and it is prayer that causes us to depend upon Him. God does not want us to live lives independent of Him. If God just simply blessed us without our asking, what would that do? That would teach us to live life independently from God. But the Bible, Jesus said, "If you abide in me and my word abides in you, then you'll ask what you will and it shall be done unto you." You see, God wants you to abide with him. And that's the reason God has taught us to pray - to invite Him to take control of our lives.

Now, listen very carefully. The devil cannot keep God from answering. So what will he do? He will endeavor to keep you from asking. Think about it now. The devil can't keep God from answering. So what will he do? He will try to keep us from asking. Now, our Lord in this scripture says, "Ask, seek, and knock."

Now, three factors I want to give you.

## **I. The Desire Factor**

Factor number one: The desire factor: ask and express your desires to God. So if you have a desire in your heart, "what things soever ye desire, when you believe that you'll receive them and you shall have them." Now, the Bible says, "Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desire of your heart." Now, don't get the idea that there are spiritual things that you can ask for and, secular things that you cannot ask for. The Bible never divides life from, between the sacred and the secular. With God every task is a holy task, every day is a holy day. Can you imagine Jesus dividing His life into the sacred and the secular? Can you imagine Jesus saying, "Now, Lord, Father, when I preach, I want anointing, but the rest of the time I'll do it Myself." No! You see, "In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your request be made known unto God..." A good test as to whether you should desire it or whether you should do it is can you ask God to help you, or can you ask God to do it through you? Whatever you desire. Listen. Whatever you desire, tell God. Ask!

"Well," you say, "what if I want the wrong thing?" Tell Him! Say, "Lord, I want the wrong thing. Have mercy upon me, O God. Fix my want." That's right! Listen. You can't hide it from God. If you want it, He already knows it, doesn't He? So tell Him! Say, "O God, this is what I want, and I know it's not what You want." Say, "Have mercy upon me." But, friend, pray about everything. The responsibility for asking is ours. The

responsibility for giving is God's. Now, you just ask. Learn to ask God for whatever you want.

You see, sometimes the answer to prayer is direct. And I want you to learn these three words today: direct, different, and delayed. All right. Sometimes you ask God and the answer is absolutely direct.

Last week, I went to the inauguration of our president. Had a wonderful time, and God blessed our lives. But, I did not have a ticket for the inauguration, so I called our senators' offices, Bill Frist and Lamar Alexander, and I said, "I need a ticket." Well, they sent a ticket, but they said, "We need to tell you it is standing and you will be 1/3 of a mile back!" No exaggeration. A third of a mile! I said, "Well, I'll stay home and watch on television. And so I, asked another friend for a better ticket. He said, "Yes, you're supposed to have better ticket in a seated area." And, he said, "I've sent it over to the hotel." I went to the hotel. It wasn't there. I went again. It wasn't there. I went again. It wasn't there. It was time for the inaugural event. And I'm sitting out there in the lobby and Jim Dobson comes around the corner. We fellowshiped some. Jim's a good friend and we fellowshiped some. He said, "What are you doing?" I said, "A man was supposed to send some tickets over here, for me, and, they haven't come." Well, he said, his friend there said, "Look, I've got four tickets—one, two, three, four—I had my daughter and son-in-law—one, two, three, four—here!" And these were the best seats in the house. I was as about as close at those of you on, on the back row, sitting in a nice chair on a cement platform.

Now, let me tell you something. Just before I was given those tickets, I prayed, and here's what I prayed. I said, "Lord, I don't have to have those tickets, and I'm no better than anybody else in this city. There's no reason that I should have the privilege of getting a closer seat or having a chair to sit on, but I want one!" And, I said, "God, I don't know this is Your will. I can't pray in the name of Jesus. It's just what I want. Lord, I'm Your child. That's what I want!" I'd not prayed that prayer two or three minutes before they came around the corner, and I had four of the best seats in the place in my hand. I ask Him and the answer was direct. You know, don't think of some things too big or too small for God to answer.

Down in Florida one time I got to go fishing. And I love to fish, especially in salt water—not one of these cow ponds around here. I'm sorry. But I was out in a saltwater lagoon called the Indian River with some pals. And I had not been fishing for a long time. We were wading on the sandbar casting for speckled trout, and I'm talking to the Lord all by myself, away from everybody else, just loving Him and praising Him. And I said, "Lord, I am not catching any fish." And I said, "Lord, I haven't been fishing for a long time, and maybe a long time before I go fishing again. But, Lord, I want to catch a

great big trout.” I told Him this. “I want to catch, not a small one, I want to catch a big one.” And I said, “I can’t ask in Jesus name. I have no right to catch a big fish. It’s not a necessity, but I want one.” I’d not prayed that prayer any faster than two minutes, any longer than two minutes. And I dropped that mere lure down into a deep hole there off that sandbar and began to bring it up, and I saw a big yellow mouth like that coming up out of that water. And that big speckled trout hit that thing, and I wrestled him all over the landscape out there, or the waterscape. Finally got him landed. It was a prize trout. It was what they call a button trout. Immediately after I prayed for this fish, there God gave the answer. I said, “Lord, that was great. I want another one!” And I cast for another one. And I suppose in two or three more minutes I’d caught another huge trout. I stopped asking and I stopped catching. Now, what was God doing? God knew the desire of my heart. You see, don’t be afraid to ask God. Sometimes the answers like that are absolutely direct.

I woke up one night with an excruciating pain in my right ear. What caused it, I do not know. But I put my hand on my ear, and I said, “O Jesus, in Your holy name, heal me!” because I felt that was His will. Immediately, immediately, immediately the pain was gone. I don’t know what caused it, but I know who took it. His name was Jesus.

I was driving to a revival meeting one time. And, this was in Florida. And I had preached Sunday morning, Brother Jim, at Merritt Island, and I was going over to Watula, Florida. Was out there in, driving my automobile, going along just as happy as I could be, driving about, 65 miles an hour, when my car stopped running. It didn’t sputter. It just stopped running. The engine was not running at all. I put it in neutral, coasted as far as I could. I’m out there all by myself on this road, and the car won’t run. I did what everybody does—I got out and looked under the hood. I mean, there’s the engine. It hadn’t fallen out. What was wrong with that car, I don’t know, but I got in and I cranked and I cranked and I cranked and I cranked, and it would not even sputter, till, finally, my battery was just going. And I said, “Well, worse than a car not running. Now, I’m going to have a dead battery.” Then I thought, Adrian, have you asked God? I got out of that car and I, now, I know this sounds silly, but I laid my hand on the hood, and I said, “Lord, if You are the great physician, You’re also the great mechanic, and I ask You, in the name of Jesus—because I was going to revival meeting—in the name of Jesus, fix my car.” I got in, turned the key. “Zoooooom”—the engine just roared. You say, “Well, that was a coincidence.” You believe what you believe; I’ll believe what I believe. But, friend, sometime the answer is direct. We ask God and God answers our prayer. Now, remember, Satan cannot keep God from answering, so he’ll try to keep you from asking. Now, he cannot, answer unless we ask. Now, that’s the first factor, the desire factor, what things soever ye desire. The desire factor is ask and express your



desires to God.

## **II. The Direction Factor**

Now, the second factor is the direction factor. Seek and expect direction from God, because there are sometimes there are things that we ask God for and they're not His will. Why did He say seek? Because God sometimes wants to redirect our prayers to His will. Asking and seeking have to be linked together. Sometimes God's ways are unknown to us. Sometimes we're asking for one thing and we need to be seeking another thing, and so we keep asking and keep seeking until God directs our prayer if we're not asking for the right thing the first time.

Have you ever thanked God for unanswered prayer? It's reported that Mrs. Billy Graham said, "I thank God that He does not answer every prayer of mine. Had He done so, I would have married the wrong man five different times." Sometimes we ask God for things and it's not what God wants us to have, so we have to keep seeking.

This property that we're built on is an answer to prayer, but not because I sought it at first. We were trying to build downtown. And had we built downtown, we would have, overbuilt the area and under built our need. But we were trying to buy at least three more acres of property. Out here we have 400 acres of property. But we had 24 acres. We needed at least three more acres of, of property. And we prayed and I stained heaven, asking God for the property that we might build a worship center where we could reach people, because we were having three services on Sunday morning. I preached three times in a row then again Sunday night. Then after church they slid me under the door. And so we were praying.

I remember I was with Roland Maddox. We were walking across the parking lot. And the, and Roland said, "You know, pastor, that piece of property we've been trying to buy up there?" Said, "The man has just raised the price again." Here's what I said. I can remember the exact words. I said, "Well, praise God. No two-legged man whose breath is in his nostrils is going to stop what God is doing. Just praise God. I don't understand the way, but praise You, Lord, praise You." That man did us the best favor he could have possibly done for us by raising the price on that property.

In Orlando, asleep, or trying to sleep, God laid on my heart that we need to move this entire facility out here. It has been an incredible blessing. We asked God for one thing and we kept seeking God until God showed us what His real plan for us was.

I remember I used to pray, "O God, let Interstate #40 go through Overton Park." Now, if you're a tree lover, I'm sorry, but that's what I prayed. "Let the interstate go through the park so that our people, who live where they live, can get to the church rather than going around through Robin Hood's barn, wherever that is." But I told the

Lord. I explained the whole deal to Him. You know, I tried to inform Him, and then instruct Him, but I didn't impress Him. But He heard my prayer.

When I went and told the mayor of the city what we were about to do, he said, "That's wonderful!" He said, "You know, the money that was set aside to go through Overton Park can be used to put an interchange right there." You see, isn't God good? Isn't God good? Hasn't God been good to our church? You see, friend, sometimes the answers are direct. Sometimes the answers are different.

The Apostle Paul had a thorn in the flesh, and you read about it over there in 2 Corinthians chapter 12, verses 8 and following. And he said, "O God, take away this thorn." Three seasons of prayer he prayed, but God said, "No, I've got something different for you, and I've got something better for you. My strength will be made perfect in your weakness. I'm going to give you a special anointing, a special power."

So, what do we do? We ask and express our desires to God. Then we seek and experience direction from God.

### **III. The Determination Factor**

And then, thirdly, we knock. And when we knock, we exercise determination with God. Sometimes we're asking in the will of God. Sometimes we're asking with specificity for what God wants to give us. But we give up too easily. To knock implies determination.

In the Greek language, and this was written, as you know, in Greek, the word is knock and keep on knocking. Knock, knock, knock upon heaven's door. Now, I said that sometimes the answers are direct. You ask God for something; there it is! I love those kinds of answers. But sometimes the answers are different. You ask God for one thing and God in love does not give it, but He gives you something better, but different. But sometimes the answers are not direct and they're not different—they are delayed. There seems to be some impediment, something there. We, we've asked God. We've sought God, but the door is closed. And so, God says, "Knock, knock, keep on knocking on heaven's door." That's very interesting. Why would God tell us to do that? Why doesn't God just, give us what we ask?

Well, this same Scripture—ask, seek, and knock—is repeated in Luke chapter 11. You might want to turn over to Luke chapter 11. Jesus here again is teaching on prayer. And look, if you will, in Luke chapter 11, verses 5 through 10: "And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go to him at midnight, and say to him, Friend, lend me three loaves—that is, three loaves of bread—for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him." Now, in the Middle East, if a friend comes to you, or you must invite him to stay there and you must feed him. That

is the expected thing. “And he...” And, now, the man said, “Look, the cupboard is empty. I’ve got this friend. I’ve got to feed him something. “And, and he from within shall answer and say, trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity—now, just write out in your margin his persistence—he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you—here it is—seek, ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”

Now, he’s not talking here about a light rattle on the doorknob. He is talking about a man banging on the door. And his friend, his neighbor said, “Will you go away! Do you know what time it is? Man, if you wake up those dogs and wake up those babies, we’re going to have some serious trouble.” You know, the houses were small. They would sometimes keep animals beneath on the first floor, and, the locks were complicated; the whole family often in one room. And he said, “Look, I can’t do this. Go away!” “I said, Go away!” “I said, how many you need?” “How... get this bread and get out of here.”

Now, why would Jesus use an illustration like that about prayer? He’s not saying that God is like an unconcerned neighbor. He’s just saying that if a neighbor will do that just because he’s being pestered, how much more will God hear us if we continue to seek, if we continue to ask, if we continue to knock?

Jesus told a story of an unjust judge. There was a widow. She had a good case. But this crooked judge would not answer. He didn’t have time for her. And, she just kept on pestering him. And notice, if you will, here in Luke chapter 18, and verse 5: “Yet, because this widow....” Well, let’s go to verse 4: “And he would not for a while: but afterward he said to himself, though I fear not God, nor regard man;” What a hard-hearted guy this was. Didn’t fear God. Had no respect for man. Listen to what he says, “Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, through he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily...” Now, what’s all of this about? Is he saying that God is like an unconcerned neighbor? No! Is he saying God is like a perverted, wicked judge? No! But what He’s saying if an unconcerned neighbor will hear persistent prayer, if an unconcerned judge will hear persistent prayer, then keep on knocking. That’s taught, we see it all in the Bible.

Over there in, Matthew chapter 15 there’s a story of a, of a Canaanite woman. The Bible calls her a Syro-phoenician woman. She was from Syria and Phoenicia; that is, she was a Canaanite. She had a daughter that was demon-possessed. She came to Jesus, and she said, “Jesus, I’ve got a big need. My daughter has a demon. Do

something for her!” Do you know what Jesus said to her? “I haven’t come to you Canaanites. I’ve come to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Do you think I’m going to take the children’s bread and give it to dogs?” Now, suppose Jesus talked to you that way. You’d say, “Ha, some Messiah He is. Some caring person He is, calling me a dog. Said He doesn’t care about me and my daughter. She’s demon-possessed.” You know what that woman did? She said, “That’s right, Lord. You described me perfectly. I’m a Gentile dog. But I’m a dog under Your table, and I’m going to stay there until I get a crumb from you.” Jesus’ heart broke. He wasn’t being cruel to that woman. He was trying to teach her to knock, to persist, and He said, “Woman, great is your faith. Great. You’ll have what you ask.” You see, she just continued to knock.

Elijah was a prophet of God in the Old Testament. God had shut up heaven that it would not rain. For three years it didn’t rain. The leaves were shriveled. The animals were dying. It was a judgment of God upon the land. But then Elijah and the people prayed for rain for the glory of God. Elijah went up on the top of Mount Carmel. I’ve been there many times. And he looked out and he sent his servant and said, “Go see if you see any clouds.” He went. Nothing. He prayed some more. He said, “Go again.” He went. Nothing. He prayed some more. “Go again.” He went. Nothing. On the seventh time the servant came back and said, “Well, I see a little cloud about the size of a man’s hand.” Elijah said, “There’s going to be an abundance of rain.”

We sang this morning, “Rain down, Lord, rain down.” Friend, we need to keep on praying until God rains down upon us. And here was a man who knocked and kept on knocking. And that’s what we need to do. If God doesn’t answer your prayer, just keep praying. Well, that, that brings up a question.

How long should we continue to pray? Let me tell you how long you continue to pray, how long you continue to knock. You continue to knock until you have the answer in your hand or in your heart or until God says no. If you have the answer in your hand—you got four tickets—you don’t have to keep asking. Now, you may have the answer in your heart. God says, “I have heard your prayer. Wait upon me.”

I had a deep prayer request in my life one time concerning some of my loved ones, and I tried again to tell God how to do it, but He would not let me instruct Him. But one day He said to me, “Adrian, you trust me. I’m going to take care of it. I have heard your prayer.” Now, it took a while for that prayer to come to me, but I had the answer in my heart.

Now, sometimes God will just simply say no. Why? Because He doesn’t love us? No, because He does love us! Three of God’s greatest prophets in the Bible asked God to kill them. God said no. You know, God said, “No, I’m not going to do that. That’s not what you need.” You ask. You seek. You knock. You pray until you have the answer in

your hand, in your heart, until God says no. The answer may be direct. The answer may be different. The answer may be delayed. But God answers prayer.

## Conclusion

And what is my desire for this dear church? That we will be a praying church.

Bow your heads in prayer. O, our God, my God, our God, we join the disciples in asking You, Lord, teach us to pray. Amen.

Now, look up here. I hope you will develop the habit of asking, seeking, knocking. These are not my words. These are the words of Jesus. "Ask, it will be given to you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." But let me put this caveat there. He's talking to His children. Now, God may answer the prayer of an unsaved man, but He's never promised to. These promises are to God's children. Now, friend, I'm telling you something. Listen to me. Even if you not, not all that excited about going to heaven and missing hell, live long enough and the time will come when for God to answer your prayer will mean more to you than anything in the whole world. And you cannot ask with assurance unless you're a child of God.

Now, if you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, I want to invite you today to give your heart to Him, just to trust Him, to depend upon Him, to do with you and for you and through you what He said He would do. Remember that He loved you so much, He took your sin debt and paid it with His precious blood on the cross, and said, "It is finished! It is paid in full." And then He offers you salvation if you will trust Him and receive what He did for you. When you trust Him, that moment you become a child of God. Now, you'll be a baby Christian. You'll have to grow. You're not going to sprout wings and get a halo. You'll have to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus. I'm still growing. I don't want to stop growing. But you'll grow, and the Lord will be in your heart, you'll have fellowship with Him, and heaven will be your sure destination.

Bow your heads in prayer. If you already know the Lord, I want you to begin to pray for those round about you who may not yet know the Lord. If you do know Him, thank Him that He has saved you. And, today, if you are not sure that you're saved, or sure that you're not saved, I've got wonderful, wonderful, good news for you. Jesus can and will save you today. You might pray a prayer like this: O God, I'm a poor, lost sinner. I need to be saved and I want to be saved. Thank You for paying my sin debt with the blood of Your dear Son, Jesus. Lord Jesus, I open my heart right now like a little child. I receive You into my life. Come into my life. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Save me, Jesus. Amen and amen. Now, look up here.

"Pastor, did Jesus save me?" It all depends. Were you sincere? You say, "Well, I thought I was sincere. How can I know?" Here's the way. Are you willing to make it

public? “With the heart man believes unto righteousness; with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” The faith that will not lead to confession will not lead to heaven. You don’t confess Jesus in order to be saved, but because you’ve been saved. When you believe unto righteousness, you confess with your mouth. Jesus said, “If you’re ashamed of me and of my word before this sinful and adulterous generation, I’ll be ashamed of you.” But Jesus said, “If you’ll confess me before men, I will confess you before my Father.”

Now, we’re going to sing an invitational hymn, and the ministers of our church are going to stand here at the head of each of these aisles all the way across the front to welcome those of you who’ll be coming forward. If you’re in the balcony, there’ll be someone to welcome you under that banner there in the corner, that speaks of the Lord Jesus, and this one over here. They call it Messiah. He’s your Redeemer and your Messiah. You go to one of those banners and there’ll be a friend there waiting to receive you. If you prayed and asked Christ today into your heart, you need to come down this aisle and let it be known. If you’ve already been saved and never given Him the glory, you need to come and say, “I’m, I have trusted Christ.”

Now, if you are a, if you are a Christian and have, don’t have a church membership or that you don’t attend where you, your membership is, and this is where God speaks to your heart, where you feel God working, then I invite you to come and say, “I want to place my membership here.” Now, placing membership is not a substitute for being saved. If you haven’t been saved, that comes first. And if you haven’t had believer’s baptism, we’d want to baptize you. But if you need a church home, I want you to come.

Some will be coming today and saying to the minister, “I’m trusting Jesus.” Others will be coming, saying, “I want to place my membership here.” We will receive you, rejoice with you, give you some Scripture to stand on, and seal your decision in prayer.

Let’s stand together. Bow your heads one more time.

Now, heavenly Father, we ask You to open the hearts and move the will of those who need to acknowledge You. In Jesus’ wonderful name. Amen.

Now, you step out and come as we sing.

# A Praying Church

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** January 23, 2005

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 7:7–8

*“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”*

MATTHEW 7:7

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Desire Factor

II. The Direction Factor

III. The Determination Factor

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take the Word of God, the Bible, and open to Matthew chapter 7? In a moment, we're going to look at verses 7 and 8. But, let me ask you a question: If you could ask the Lord Jesus Christ to do anything for you, what would you ask Him to do? Would you ask Him, if you were a preacher, to help you to preach? Or, if you were a musician, would you ask Him to help you to sing? Or, if you're a businessman, would you ask Him to help you to be a success? Or, if you're a church leader, would you ask Him to make you a better leader? All of those are well and good, but they're all wrapped up in one thing. The disciples said, *“Lord, teach us to pray”*—*“teach us to pray.”* (Luke 11:1)

Now, we've been in a series of messages called “Milestones and New Horizons,” and what I'm trying to do in these messages is to distill the things that I've tried to teach you for thirty-two years and to look into the future new horizons and say, “O God, let these things be true about Bellevue Baptist Church.” Today, we're talking about a praying church. Now, don't ask the question: “Is Bellevue Baptist Church a praying church?” Ask yourself this question: “Am I a praying Christian?” You see, the Church is nothing but a composition of all of us. So, ask yourself this question: “Am I a praying Christian?”

Now, here's what our Lord says. Look, if you will, in verses 7 and 8—wonderful, wonderful promise: *“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh*

*findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*” (Matthew 7:7–8) Now, these are not the words of Adrian; they are the words of Jesus Christ—an incredible promise in the Word of God. “*Ask...seek...knock.*” (Matthew 7:7) Rivet those three words in your mind. Etch them upon your heart: “*Ask...seek...knock.*” (Matthew 7:7) *Ask*—that speaks of desire. *Seek*—that speaks of direction. *Knock*—that speaks of determination. Now, these are three small words, but a great door to a room of wonderful things can swing on three hinges. And, I want us to learn these words. I want us to understand that they are from Jesus and they are a promise. I don’t have a failure and you don’t have a failure but somehow it is a prayer failure. I don’t have a need and you do not have a need that proper prayer could not supply.

Prayerlessness is not only a missed opportunity; it’s a sin. Samuel said, “*God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you.*” (1 Samuel 12:23) The Lord Jesus said in Luke chapter 18 and verse 1: “*And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray.*” (Luke 18:1) The Lord said in Mark chapter 14, verse 38: “*Watch...and pray.*” (Mark 14:38) The Apostle Paul said in Philippians chapter 4 and verse 6: “*In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made unto God.*” (Philippians 4:6) So, prayerlessness is really another form of wickedness. It is a life that lives so proudly that it lives independently of God. There is no substitute for prayer—not energy, not eloquence, not enthusiasm, not intention. There is no substitute for prayer. And, I believe that prayer is the greatest unused and untapped energy in the world. The reason behind our poverty is our prayerlessness—and I’m talking about spiritual poverty.

Now, listen to me. Why should we ask God to give us what He already wants to give us? Why should we tell God things that He already knows? Well, we’ve read Matthew chapter 7. Back up to Matthew chapter 6 for just a moment and look in verses 7 and 8: “*But when ye pray*”—these are the words of Jesus. Now listen—“*But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.*” (Matthew 6:7–8)

Now, why do we pray, therefore? We don’t pray to impress God. We’re not “*heard for [our] much speaking.*” (Matthew 6:7) You don’t have to be eloquent to pray. If an earthly child can speak to an earthly father, you can speak to your Heavenly Father. He is not impressed by your vocabulary or by your poetry. Number two: You don’t pray to inform God. God already knows what you need. “*Your [Heavenly] Father [knows] what things [you] have need of, before [you] ask him.*” (Matthew 6:8) Again, you don’t pray to instruct God. You’re not going to be able to tell God what to do. *Prayer is not bending God’s will to fit your will. Prayer is finding the will of God and getting in on it.* Well, then, why do we pray? If we don’t pray to impress God, to inform God, to instruct God,



why do we pray? We pray to invite God into our lives. You see, prayer is a way God has of binding Himself to us and us to Him.

Now, if God were to meet all of our needs and we didn't pray, we would tend to be independent of God. We would just simply say, "*Ipsa facto*, the needs are going to be met." But, the Bible says that, "[We] have not, because [we] ask not." (James 4:2) God never wants us to live independently of Him. Paul said we're "*workers together with him*." (2 Corinthians 6:1) Now, He could do it without us; we cannot do it without Him. But, thank God, when heaven and earth come together, God allows us to pray—and we do this by abiding in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, there are three factors that I want to go back to: ask, seek, and knock. And, these are the keys to getting your prayers answered.

## I. The Desire Factor

The first factor is what I'm going to call "the desire factor." Ask and express desire to God. "*What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them.*" (Mark 11:24) God wants you to tell Him your desires—not just the big ones; the little ones. Can you think of anything that's big to God? God is interested in you so much that the very hairs of your head are numbered. (Matthew 10:30; Luke 12:7) There's not a sparrow that falls but what God attends the funeral. (Matthew 10:29; Luke 12:6) So, you can ask Him. Don't get the idea that you can ask God for spiritual things but you cannot ask Him for material things, you can ask Him for sacred things but not for secular things. Can you ever imagine the Lord Jesus Christ dividing His life between the sacred and the secular? When you're saved, every day is a holy day, every place is a sacred place. And, if you want something, ask God for it.

"Well," you say, "what if I want what God doesn't want me to have?" Tell God about it. Tell God, "God, I want something you don't want me to have." He already knows it; you're not going to surprise Him. And, you just say, "Lord, here's a desire in my heart, and I'm not quite certain it's your will"—or, "I'm certain it's not your will"—"God, if my *wanter* is wrong, fix my *wanter*." But, bring your desires to God. Tell God what you want, and God will hear that prayer. Now, the responsibility for asking is ours. The responsibility for giving is God's. Friend, Satan cannot keep God from answering so he'll try to keep you from asking.

Now, here are three words also I want to lay on your heart. Sometimes the answer to prayer is *direct*: we ask, and God gives it. Sometimes the answer to prayer is *different*: we ask, and God gives us something different. Sometimes the answer to prayer is *delayed*: and we ask, and God wants to give us something; but He makes us wait. So, let's think of those three words.

First of all, when we ask, we're going to find out that many times, the answer is

direct: we ask, and God answers that prayer just like that.

‡ Last week, Joyce and I were at the inaugural ceremonies for the president, and I wanted a seat there in the inaugural meeting—because you can't just walk in. So, I contacted our senators' offices, Senator Alexander and Senator Frist, and asked to make certain that I had an invitation. Well, I heard from those gentlemen, but the office said, "This is an invitation to the inaugural ceremonies, but it's a standing area where you have to stand and you will be about a third of a mile away." No kidding! A third of a mile! Well, friend, I'd rather stay home and watch it on television. And, I certainly didn't want to stand out in the cold for about three hours—not that I was too good to do it; I just didn't want to do it. And so, I asked another friend who was in charge of the inaugural events if I couldn't get some better tickets. He said, "Yes, I've got better tickets for you in a seated area—you and Mrs. Rogers and your daughter and son-in-law." So, he said, "I'll get them over to the hotel for you."

Well, they never came. The morning of the inauguration I kept asking the concierge, "Have the tickets arrived?" He said, "No, they have not." I was sitting in a chair there in the hotel lobby just ready to go, and I prayed, "Dear Lord, I want some good tickets." Now, here's what I said: I said, "Lord, I don't deserve them. I'm no better than anybody else. I can't say I know it's your will. I can't ask in the name of Jesus. I just want some tickets. And Lord, if in your grace, you could do that, I'd be most grateful." I had just concluded the prayer when around the corner came Dr. Jim Dobson and some friends. And, Dr. Dobson and I are close friends so we chatted a little bit. He said, "What are you doing?" I said, "I'm waiting on that man to bring the tickets, but he hasn't brought them." A man who was part of the entourage with Dr. Dobson said, "I have some tickets." I said, "I'll need four." He said, "I have four tickets—one, two, three, four."

Friend, they were the best seats in the house. I wasn't a third of a mile away; I was as close as I am to you on the back row from the inaugural service, sitting up there in a folded chair on the concrete. I didn't deserve that. I'm no better than anybody else. But, you know, God sometimes just knows the desire of our heart.‡

And, He delights to give us things like that. You ask, and you receive, and the answer is direct. And you can't quibble about the answer being direct. God is interested in what sometimes we call frivolous things.

‡ Down in Florida I went fishing. And, I'd not been fishing for a long time, and it looked like it would be another long time before I would go fishing. I was out on a sandbar there in the Indian River lagoon there. And, you know, I love to fish in saltwater. Freshwater's all right, but we have something better than cow ponds down there to fish in. And, I was out there, you know, by myself, wading around about knee-deep in the water on a sandbar with my rod and mirror lure, talking to the Lord Jesus. I said, "Lord,

thank you for letting me be out here. Thank you for the beauty of this day. Thank you for the sunshine. Thank you for the water. Thank you for all of it. But Lord, I want to catch a fish.” And, I’d been fishing for a long time, and I hadn’t caught a fish. “Now Lord, I don’t deserve it. I can’t demand it. I can’t say, ‘In Jesus’ name.’ I just want it.” So, I said, “Lord, I want you to help me to catch a big trout.”

Within a minute or two, I dropped my mirror lure down in a deep hole there in the sandbar, and as I was bringing it up, I saw a big yellowmouth *like that* coming out of the water. It took that lure, and we wrestled all over the sandbar. And, I landed him, and he was a trophy trout, one they call a “button trout”—a big one, just like I asked God for. I said, “Lord, that’s wonderful. I want another one,” and I prayed again. And, I cast, and in a very short time I had another one on the line, another big one—not as big as the first one, but, you know, a king-sized one. And, I thanked the Lord for that. I didn’t ask Him for any more, and I didn’t catch any more.†

Now, you can say that was a coincidence. Well, you can believe what you want. But, I asked, and I received.

†I was going to a revival meeting, driving my automobile across the state of Florida. And, I preached Sunday morning at Merritt Island. I was going over to Wauchula, Florida, to preach that evening. When I was right out in the middle of nowhere, my Ford stopped running. It just stopped. I was doing about sixty-five miles an hour, and the engine stopped. It didn’t sputter; it just stopped. I rolled to a stop, and I tried to start the engine. It wouldn’t start. I got out and did what everybody does: I opened the hood and looked in. There was the engine. It didn’t fall out. I’m not a mechanic. But, I knew I had a revival meeting I needed to get to. This time I prayed this way: I said, “Lord Jesus, if you’re the Great Physician, you’re also the Great Mechanic. Now, my battery is almost dead. I’ve tried to crank this automobile. It will not start.” I put my hand on the hood, and I said, “Lord Jesus, in your holy name, fix this car.” I got in and turned the key, and it went *zoooooooooom!* And, the engine began to run, and it ran smoothly. I’ve never had it back in the shop.†

Now, you can say what you want. You can say that was a coincidence. You have your opinion. But, the Bible says, “*Ask, and [you will] receive.*” (John 16:24) God just gives us an answer to prayer, sometimes, immediately.

†I awakened in the middle of the night. I had an excruciating pain in my ear. I don’t know what caused it. But, I put my hand on my ear, and I said, “Lord Jesus, please heal me.” Immediately, the pain left.†

You say, “Well, just a coincidence.” Again, you have your ideas, and I have mine. But, many times we just simply ask and we receive.

## II. The Direction Factor

But, sometimes we ask and we don't receive. What do we do then? We seek so we can find. So, the next factor is what I want to call "the direction factor": seek, and expect direction from God. Now, if you don't have the desire of your heart, and you ask God for something and you don't get it, you have to ask yourself, "Well, why didn't I get it? Why didn't God do for me what I asked Him to do? Well, maybe I was asking for the wrong thing." James said, "*Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss.*" (James 4:3) God is too good to give us the wrong thing; and so, we pray until God directs us. We expect direction from God.

The Apostle Paul, who was a better Christian than anybody in this building, had a thorn in the flesh, and he asked God to remove his thorn. God didn't do it immediately like He did my earache. He prayed once—one session of prayer—and God didn't answer his prayer. He prayed another session of prayer, and God didn't answer his prayer. He prayed the third time, and God did not answer his prayer. But, God gave him an answer, but God did not answer and give him what he asked for (that the thorn would be removed). God said, "Paul, I've got a better plan for you. I'm going to give you extraordinary power. I'm going to let my strength rest upon you." Paul said, "Well, praise the Lord!" He didn't say, "What can't be cured must be endured." He said, "It will be enjoyed." He said, "I take pleasure in what God has done for me." (2 Corinthians 12:7–9) Why, you see, Paul was seeking.

Now, you may be sincere in your prayer, but God may not be wanting to give you that exact thing that you're asking God for because He has something better for you. I think it was Mrs. Billy Graham who said, "If God had answered every prayer of mine, I would have married the wrong man on five different occasions." And, some of you girls praying for a man had better be careful. You'd better say, "Lord, I want to seek your will. I don't want to just go ahead of you."

† This church used to be located in Midtown. It's why we call it "Bellevue." It was on Bellevue Boulevard. And, we just outgrew our skin. The church just kept growing and growing and growing. We had an auditorium. It was about half filled, and we filled it up. Then we started another service, and we filled that one up. So, we started a third service, and I was preaching at 8, 9:30, and 11, and then again Sunday night. When I got finished preaching, they just slid me under the door Sunday night. I was whipped. We needed to grow, and we were bound—root-bound. There was no way that our oak could grow so we decided we'd need to build. Well, we had purchased, up until this time, about twenty-four acres of property. We needed at least three more. And, we set out to buy that property. And friend, we ran into a wall—a brick wall. Some people did not want to sell. And, the ones who did sell to us wanted exorbitant prices. And so, we were working trying to buy some property. Our committee—good, godly committee—

was working with these people.

I remember one time walking across the parking lot with Brother Roland Maddox. He said, “Pastor, you know that piece of property we have been negotiating for? The man just raised the price again.” It was already exorbitant. I can tell you exactly what I said: I said, “Well, praise God! No two-legged man whose breath is in his nostrils is going to stop what God is doing.” I didn’t know how He was going to do it, but I just knew that God was with us and we’d been praying. You know the story.

I went to Florida to look at some churches. In the middle of the night, God spoke to my heart and said, “Adrian, you need to move that facility out east.” Now friend, we were trying to buy three acres. We now have four hundred acres of property. Now, we’ve given some to the seminary and some to Bellevue Woods, but God has given us an incredibly beautiful, significant piece of property. You see, as we were seeking God, God said, “Now, this is what you’re asking for, but over here is what you need.” And, God has poured blessing upon blessing upon blessing upon blessing on us in this new location. How I praise Him for it!†

† I used to tell God how He needed to let the Interstate go through Overton Park. You know, you can go from one coast to the other coast on the Interstate, but when you get to Overton Park in Memphis, you have to go around. It’s a dogleg. Now, you have to just kind of go around Robin Hood’s barn. You just go around, either on one leg or the other, but you can’t go straight through on Interstate 40. Well, I used to tell God, “God, we need the Interstate to go through Overton Park.” Now, if you’re an environmentalist and a tree hugger, I’m just going to confess to you I still prayed that. I said, “Lord, I want to bring our people from out east who are trying to come here so they can get to Bellevue.” And, I explained it to God. I tried to inform God. Then I kind of instructed God. But, nothing happened.

When we purchased the property out here and I told the mayor about it, he said, “That’s wonderful.” He said, “You know, the money that had been designated to put the Interstate through Overton Park—we can use to put an interchange out where you are.” Isn’t that amazing? That’s amazing. Here I was asking God for one thing; and God didn’t give me what I asked for, but He gave me something so better. And now, you can tell anybody, “You want to come to Bellevue Baptist Church? Get on Interstate 40 and just get off at Exit 15. We’re right there.”†

Now friend, that’s an answer to prayer. God doesn’t always give us what we ask, but God gives us something different and God gives us something better.

### **III. The Determination Factor**

So, when you pray, remember the desire factor: you ask and express your desire to

God. Then, remember the direction factor: you seek and expect direction from God. Now, here's the third factor, and this is a very important factor—and it's what I want to call "the determination factor": you knock and exercise determination with God. Now, sometimes you ask, and God's answer is direct. Tom, sometimes you seek, and God's answer is different. And, sometimes you knock, and God's answer is delayed—God wants to answer the prayer, but God delays to answer the prayer. There are some barriers that are in front. There are some closed doors that have to be answered by persistent prayer.

Now, He says, *"Ask...seek, and...knock,"* (Matthew 7:7) and these are in the present tense, meaning, "Keep on asking. Keep on seeking. Keep on knocking. Don't pray and then quit." Luke 18:1: *"And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint."* (Luke 18:1)

Now, this scripture that I gave you from Matthew chapter 7, this promise is repeated in Luke chapter 11 with a great illustration. So, you might want to turn to Luke chapter 11 and begin in verse 5: *"And he said unto them"—*Jesus, now, is speaking—*"And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go to him at midnight, and say to him, Friend, lend me three loaves; For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you"—*now, Jesus is speaking—*"Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity"—*just write out in your margin "his persistence"; that's what the word means—*"he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you"—*now, here's our text again—*"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."* (Luke 11:5–10)

Now, here Jesus is using the illustration of knocking. In the Middle East, there are no Motel 6's, or Holiday Inns, or whatever. You're traveling; you have a friend, you stop by, and he's going to put you up—he's obligated to do it. It would be unthinkable that he wouldn't do it—and to feed you. Now, this man has an unexpected guest, and he doesn't have anything in the cupboard. He's embarrassed. He goes to his next-door neighbor in the middle of the night and knocks on the door. Nobody answers. "Who is it?" "It's John." "What do you want at this time of night?" "I need three loaves of bread." "Man, are you crazy? Do you know what time it is? Go away." "I need some bread." "Listen, mister, it's late. I'm already in bed. I've got the covers up over me. The children are with me in bed. If you wake up that baby or you start the dogs to barking, there's going to be real trouble. Go away!" "What do you want?" "I told you what I want. I've got to have three loaves of bread." He said, "Oh, my! Wait just a moment." And, he gets up,

and he works with that complicated lock; and he opens the door and says, “Now, here. Take this bread and get out of here. I need to get some sleep.”

Now, is Jesus saying that God is like that neighbor? No. You missed the point altogether. What Jesus is saying is if a man like that, because of persistence, will give his friend bread, how much more will your Heavenly Father answer you if you persist? Now, He’s not saying that God is like a careless, unconcerned neighbor, but what He is saying is that we need to learn to persist. That’s the idea there. We need to knock and keep on knocking. Why? God wants us to search for Him with all of our heart. Jeremiah chapter 29, verses 12 and 13: *“Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.”* (Jeremiah 29:12–13) You see, God wants us to pray not only in His will, but God wants us to pray with all of our heart.

Jesus told the story of a widow. She didn’t have anybody to stand up for her. And, somebody had cheated her financially, and she didn’t have anything to live on apart from that. So, she went to the judge and said, “Judge, I want you to rectify this matter.” The judge said, “Go away. I’m not interested in this.” Jesus said the judge didn’t fear God or man. The woman came again and said to Mr. Judge, “You need to help me. I don’t have any other help.” The judge said, “I’m not interested in you. Go away.” But, she kept coming over and over and over again. And, Jesus said, “Finally, the judge said, ‘Lest this woman weary me, I’m going to adjudicate her case in the right way.’” (Luke 18:1–6) Now, was Jesus saying that God is like an unjust judge? No. Again, what He is saying is there is a principle of persistence. It works in the world. It works in the neighborhood, and it works in the kingdom of heaven. We have to persist with God.

There was a story in the Bible about a woman who was a Canaanite woman. The Bible calls her a Syrophenician woman. She had a daughter that was demon-possessed. She heard that Jesus was in the neighborhood. She thought this was her opportunity. She comes to Jesus, falls down in front of Him, and says, “Lord, have mercy upon my daughter. She’s possessed with a devil.” You know what Jesus said to her? “Look, I haven’t come to you Canaanites. I’ve come to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Do you think that I’m going to take the children’s bread and give it to dogs?” You would think the woman would say, “Well, some Messiah He is! Some loving man He is! I’ve never been treated so rudely in my life!” You’d think she’d turn and go away. But you know what she said? She said, “You’re right, Lord. That’s what I am. I’m a Gentile dog.” But, she said, “Lord, even the dogs get the crumbs that fall from the table, and I am under your table. And, if I’m a dog, I’m your dog, and I’m under your table.” Jesus’ heart broke. Now, He wasn’t being cruel to that woman; He was trying to teach her to persist in prayer. And, He said, *“O woman, great is [your] faith.”* (Matthew 15:28) And, that woman had her prayer answered and her darling daughter delivered from

demons. (Matthew 15:21–28; Mark 7:24–30)

Jacob was out lonely at night seeking peace, seeking meaning to life, and the Bible says that an angel of the Lord pounced him. Now, can you imagine being asleep out in the wilderness and getting pounced by an angel? This angel, the angel of the Lord, was really the angel Jehovah, which was Jesus, a preincarnate Jesus. And, the Bible says that they wrestled all night. Now, can you imagine a man wrestling with an angel—the angel of Jehovah? And, the angel says to Jacob, *“Let me go.”* (Genesis 32:26) Well, good night! He could get away any time he wanted to. That fight was fixed. And, Jacob said, *“I will not let thee go, [until you] bless me.”* (Genesis 32:26) And, the Lord says, *“Oh, that’s great. You prevailed with God. I’m going to give you a new name, “Israel,” because you have become a prince to prevail with God.”* (Genesis 32:24–30)

Sometimes you have to ask. Sometimes you have to seek. Sometimes you have to knock and keep on knocking because *God does business with those that mean business*. Your answer may be direct. Your answer may be different. Your answer may be delayed.

† I had a personal need in my life. I told the Lord about it. I stained heaven with my prayers, but the answer didn’t come. I felt definitely I was praying in the will of God. I prayed in the name of Jesus. But, the answer didn’t come. And, one day God spoke to me, and He said, *“Adrian, I’ve heard your prayer. Your prayer is answered. Wait upon me.”* And, I did, and I cannot explain to you how gloriously wonderful—how gloriously wonderful—God answered that prayer.†

What does God want for Bellevue Baptist Church? God wants our church to be a praying church. And, for our church to be a praying church, you’ve got to be a praying person. Question: When do you stop knocking? When do you stop seeking? When do you stop asking? When you have the answer either in your hand or in your heart—you know it’s done—or when God says, *“No.”* Now, God may say *“no”* because He loves you too much to give you what you’re asking for. Jonah asked God to kill him. Moses asked God to kill him. Elijah asked God to kill him. God said, *“I’m not going to do it. You don’t know what you’re asking for.”* You pray until you have the answer in your hand, or you have the answer in your heart, or until God says, *“No.”* If God says, *“No,”* praise Him; He knows what He’s doing. *“Your [heavenly] Father [knows] what things [you] have need of, before [you] ask him.”* (Matthew 6:8)

## Conclusion

Bow your heads in prayer, and I want you to pray this prayer: *“Lord, teach me to pray.”* Pray about your prayer life. Now, these are the words of Jesus: *“Ask...it [will] be given [to] you; seek, [you’ll] find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”* (Matthew 7:7) Now, while heads are bowed, let me say that this is a promise to God’s children. And, if you’re



not a child of God, God may hear your prayer sometimes, but He's not obligated to; He hasn't promised to. You can only pray in Jesus' name when you're a child of God.

Would you like to know the Lord personally? Understand that you're a poor, lost sinner. Understand that Jesus paid your sin debt with His shed blood on the cross. Understand that salvation comes by faith. You put your faith where God has put your sins: on Jesus. The Bible says, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and [you will] be saved.*" (Acts 16:31) Pray like this: "O Lord, I'm a poor, lost sinner. I need to be saved, and I want to be saved. Jesus, you died to save me and promised to save me if I would trust you. I do trust you right now, this moment. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Save me. And, begin now to make me the person you want me to be. In your name I pray, my Lord and Savior. Amen."✠

# Prayer: The Unused Resource

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** May 22, 1983

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 7:7–8

*“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”*

MATTHEW 7:7

## Outline

### Introduction

- A. Prayer Is a Resource in a Time of Need
- B. Prayer Is a Resource in a Time of Temptation
- C. Prayer Is a Resource in a Time of Discouragement
- I. Learn to Pray About All of Your Life
- II. Learn to Pray in the Will of God
- III. Learn to Pray in Faith
  - A. Saturate Yourself with the Word of God
  - B. Separate Yourself from Sin
  - C. Be Activated by the Spirit
  - D. Dedicate It to the Savior
- IV. Learn to Pray in Jesus' Name
  - A. As His Disciple
  - B. For His Glory
  - C. With His Authority

### Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take your Bibles and turn with me, please, to Matthew 7:7—Matthew 7:7. I want us to think tonight on this subject: “Prayer: The Unused Resource.” Jesus said, *“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.”* (Matthew 7:7–8) We’re going to be thinking again tonight on the subject of prayer. And I don’t know what these messages on prayer are doing for you, but they’re doing a lot for me. And God has been encouraging my heart more and more and inclining my heart more and more to this matter of prayer. And there is a divine dissatisfaction in my heart with my present prayer life and a keen, wonderful anticipation in my heart for the victories that will yet be mine, and yours, and

ours as we pray together.

I really, sincerely believe that the greatest untapped resource in the world is not the fact that we have not yet ultimately harnessed electricity as perhaps we could. Benjamin Franklin, when he saw that electricity up there in the sky and forked lightning flashing across the bosom of the sky, thought, “That is awesome power! If some way we could harness it!” And you remember he flew that kite with the key attached to it, thinking somehow that that there must be power up there that we could harness. And when I think of Benjamin Franklin doing that, when I look at a congregation like this of between two and three thousand persons, I think, “Oh my! The untapped resources of prayer that there are in this place if our people were mobilized to pray!”

We think of the power of the atom—and awesome and mighty is the power of the atom—and we think of all of the atomic resources that are yet ours to be discovered in the power of the mighty atom. Or, perhaps the surging oceans: Some people are saying that the ocean is an untapped resource as the waves come in and out and as the tides move in and out, that there’s some mighty power there—some mechanical genius can tap that power. And that is true. There’s power in all of these things: in electricity, in the atom, in the ocean, and so many other things perhaps we’ve never even dreamed of or thought of. But I am confident tonight that the greatest untapped resource and the greatest untapped power in the world really is still just prayer.

Wasn’t it Archimedes who said, “If you will give me a lever long enough, and you will allow me to place a fulcrum outside this world—give me a fulcrum to rest it on and the lever long enough—I can move the world”? And that’s true. That’s a principle of physics: that if you get up a lever long enough and can place a fulcrum somewhere outside the world, a man could move this entire world with his little pinky. That’s all he’d have to do is just lay it on that lever, and therefore he could move the entire world. It’s just a principle of power. But I want to tell you that the fulcrum is the Word of God, and the lever is prayer; and with it not only can we move this world; we can move heaven and hell, as well, if we learn how to pray. We can move heaven by prayer. It is a mighty untapped resource.

#### **A. Prayer Is a Resource in a Time of Need**

Now, whatever you need, dear friend, you’re going to find that need met through prayer. If you have a personal need—that is, you need some resource in your life—James said in James 4:2 that “*we have not, because we ask not.*” (James 4:2) Now I want to say, having said that, that if you need something, you ought to ask God for it. But that does not mean that prayer is a substitute for work. Now, when we pray for something, we correspondingly ought to work for the thing for which we have prayed, and we ought to cooperate with heaven. You see, divine grace and human cooperation

and responsibility work together. Now we've even sloganized it—that “God helps those who help themselves.” Now you may respond against that and think that is carnal wisdom because that verse or that little slogan—that little proverb—is not found in the Bible. But I believe it is found incipiently in the Bible—all over the Bible. God helps those who help themselves.

Let me give you an example. For example, Jesus taught us to pray in the Sermon on the Mount, “*Give us this day our daily bread.*” (Matthew 6:11) We're to pray and ask God for bread. That's a wonderful promise. Thank God for it. But the Bible also says in 2 Thessalonians 3:10, “If a man will not work”—what?—“neither should he eat,” right? (2 Thessalonians 3:10) So I can sit around on my fist, and lean back on my thumb, and say, “God, give me today my daily bread.” And if I'm too rotten lazy to go out and work, I have no right to expect God to give me today my daily bread. And so, prayer is not a substitute for work, but neither is work a substitute for prayer.

A person says, “O God, I want you to make me a strong Christian.” Well, wonderful! That's a good prayer. But if you say that you want God to make you a strong Christian, then you ought to say *amen* with church membership and Bible study, and submit yourself to the church and the spiritual means of grace and power that God has put at your disposal. People sitting around saying, “God, teach me the Bible. God, help me to understand. God, help me to be a strong Christian,” and you're not even a member of a Bible study class, and you're not faithful to your church, you want God to answer that prayer? You'd better say, *amen* with your cooperation. You say, “Lord, save the lost. Lord, save the world. Lord, save my neighbor. Lord, save my wife, my husband, my children.” All right, that's fine; that's a good prayer. But you'd better say *amen* with your money. You say, “Lord, save the world.” You'd better be a tither and give beyond the tithe. You say, “Lord, save my lost ones.” You'd better say, “My loved ones who are lost,” you'd better say *amen* with your witness, and you'd better be willing to be a part of that prayer. I believe it is sheer religious hypocrisy to be praying for someone that you're not willing to witness to. Hypocrisy: asking God to do something that you're not willing to participate in!

One time Dwight L. Moody was asked to pray for a preacher who was sick. Moody said, “I'm not going to do it.” They said, “What? You're not going to pray for your friend who is sick?” He said, “No.” He said, “He does the work of ten men and eats everything in sight, and I'm not going to pray for him until he repents for God to heal him.”

I mean, we're praying, “Lord, give me health,” and we break the laws of health. We think God is somehow going to give us a license to steal; that is, that we're going to be able to break God's laws. We don't cooperate with God about the matter of health, and still we ask God to give us health. You ask God for a job: Fine! Wonderful! But you'd better read the want ads, and you'd better get out and knock on doors. You're sitting

around saying, “Well, I don’t have a job. I prayed. God didn’t give me a job.” Get out! Get to work! Get busy! You pray for a wife, some of you guys: “O God, I need a wife.” Well, start shaving. I mean, some woman is not going to come knock on your door and say, “Hello, I’m your wife. God sent me.” Now we have not, because we ask not.” That’s true; but, you see, prayer is not a substitute for cooperating with God.

I want to give you back again that scripture: “*Give us this day our daily bread.*” (Matthew 6:11) “*If [a man will] not work, neither should he eat.*” (2 Thessalonians 3:10) You see, prayer and work go together.

I heard about a man one time who was out with his servant, the man who worked for him. They were out in a rowboat, the man and his boss. And the boss was not all that much of a Christian, but his servant was supposed to be a deep Christian. And a terrible storm came up that was about to sink the boat. And so this man, who was not so wise in the ways of the Lord, looked to his servant and said, “Sam, we’re in a predicament. It looks like our boat’s going to go under. And I want to ask you a question: Do you think we ought to pray, or do you think we ought to row?” Sam said, “Boss, let’s mix them. Let’s pray and row.”

And that’s exactly what we ought to do: We ought to pray as though it all depended upon God; we ought to work as though it all depended upon us. But when you have a need, come to God and ask Him for it.

## **B. Prayer Is a Resource in a Time of Temptation**

And prayer is the resource in time of need. Prayer is the resource in time of temptation. I spoke to a young man this week, and he said, “I love God in my heart, but I have a problem of lust.” And he said, “It’s almost uncontrollable. I don’t know how I’m going to be able to control this fire that burns in me. What am I going to do?” Well, I want to tell you, dear friend, that Jesus said in Luke 22:46, “*Rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation*”—“*Rise and pray.*” (Luke 22:46) There’s no way that a young man can live in this sex-saturated society unless he spends time on his knees and stays clean and pure before God. Friend, prayer in the time of temptation is going to keep us clean and pure.

## **C. Prayer Is a Resource in a Time of Discouragement**

Some of you are discouraged. You’ve got problems, and you’ve got burdens, but prayer is the resource in time of discouragement. The Bible says in Philippians 4:6, “*Be careful for nothing;*”—that is, “Don’t worry about anything”—“*but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep*”—literally, “shall guard”—“*your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*” (Philippians 4:6–7)

*What a friend we have in Jesus,*

*All our sins and griefs to bear!  
What a privilege to carry  
Everything to God in prayer!  
O what peace we often forfeit,  
O what needless pain we bear,  
All because we do not carry  
Everything to God in prayer.*

—JOSEPH M. SCRIVEN

You want to win the lost to Jesus? Friend, pray—pray! You say, “Can we pray for the lost?” Not only can we, but must we. Paul said, “*Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.*” (Romans 10:1) We need to intercede for our lost. You have loved ones that are lost. Soak them in prayer. Saturate them in prayer.

Monica was the mother of Augustine. We know him today as St. Augustine. But he was a wild and wicked young man. This was his testimony. He said, concerning his sin, “But in spite of all of the floods of tears, at sixteen years of age I took a concubine.” That is, his mother had been praying for him with tears, but he said, “When I was sixteen, I took a concubine.” That was the old-fashioned way of saying, “I moved in with a girl”: “I took a concubine. And when I was less than twenty, I was the father of an illegitimate child.” Now this is the man that we know as St. Augustine, living in a state of non-marriage when he was sixteen; his mother, a godly woman. When he was twenty he had an illegitimate child—“but at the floods of my mother’s tears continued. And then one day, after hearing the mighty Ambrose preach, the mighty conviction fell while Monica still prayed. I fell under a fig tree and confessed my sins to God, and I opened the book and there was the Word, not in revelry, not in envy and strife, but, ‘*Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.*’” (Romans 13:14) And Augustine was born of God and has blessed the entire world. Why? Because he had a mother who prayed and prayed and prayed and prayed with tears, and would not stop praying. I’m telling you that prayer is a mighty untapped resource.

Now, if we’re going to pray therefore, and tap this resource, what must we do, and how shall we do it? I want to give you some suggestions, and these are simple things. This is not a profound sermon, but it is profoundly important. And the things that I have to say to you are very true, so in that sense, it will be profound.

## **I. Learn to Pray About All of Your Life**

The very first thing I want to say to you is develop the habit about praying concerning all of your life. Don’t just divide things up into the sacred and the secular, and you pray

about the sacred, but you don't pray about the secular. Don't divide things up into the big things and the little things as to where you pray about the big things, but you do not pray about the little things. Remember the verse that I've already given you in Philippians 4:6? *"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication...let your requests be made known unto God."* (Philippians 4:6)

Now, friend, if you desire something, you have every right to pray for it. Mark 11:24: *"Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."* (Mark 11:24) Anything—anything—that you have a right to want, you have a right to pray for. Did that get into your heart? Anything that you have a right to want you have a right to pray for. It is a sin to want anything that you can't ask God for. And if there's something that you can't pray about, that's a pretty good test you have no business doing it. For example, it would be hard to pray for a fifth of Jack Daniels, wouldn't it? Sure! I mean, it would be hard to pray that God would give you a ticket to a rock concert, see? Anything—anything—that you have a right to want, you have a right to pray about. So you pray about all things: the material things and the spiritual things, the great matters and the little matters.

As a matter of fact, if you want something, and you know that God doesn't want you to have it, tell God about that, too. Ask Him to fix your want. You can even pray about wanting the wrong things. You might as well tell Him about it; He already knows it. I mean, don't try to hide it from Him. Just come to God and tell Him, "Lord, I want this, and it's wrong." You can even pray about the things that you want that are wrong and ask God to deal with that desire in your heart. Learn to pray about all matters in your life.

Now you say, "Well, God's not interested in those little things." Well, friend, can you imagine anything that's big to God? Even the things that are big to you are little to Him. You've never really come to God with anything that's not a little thing, when you really think about it from His viewpoint. So don't get all concerned about whether it's too big or too little. God is a God of infinite strength and infinite knowledge. And the same sun up there in the sky that holds the mighty planets in orbit ripens a little bunch of grapes like it had nothing else to do; and the same God that runs this mighty universe is concerned as to whether or not you can thread that needle. He knows about you. He knows not a hair in your head falls to the ground but what He knows about it. *"The very hairs of your head are all numbered."* (Matthew 10:30; Luke 12:7) The little sparrow—His eye is on the sparrow. (Matthew 10:29; Luke 12:6) Learn to pray about everything. *"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."* (Philippians 4:6) If you have a desire in your heart, if you want it, it's all right to ask God to help you to have it.

## II. Learn to Pray in the Will of God

Now, the second thing: Learn to pray in the will of God. I want you to turn with me, if you will, to 1 John 5:14. And this is a scripture that I'm certain that all of us are familiar with, but certainly we need to read it again: *"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."* (1 John 5:14–15)

Now, successful praying is for those who love the Lord, who are those who are surrendered to His will. Prayer is not some way to change God's mind. What I mean by that is this: that while prayer moves the heart of God, and while prayer motivates God to do things He would not do unless you pray, prayer is not some way of talking God into doing what He does not want to do. *Prayer is not bending God's will to fit your will; prayer is finding the will of God and surrendering to it.*

You see, there is a principle. Down in the Atlantic Ocean, off the coast of Florida, there's a place out there in the ocean they call the Devil's Triangle or the Bermuda Triangle, and there's all kind of folklore about planes and ships that fly over that area or sail into that area that are forever lost and immobilized, and so forth. Well, that is what they call it the Bermuda Triangle or the Devil's Triangle. I want to give you the divine triangle of prayer. The Bible says, *"Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things."* (Romans 11:36) Of Him: Our prayer starts from heaven. Through Him: We pray in the name of Jesus. To Him—are all things. That's the divine triangle. And, by the way, I don't want to say too much on this, because I'm working on a sermon on it, and I don't want to preempt it and just eat the heart of that message; but what I'm trying to say is, dear friend, that *the prayer that gets to heaven is the prayer that starts in heaven.* *"Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things."* And the way to pray in the will of God is to learn the truth of that divine triangle, that we know the will of God.

Well, how can I know the will of God? How can I know what God wants me to have? Well, I must spend time with God. I don't run into God's presence with a shopping list and expect to have my prayers answered if I've not been spending time with God. Didn't Jesus say in John 15:7, *"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you?"* *"If ye abide in me"*—to abide in Jesus. (John 15:7)

He's already used the illustration of the branch and the vine: *"I am the vine, ye are the branches."* (John 15:5) Now, what does a branch do to abide in the vine? Not only is there union—that is, the branch is attached to the vine—but there is communion. That's what it means to abide. The branch receives its life, its strength, its sustenance from the vine. Now Jesus said, *"If ye abide in me"*—that is, if you're saved; but more than union, communion—*"and [I] abide in you"*—*"my words abide in you"*—*"ye shall ask what ye*



*will, and it shall be done unto you.*” (John 15:7) Now to abide in the Lord means to have time alone with Him.

Do you like to be around a person who does all of the talking? You know, somebody says an egotist is somebody who talks about himself so much that you don't have time to talk about yourself. There are people like that, and they're not very pleasant people to be around. As a matter of fact, if you want people to think you're a wonderful conversationalist, don't say much; just listen. Pay attention. Nod your head. Say, "That's right," or, "How wonderful!" or, "Tell me more." And they'll say, "That's the most interesting person I ever spoke with." You won't be saying much at all; you'll just be listening. That's true. And what the world needs is more sympathetic ears. I don't want to digress on that but to say that we need to let God speak to us, not just run into His presence and say, "Listen, Lord: Your servant speaks," but, "Speak, Lord: Your servant listens."

And we need not only to listen to God, but we need to love His Word. *"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you..."* You remember what the psalmist said concerning that man who's like a tree planted by the rivers of water? The Bible says, *"His delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."* (Psalm 1:2–3) Why? Because God's Word is in him. He knows the will of God. He knows the ways of God, and he's able to pray, therefore, in the will of God. And so, learn to pray about all of life. Learn to pray in the will of God.

You know, it's so amazing when God just sort of tells you what to pray. I one time had an experience when Joyce and I lived at Merritt Island. We'd gone out to lunch and I took my billfold out to pay for the lunch. And, evidently, I left my billfold on the counter somewhere, because when I came home, after a while, I reached back to my hip pocket where the billfold was, and it wasn't there. So you know what you do: You retrace your steps. Just think: "Now, what did I do? Where could it be?" I said, "Lord, help me to find that billfold." I had in it credit cards. I had in it a driver's license. I had in it important papers. I had in it an old Roman coin that a little fellow who loved me had given me. He was a coin collector, and he said, "Pastor, this coin dates back to Bible times." It was a Roman coin. It was in there. And I had a few dollars in there—three or four dollars. And that was the billfold.

And so I went back to the restaurant. They said, "No sir, we haven't seen it," and so forth. I don't know who got it or who'd seen it or what. I never have found that out. But I thought about it, and I pondered on it, and I wondered, and I worried, and I thought. And then I can just remember the spot when I was driving along there on North Tropical Trail in Merritt Island where I said to God, "God, I want you to forgive me. I've been more

concerned about a lost billfold than I have a lost soul. And I'm sorry, God, about that. I commit this matter to you, and I refuse to worry about it anymore. I just commit it to you. Thank you, Lord."

That evening just before I went to sleep, I had a strange impulse. I never had one like it before or since. But the Lord said, "Adrian, I want you to ask something of me." Now He didn't say it in audible words, but I felt this impulse in my heart. He said, "I want you to ask me to show you where that billfold is, and I want you to ask me to show you in a dream." Now, friend, I don't take a lot of stock in people's dreams. One of the drawbacks of being a pastor is that people frequently come to you and say, "I dreamed thus and such. What do you think it meant?" And, generally, they're kind of flaky people that ask you that—not always, in case you ask me. But people are coming to you, you know, and they say, "Well, I had a dream. What do you think that dream meant?" And, you know, I don't put a lot of stock in dreams and visions and ecstasies. And so this was strange for me that I would feel this impulse. But I felt a distinct impulse in my heart to pray this, and I prayed it—prayed it out loud, even verbalized it: "Lord, I want you to show me in a dream where my billfold is. Thank you. Amen," just before I went to sleep.

I dreamed about that billfold in my dream. I had a dream or a vision—I don't know what. But in the middle of the night, while I was asleep, I saw my billfold. It was in a mailbox: one of those big mailboxes, the blue kind with the oval top that says, "US Mail" on the side. And I could see it. In my dream, I was like Superman. I had X-ray vision, and I could see right through that mailbox. I could see my billfold in that mailbox. I could see it was open like this, leaning up against the side of the mailbox. I could see right through the billfold. I could see the Roman coin in there. I could see the cards. And I could see there was no money in it, lying up against the side of the mailbox, right on through the inside of that mailbox.

I awakened the next morning and went to my office. The first call I had was from the postmaster. He said, "Mr. Rogers, we have your billfold." I said, "Don't you tell me; I'll tell you: It was in a mailbox." He said, "That's right." I said, "Don't you tell me; I'll tell you: There's no money in it." He said, "That's right." But I said, "The credit cards are in it." "That's right." "And there's an old Roman coin in it." He said, "That's right. You may come and pick it up."

Now, friend, I wish that I could give you a lot of stories like that about how definitely God has answered my prayer. And to me that was nothing beyond the miraculous, but the important thing about that prayer to me is this: that I believe that God the Holy Spirit dictated that prayer. I believe I would never even have thought to ask God to do something like that. But I do believe that *the prayer that gets to heaven is the prayer that starts in heaven.*

Now that's a dramatic answer to prayer. I believe it was a specific answer to prayer.

But I do believe that we need to pray in the will of God. Now I believe that God every now and then so dramatically and so specifically and so intricately answers a prayer just to give us that little extra push, that little extra identification of courage to help us to pray. And I really believe if I lived closer to the Lord, there would be more things like that happening in my life, and in your life, and in our lives, as God supernaturally, marvelously, wondrously answers prayer, as we find that divine triangle: *“For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things.”* (Romans 11:36) Now the important thing is not that I got the billfold back, but the important thing is that I saw there is a God in heaven who is able to answer prayers so specifically, so clearly, so plainly, there can be no ifs, ands, and buts about the fact that God has done it.

### III. Learn to Pray in Faith

Now we're to pray in the will of God. Now we're to pray in faith. Not only should we make a habit of praying about everything; not only should we seek to know the will of God when we pray; but when we pray, we must pray in faith. Now I want you to turn to Hebrews 11:6 with me for a moment. Now the Bible says, *“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”* (Hebrews 11:6) Now this verse tells us two things, primarily. Number one: By faith man gives God pleasure. *“Without faith it is impossible to please him.”* If you want to please God, the best way to please God is to believe God. By faith man gives God pleasure. Now, just turn it around: Through faith God gives man treasure. God *“is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”* How? Through faith. *“Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”* Faith is not just simply believing that God exists, but believing that God is a God that answers the prayers of those that diligently seek Him.

Now we must pray in faith. We have a little saying, “Pray, believe, and you'll receive; pray and doubt, you'll do without.” Amen? It's just that plain. *“What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.”* (Mark 11:24) Hebrews 12:1–2 tells us really how to have that kind of faith. Now, look at it: *“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and the finisher of our faith.”* (Hebrews 12:1–2) Now the writer of Hebrews has been talking about faith, and now he gives us in a capsule a recipe for faith: how to have faith.

Now, what is it?

### A. Saturate Yourself with the Word of God

First of all, you must be saturated with the Word of God. You see that word *wherefore*? The word *wherefore* refers back to chapter 11, and all of chapter 11 is filled with promises and admonitions and illustrations of faith. That is, on the basis of the Word of God, the promises of God, the stories in the Word of God, the record of God's revelation, God's working with His people—on the basis of that—he's saying we're to have faith. So if you would be a person of faith, get into this book. There's no way that you can be weak in the Bible and strong in faith, because the Bible says in Romans 10:17, "*Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*" (Romans 10:17) If you're mighty in the Word, that's going to enable you to be mighty in faith. So if you want faith, saturate yourself with the Scriptures.

### B. Separate Yourself from Sin

Secondly, separate yourself from sin. He says, "*Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us*" (Hebrews 12:1)—that is, "that entangles us and trips us up." That's what the word *beset* means; it has the idea of wrapping around one's feet. That is, if you're going to run a race, you don't want to be all ensnared and entangled with things wrapped around your legs. That's what the weight of sin does. So not only must I be saturated with the scriptures; I must be separated from sin. I must lay these things aside. There's nothing more damning, more debilitating, more stultifying of faith in the heart than sin in the heart. Lay aside these things. It is not without significance that the Bible links repentance and faith side by side. And if you're having difficulty with faith, try repentance; for the Bible says, "*[Beware] lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.*" (Hebrews 3:12) Unbelief comes out of a wicked heart. And if you're having trouble believing God, it is because there's sin in your life.

### C. Be Activated by the Spirit

So, number one: Be saturated with the Scripture. Number two: Be separated from sin. Number three: Be activated by the Spirit. Notice what he says: "*And let us run with patience the race that is set before us.*" (Hebrews 12:1) Do you know the difference between belief and faith? *Faith is belief with legs on it.* It is not just believing that God can do something, but it is letting the Holy Spirit of God so activate us that we move out. I've already mentioned this: that we pray and work. We ask God for something. Then we enter into it, and we let the Holy Spirit teach us to run the race. Trust God. Now, do it with your finances. Do it with your witness. Do it with your life. Get busy. Get active, and you will develop the faith that you have. Just as an athlete becomes strong by running, then you're going to develop your spiritual strength by running the good race of faith.

#### **D. Dedicate It to the Savior**

Now, here's what he says—look. First of all, saturate it with the Word of God. Secondly, separate it from the world, from sin. Thirdly, activate it by the Spirit. And, fourthly, dedicate it to the Savior. He says we're to be *"looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."* (Hebrews 12:2) Spend time knowing Jesus, loving Jesus. Don't try to make yourself believe. You can't make yourself believe. You can't have faith just by clenching your fists, and gritting your teeth, and saying, "I'm going to believe." But know Jesus. Look to Jesus. Understand Jesus. The Bible says here we are to be *"looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."* Faith comes by seeing Jesus and going on seeing Him. See Jesus: who He is, what He's done, what He has promised. Know Him. Learn about Him from the Word of God, and you're going to find that faith is automatically there. It is the byproduct of a life spent with the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **IV. Learn to Pray in Jesus' Name**

Now I want to say one last thing, and my time will be gone: Learn to pray in Jesus's name—learn to pray in Jesus's name. In John 14:13–14, Jesus said, *"And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it."* (John 14:13–14) Now, what does it mean to ask in Jesus's name? Does it mean that when I finish praying, I say, "In Jesus' name. Amen"? No, that's not what it means. Now there's nothing wrong with praying that way. There's nothing wrong with saying, "In Jesus's name. Amen." I do it frequently, most all of the time, when I pray. But I want to tell you, so far as I know, there is no prayer in the Bible that ends with that little phrase. And even the model prayer that the Lord Jesus taught us to pray—*"Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done,"* (Luke 11:2) and so forth—does not end with this little phrase, "In Jesus's name. Amen"—the model prayer. So there's nothing wrong with praying that way, but these are not supposed to be little words necessarily tacked on to the end of a prayer.

Now, don't get me wrong. I'm not saying not to pray in Jesus's name. If you like to say, "In Jesus's name" when you finish praying, fine, wonderful, good. As a matter of fact, I think very good. But that is not primarily what this means.

##### **A. As His Disciple**

First of all, it means that you've got to be His disciple. You see, Jesus said in John 16, *"Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name."* (John 16:24) That is, "Before this, you weren't my disciples." You have got to come as His disciple, knowing Jesus. If you try to pray in Jesus's name and you're not a Christian, you're just forging His name into your

prayers. You have no right to expect your prayers to be answered if you're not a Christian.

## **B. For His Glory**

Now, not only must they be as His disciple, but they must be for His glory. He says, *"Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive..."* (John 16:24)—*"that the Father may be glorified in the Son."* (John 14:13) Now, when you're asking in Jesus's name, you're asking for His glory. That's the reason that so many prayers are not answered. We may say, "Lord, in Jesus' name, help me to win the beauty contest." Well, I mean, is that going to give Him glory? Well, if you can, if indeed you might say, "It will give me a platform from which to witness for you," or something, and it's not an immodest or ungodly thing, perhaps so. But not necessarily so. It might just be something you want to consume upon your lusts so you can strut your stuff and feed your ego, see? And the fact that you say, "In Jesus' name"—you're not really praying in Jesus's name. A prayer in Jesus' name is that the Father will be glorified through the Son: "This is something, Lord, for your honor, for your glory."

## **C. With His Authority**

I'll tell you something else: Not only does it mean I pray as His disciple; not only does it mean I pray in His glory; but it also means I pray with His authority. Just like we say, "in the name of the law," we mean in the authority of the law. You see, I have authority over all the powers of hell. Jesus gave to me the power of attorney. I have His name. I can use His name. I am His servant. I am His steward. And when I know His will, I can bring the name of Jesus into this matter. And when I say, "in the name of Jesus," and I'm praying for His glory, as His disciple, in His will, I have all heaven behind me. And how wonderful it is to pray in the name of Jesus!

## **Conclusion**

Folks, I honestly believe that the greatest untapped resource in my life, our lives, your life, and anybody's life, is prayer. And we ought to say with the disciples, *"Lord, teach us to pray."* (Luke 11:1) The saintly Samuel Chadwick said this: "The one concern of the devil is to keep Christians from praying. He fears nothing from our prayerless studies, prayerless work, prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when we pray." I was thinking about old Daniel, who had rather spend a night with the lions than miss a day in prayer. That's why he was thrown into the lions' den: because he refused to miss his time with God in prayer.

# The Power of Prevailing Prayer

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: April 4, 1993**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 7:7–11**

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## Introduction

**M**atthew chapter 7, and we come today in our journey through the Sermon on the Mount under the title, “Building on the Rock,” we come today to Matthew chapter 7 and verse 7. Look at it. It’s one of the grand promises in all of the Bible. It tells us how to get our prayer answered. And I’ll say it again. The time will come, if the time is not already here, when the most important thing for you on this earth will be for God to answer your prayer.

Now these are the words of Jesus. And if you cannot believe these words, you have no right to believe you’re saved. For the same Bible that promises salvation promises answered prayer. And if you cannot believe one promise, why should you believe the other? Look at it. Look at it clearly and plainly. Our Lord says, *“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?”* (Matthew 7:7–11)

Dr. C. Roy Angell used to be a noted pastor in Miami, Florida, when I was a boy. One of the things that Dr. Angell would do in his preaching was to tell stories. He was a great illustrator of messages with stories. And he told a story one time of a shepherd boy who was out tending his sheep. And he happened to look down, and the shepherd boy saw the most beautiful flower he believed he had ever seen. He got down on his hands and knees, and looked at that flower. And it was so beautiful that he dug it out of the earth, root and all, and cupped it in his hands, and brought it up closer to his face to look at it. When he did that, there was a mountain nearby, and it seemed that the entire mountain would open up, as if there were doors in the mountain on great oil hinges, and the doors swung open, and the sunlight went into the side of that mountain into that great vault in the mountain. And the boy looked in there, and he saw all kinds of treasures: gold and silver, and diamonds and rubies and sapphires. He had never seen anything like that. He went in there and set the flower down. And he began to gather that treasure: rubies and diamonds and emeralds and gold. His arms were full of treasure.

He was just a shepherd boy. And now he is wealthy. And he takes the treasure and begins to make his way out of the mountain, and he hears a voice that says, “Don’t forget the best.” But he has the gold. He has the silver. He has the rubies, the emeralds, the sapphires. He looks around. Is there is there something he didn’t see? Is there anything better than this? No, he’s got the best. And he starts out again. And the voice says, “Don’t forget the best.” He looks around one more time. What could be better than this? And he walks out again into the sunlight. And when he does, the great doors in that mountainside close and disappear. And he looks in his hands, and he has nothing but dirt. And the voice says, “The best was the flower. That was the key to the vault. And you left it locked inside the vault.”

That’s only a story. Of course, it’s not true. Just a parable, just a story, just a fable. But, friend, the best, the key to the vault of all of God’s treasure, is prayer. Don’t forget the best. Now you’re gathering treasure every place. But the key to the vault is prayer. Jesus said, “*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.*”

Three things I want you to see today.

## **I. A Promise to Claim**

First of all, as we look at this passage, there is a promise to claim. Our Lord says, if we will ask, if we will seek, if we will knock, it shall be given unto us. There is no substitute for prayer.

Now, if you lose a leg, you can get an artificial leg. If there is a substitute for communication—if your telephone is not adequate, perhaps there is a fax machine; or if you don’t telephone, tell-a-woman—somehow you can communicate. There is a substitute there. If you need one thing in this life, you can perhaps substitute something else. But there is no



substitute for prayer. Not eloquence, not intellect, not energy, not enthusiasm, not intention: there is no substitute for prayer.

I believe the greatest unused and untapped resource in the world is prayer. If somehow we could harness lightning, or somehow tap into the resources of the mighty tides of the ocean as they ebb and flow! The greatest untapped unused resource is not some use of atomic energy; it is prayer—prevailing prayer. What fools we are, if we don't pray!

Why the poverty of so many Christians? Why the powerlessness of so many Christians? There is one answer—and it is prayerlessness. I don't have a failure in my life but what it is a prayer failure. I don't have a sin in my life but what proper prayer would have avoided it. I don't have a need in my life that cannot be met through prayer—prevailing prayer.

Now, why does God want us to pray, anyway? You know, we've already studied in the Sermon on the Mount that our Heavenly Father knows what we have need of before we ask Him. (Matthew 6:8) So, why ask Him? Why ask God to do what He already wants to do? And why ask God to do something for us, when He already knows that we have need of it? That's a good question. Why has our Lord commanded prayer? Why?

Well, when we pray, we don't pray to inform God: God already knows. We don't pray to instruct God, because God has a will. What we do is not inform God, or instruct God, but we invite God. We invite God when we pray.

Now, what does that mean? Well, you see, God wants to do some things in us. And God wants to do those things through prayer. Why does God tell us to pray?

#### **A. The Fellowship Factor**

First of all, there is the fellowship factor. Remember there in John the fifteenth chapter, Jesus said, *"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, then ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you"*—John 15:7. *"If ye abide in me"*: what does our Lord want us to do? Does God just simply want to give us things or does God want us to have fellowship with Him? God wants us to have fellowship with Him.

And so therefore God says, "You're going to pray. And prayer is the way of you abiding in me, and me abiding in you." And that way, you and God do it together. God could do it without you. You can't do it without Him. But He will not do it without you, because God wants you to have that fellowship with Him.

You remember awhile back I told you about somebody coming to pick me up in a private airplane to go someplace, and we were sitting up there side by side in the cockpit. I don't know anything about flying an airplane. But he said, "Do you want to fly this thing?" I said, "If I can. If you'll tell me what to do." So he said, "Do *thus-and-such*." And so here I am flying that airplane

across the United States. Now he's sitting right there: his hands are on the control, and my hands are on the control. He could do it without me, but I could not do it without him. But it was a lot of fun to fly that airplane. And as I was flying that airplane, this man and myself were having wonderful fellowship.

You see, friend, when you pray, and God answers, you abide in Him, and He abides in you. Together—we are laborers together with God. Second Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 1 says we are *“workers together with him.”* (2 Corinthians 6:1)

## **B. The Development Factor**

And so, there is the fellowship factor. That's one reason you pray. There is the development factor. There is nothing that will grow you as a Christian more than prayer. You see, when you abide in the Lord Jesus Christ, and He abides in you, then you are growing as you pray. Have you ever wondered why God doesn't answer your prayer immediately? Because He wants you to grow some more.

Here is a boy that asks a girl for a date. She looks at him, and she says, “Well, he doesn't use good manners. He's not courteous. He doesn't dress neatly. He's got dirt under his fingernails. And there are other things about him. His shoes are not shined. And she says, “Well, I just don't think I want a date, thank you. I'm busy.” “Well,” he wonders, “why didn't she go out with me? I wonder what it could be?” He asks a friend, “Why do you think that Susie would not date me?” He says, “You want me to be honest with you?” “Well, yes.” “You've got bad breath.” “Me?” “You've got bad breath. You ask me? I'm going to tell you.” “Well,” he said, “I didn't know I have bad breath.” And so he goes in, and, you know, he drinks a glass of iced scope, and he brushes his teeth, and then he asks again. And she still says no.

He goes to his friend again: “Why do you think she wouldn't go out with me?” He says, “Well, look at the way that you are dressed. Look how your shirt is dirty.” “Is that shirt dirty?” “Why, of course! Go look in the mirror.” And on and on this goes. And one day he comes—he looks sweet; he smells sweet; he is sweet; and he says to her, “Please go out with me.” She says, “I believe I will.” And they have a wonderful date.

Now, that's a small illustration. But, you know, sometimes we come to God, and we say, “God, please do this.” But there is something God wants us to do first. Prayer is the way of developing our lives. And we ask God for something, and God doesn't give it to us; and we go back and say, “Why didn't God answer my prayer?” And the Holy Spirit says, “There's sin in your life.” The Holy Spirit says, “You've been selfish; you've been carnal.”

### C. The Dependency Factor

You see, there is the fellowship factor in prayer. There is the development factor in prayer: God is growing us through prayer. And, of course, there is the dependency factor in prayer. Jesus said, in John 15, *“Without me ye can do nothing.”* (John 15:5) You see, if God were to answer our prayers just automatically, then there would be no growth. But if we never had to pray, there would be no dependency. Prayer is God’s way of bonding us to Him.

## II. A Process to Follow

And so there is a promise to claim—a wonderful promise, a wise promise: Ask, seek, and knock. But, secondly—listen—not only is there a promise to claim; there is a process to follow. Have you ever noticed these verbs: ask, seek, find? That’s a process; that is an intensification: from asking, to seeking, to knocking. Ask, seek, knock: *“Ask, you receive; seek, you find; knock, it shall be opened unto you.”* That is an intensification and an escalation. So, there is both a promise, and a process, in this verse. The promise is that God will hear us. But there is a process of asking, seeking, and knocking.

### A. “Ask”: A Desire Expressed

Now, let’s look at the first one: asking. That is, you express your desire. There is something you want. You come to God, and you ask Him for it. Do you know, the greatest problem in prayer is not in unanswered prayer; it is unasked prayer. Most of us don’t even get to the asking part. And James says, *“You have not, because you ask not.”* (James 4:2) Unoffered prayer is not only a tragedy; it’s a sin. *“God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you”* (1 Samuel 12:23): that’s what Samuel said—*“God forbid that I should sin...in ceasing to pray.”* Over and over again, the Bible not only invites us to pray; the Bible commands us to pray. The Bible says of the Lord Jesus, in Luke 18:1, *“And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.”* The Lord Jesus said, in Mark 14, verse 38, *“Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation.”* (Mark 14:38) Every time you sin, it is because you’ve failed to pray as you ought. *“Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.”* The Apostle Paul said, *“Be careful for nothing;”—that is, “Don’t worry about anything”—“but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”* (Philippians 4:6)

The reason you’re so full of care and worry right now is you’ve not truly learned how to pray. In everything, by prayer and supplication, you are to ask God for everything that you need. You know a good test of anything, whether it’s right or wrong for you to have it, is: can

you ask God for it? Now, if you don't feel you can ask God for it, you really don't have any business with it.

You see, we're to pray about anything. If it's wrong to ask God for it, it's wrong to have it or to do it. Don't divide your life up into the secular and the sacred. Don't say, "Well, there are certain things I can pray about, and certain things I don't pray about, because God's not interested in those things." Oh, no. Can you imagine Jesus living that way? You see, to a Christian, all things are sacred. Every day is a holy day. And every object is a proper object of prayer. Pray about everything.

You say, "Well, the little things? I just pray about the big things." Well, can you imagine anything big to God? Or can you imagine anything too small for God to be interested in? Yes, pray about the big things. Yes, pray when your child is sick. You can also pray for a parking place. God is a God who is over all. God knows your needs.

You say, "Well, what if I want a wrong thing? Should I pray about that?" Yes. God already knows you want a wrong thing. Tell Him you want a wrong thing, and tell Him it's wrong for you to want it, and ask Him to fix your *wanter*. Listen. Pray about all things. "*In every thing by prayer...*"

#### **B. "Seek": A Discovery Experienced**

But God can't answer, unless you ask. God can't answer, unless you ask. "You have not, because you ask not." And so, first of all, he says, "Ask." That is a desire expressed. But then, he says, "Seek." And that is a discovery experienced—because, you see, many times we ask for the wrong thing. Many times, we don't know what to ask for. Many times, we are not in an asking position. Many times, there are things that are lost, or unknown to us. And so, true prayer, true asking, is linked with seeking. It may be the will, the purpose, of God that we need to seek.

You remember what James says? "You ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss: you ask for the wrong thing." (James 4:3) And so, sometimes we need to seek the will of God. We need to say, "Dear God, is this your will?" Sometimes we need to seek the very presence of God. God wants to do something *in* us before He can do something *through* us. And James, in that classic passage on prayer, in James chapter 4, verse 8, says, "*Draw nigh to God, and [God] will draw nigh to you.*" (James 4:8)

Maybe it's the presence of God that we need to seek as we pray. Maybe it's the power of God—because James also said, in James 5, verse 16, "*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*" (James 5:16) And that word *effectual* means "powerful, stretched-out" prayer.

You know, we pray so many little giddy, frivolous, *now-I-lay-me-down-to-sleep*-type prayers. Many of us pray, and fifteen minutes later we could not even tell someone what we asked God for, if our life depended on it—because we do not pray with seriousness; we do not pray with intention.

One day a lady called me, and she said, “Pastor, I need you to come over to my house. I’ve got a prayer burden, and I want you to pray with me.” I said, “I’ll be there.” I went to her house. I said, “What is the prayer burden?” She said, “Pastor, it is my son. He is a drunkard. I want you to pray with me for my son.” And then she said, “And his wife has just been diagnosed with cancer. My son is a drunkard. My daughter-in-law has been diagnosed with cancer. And I want you, my pastor, please, to pray with me.” I said, “I will.” She said, “I’ve asked my son to come over.” I said, “Wonderful.”

So the three of us were there. The drunkard son, the mother and grandmother, who was concerned, and the pastor. And we got down on our knees and began to pray. And she prayed, and I prayed. And then she prayed. And then I prayed again. And that boy, that man, I say, he was, oh, maybe thirty-five. He looked at me, and said, “Pray, preacher. You ain’t praying.” I thought I was praying. I thought I was doing a good job. But he said to me, “Preacher, pray! You ain’t praying.” Well, I think I got a little louder and faster. I thought maybe it had something to do with the tone or the rhythm, or maybe I needed to groan a little more, do something. I’ve never had anybody challenge me like that. He said, “You ain’t praying, preacher.”

So I prayed a little more. And then I looked up, and she was gone. The grandmother was gone. She wasn’t in the room. I thought, “Just me and this boy here, and he doesn’t think I’m praying.” And then I heard another sound in another room. And so I just stopped, since I wasn’t praying anyway, and got up and looked in that other room. And there she was, spread eagle on the carpet, her face down in the carpet. And I just paused to listen to her praying.

I heard her, I listened to her, I saw her, as she went up through the skies, pushed open the gates, walked down those golden streets, right to the throne room, right past the torn veil. I heard her walk right in and get hold of the altar. And I listened to her pray. And I heard the anguish of her heart. I heard her prayer. I heard her faith. I heard her do warfare with Satan. I heard her remind God of His promises. I heard her pour out her heart, her life, almost to death for that boy. I heard her pray. And I think maybe, perhaps sometime in the past, that boy had heard his mama pray, and that’s the reason he was saying to me, “Preacher, you ain’t praying.”

### C. **“Knock”: A Determination Expressed**

I learned a lesson about prayer that day, about what it means to get hold of God in prayer. That, my friend, is not only asking; it is seeking prayer. *“The effectual fervent prayer of a*

*righteous man availeth much.*" (James 5:16) But not only are we to ask— that's a desire expressed; not only are we to seek—that is a discovery experienced, as we find what we seek for; but Jesus said we are to knock—and that, my dear friend, is a determination expressed. To *knock* means that we will not stop until we know that we have the thing that we have asked of God or God tells us no. *"Knock, and it shall be opened unto you."*

Now, there are many stories in the Bible about knocking—knocking. As a matter of fact, this same passage that we have here in Matthew is expounded on in the Gospel of Luke, and Luke tells us a little bit more about what it means to knock. I want you to turn to Luke chapter 11 now—Matthew, Mark, Luke—just turn to Luke chapter 11, and look with me, if you will, for a moment, in verse 5. Jesus is giving a parable. And here is what Jesus said: *"And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves;"*—that is, three loaves of bread—*"for friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer him and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut,"*—you see, a door is what you knock on—*"and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity"*—that is, his persistence—*"he will rise and give him as many as he needeth."* Now that's the parable. Now, look in verse 9: *"And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."* Now, there is no doubt in my mind that this is the illustration for knocking right here. *"For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."* (Luke 11:5–10)

Now you have to understand something about Bible times. In Bible times, it was absolutely, totally, unthinkable that a friend would come to you, and you would not give him lodging, and you would not give him food. Hospitality is of the highest premium in the Middle East. And so, here's a man, he has a friend on a journey, and says, "James, may I stay at your house tonight?" And he says, "Why, we're so happy to have you, John, to come and stay. You're so welcome. Come right in, and the wife will fix us something to eat." And he goes in to the wife, and he says, "John has come, and he's going to be staying with us tonight. And fix us something to eat." She says, "We haven't got anything." "Oh," he says, "don't say anything. I'll get it." So he says, "John, just sit down, and we're going to get you something. It's all right. Just sit there. Here's your bed right here." And he goes next door to his friend Matthew: "Matthew!" It's about midnight now. Nobody answers. Nobody answers. "Who is it?" "James." "What do you want?" "I need some bread." "Hey, man, don't bother me. Do you know what time it is?" "Matthew, listen. I've got to have some... Man, listen." "Don't bother me. I'm in bed."

Now, let me tell you how the houses of that day were built. Many of them had stables underneath. The animals came in at night and stayed in the house, and the body heat of those animals helped to heat the whole house—and fragrance the house also. And they were underneath. And the children would sleep upstairs. They didn't have big houses upstairs. They had everybody in one room: you wake up one person, you wake up everybody.

And the locks of that day were very complicated—oriental locks. You didn't just put in a key. I mean, to get up, you have to go downstairs through the animals; you've got to wake up everybody; you've got to get out of bed and all of this. He says, "Look, don't bother me. The children are asleep. Now, you wake the baby, you're going to pay." "Listen. I've got to have some bread." "Oh," he says, "just be quiet. I'm coming. I'm coming. What do you want? Help yourself, and get out of here."

Now he didn't do it because he was his friend; he just did it because this man would not take *no* for an answer. That's what Jesus said. That is persistence in prayer. How many of us pray that way? Jesus said, "Ask, seek, knock." "Keep on asking," is literally what it says. It's in the present tense: "Keep on seeking. Keep on knocking."

So many times we had these little take-it-or-leave-it prayers. Again, remember the Lord Jesus told, in Luke 18, about a widow. She went to an unjust judge, and she asked the judge that he might adjudicate the thing rightly. And the judge didn't fear God or man. He was an atheist and a selfish lout. And he wouldn't vindicate this widow. But she keeps coming and saying, "I need to see the judge." She keeps asking. She keeps talking. She keeps coming. And Jesus said, "After a while this judge will give her what she needs, just to get her off his back." Now Jesus' illustration is that, if an unrighteous judge will do that, how much more will a righteous God hear our prayers—if we persist. Jesus is not saying that God is like an unrighteous judge. He is saying God is *not* like an unrighteous judge. So, if an unrighteous judge finally will do something to get somebody off his back, how much more shall your Heavenly Father!—but to those who persist. (Luke 18:1–8)

Yes, God wants us to persist—because God is doing something in us and through us. And all through the Bible you find the Lord Jesus Christ teaching persistence and prayer. Whether you understand it or not, the Bible teaches it.

You remember that Syrophenician woman who came from the place that we call Lebanon today? She was down there, and she had a little daughter that was demon-possessed. She came to Jesus, and she said, "Jesus, please—please, Jesus—do something for my daughter." And the Lord Jesus said, "Why it's not fitting, it's not proper, that I would take the bread that is

for children and give it to dogs. I didn't come to you. I came to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

What an insult! Seemingly, He used the word for "dogs" which meant "household pet, a little puppy." "I can't take the children's bread and give it to dogs." She said, "Oh, that's right, Lord." But she said, "Oh, Lord,"—listen—"the dogs get the crumbs that fall under the table"—and she used another word for "dog" which means "mangy, yellow, back alley cur." She applied that to herself. Jesus, heartbroken, he said, "Woman, great is your faith. You'll have what you've asked." You see, she kept on knocking. (Matthew 15:21–28; Mark 7:24–30)

Even the Lord Jesus Christ—we saw it here in the Passion Play; He was kneeling right here on this platform in the Passion Play—the Lord Jesus prayed to the Father once, twice, thrice. Jesus, the Son of God, prevailed in prayer.

The Apostle Paul, the greatest Christian who ever lived, had a thorn in the flesh. And the Apostle Paul prayed to God, and he said, "Three times I asked God to take it away. That doesn't mean, "I said, 'Once, twice, thrice, take it away.'" That means Paul had three extended sessions of prayer—over a long period of time, I imagine—and then he got his answer. Don't tell me Paul's prayer was not answered; it was answered—and I'll say more about that later on—and Jesus' prayer was answered, as they persisted in prayer.

Elijah prayed for rain. He was there on Mount Carmel. He sent a servant and said, "Go tell me if you see something." "I don't see anything." "Go again." "Go again." "Go again." He went the seventh time, and he said, "I see something: a cloud about the size of a man's hand." I believe that's just an illustration of ol' Elijah, who had pressed his hand against heaven so hard. Elijah said, "Get up. I hear the sound of the abundance of rain." He had learned to pray through.

Jesus said, "Ask." Jesus said, "Seek." Jesus says, "Knock, knock, knock, and it shall be opened unto you." That brings a question. How are we going to know when to stop asking, seeking and knocking? When do we stop? That's a big question. Well, let me give you three steps here—three things. Listen. When do you stop in this persistence in prayer?

### **1. Keep Praying till You Get What You Asked For**

First of all, you can stop when you get what you asked for—you asked God for it, and He gives it to you. Sometimes God's answers are direct. Sometimes God's answers are different. Sometimes God's answers are delayed. And sometimes prayers are denied. So, how do you know? How do you know? Well, If God gives you what you ask for, then you have it.

I wish I had time in this message to tell you the times that I have asked God for something so direct, so simple, so plain, and God has given it to me so directly that there is no way in my mind to explain it apart from a absolute answer to prayer, a miraculous answer to prayer. I ask,



and he gives, and I say, “Thank you, God.” That’s direct. So, if you get the answer, that’s fine. But sometimes you pray, and you don’t have it in your hand, but you have it in your heart. And you can stop. I mean sometimes God will say to you, “You have it.” You have it. You have the assurance that what you’ve asked God for now God has granted, and God has given, and you can begin to praise Him for the answer.

## **2. Keep Praying till God Says No**

Sometimes God says *no*. And you stop asking. And if God says *no*, thank Him. Thank Him, because God only gives good things. The rest of this parable says, “How much more shall your Heavenly Father give good things to them that ask Him!” So you keep on asking until God says, “Yes, you have it,” in your heart, or until God says *no*.

## **III. A Provision to Enjoy**

All right now, here’s the final thing—and I just have a few moments for this. You see, here is a promise to claim. Here is a process to follow. And here is a provision to enjoy.

Now, notice what our Lord says here about why He answers this prayer, and how He answers. Go back to Matthew chapter 7, if you will, and see how our Lord illustrates this. Here’s the rational. The Lord says, *“Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? or if he asks a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask them?”* (Matthew 7:9–11)

Now, how do I know—how do I know—that God’s going to answer pray? How do I know? Notice what our Lord is saying. I mean, just be reasonable. Just take human nature. Take a man who is not even saved, a man that doesn’t even know God—and if his children ask him for food, and he can get it, will he not give it? Jesus said, “If you, being evil,” —“if you, being evil” — “know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give good things to them that ask?”

Why will your prayer be answered? Because God is good. Do you have that in your heart and in your mind? God is good. God delights to answer your prayer. God wants to answer your prayer. God is a good God.

And not only because God is good, but because God is wise. If you ask bread, He’s not going to give you a stone. He won’t give you the wrong thing. The stones in Palestine, when you go there, the little brown stones on the ground look like loaves of bread. Wouldn’t that be a cruel joke? You see, God knows exactly what you have need of. You ask bread, He’s not going to give you a stone.

I'll tell you something else, friend. If you ask for a stone, He won't give you a stone, either. If you ask for the wrong thing, He's not going to give you the wrong thing, just because you asked for it. God is good, God is wise, and God is able. He says, "How much more should your Father in heaven?"

I have an earthly father. I love my dad. My dad is eighty-six years old now. He thinks he's about forty. And he's a great guy. And he would do anything for me he could. But, you know, he's limited. He's limited. All human beings are limited. My Heavenly Father's not limited. You see, I have the sympathy of a Father, and the sovereignty of a King. I have a Father who can hear me, and a King who can answer me. Why will God hear my prayers? Because God is good, God is wise, and God is sovereign. And I say, "Hallelujah! What a mighty God we serve!"

## **Conclusion**

And I want to tell you something, friend. We are fools, if we don't learn how to pray. It is Jesus who said, "Ask, and it will be given you." It's Jesus who said, "Seek, and ye will find." It is Jesus who said, "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." The wisest thing, the best thing, we can do is to learn how to pray.

That brings me to this—and I'm finished. Is He your Heavenly Father? Jesus here is not talking to lost people. He's talking to saved people, people who are saved. Is He your Heavenly Father?

# The Principles of Prayer

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** November 16, 1997

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 7:7–11

*“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”*

MATTHEW 7:7

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## Introduction

Would you take God’s precious Word and open it to Matthew chapter 7? And, in a moment, we’re going to begin reading in verse 7. And, before we begin to read, let me tell you what we’re talking tonight on: “The Principles of Prayer.” And, I want to say that prayer is the Christian’s greatest privilege, but alas, for most of us, it is our greatest failure.

Now, there is, in the Christian life, no substitute for prayer. If you, in an accident, were to lose a leg, it’s possible to be fitted for an artificial leg to replace a natural leg. If you don’t want to use a telephone, you can find a substitute. You can get a fax machine, or an e-mail, or a female, or whatever you want to get to carry the message. You can get a substitute. There is no substitute for prayer. Other things may be good and fine in themselves, but they’re not a substitute. Eloquence is not a substitute for prayer. Energy is not a substitute for prayer. Enthusiasm is not a substitute for prayer. Intellect is not a

substitute for prayer. There is no substitute for prayer. Prayer, in my estimation, is the greatest untapped, unused force in the universe. People are always trying to tap into energy. Scientists have been looking at the energy of the ocean, as the tides ebb and flow and the waves swell, and think, “Somehow could we tap that energy.” Or, we have learned how to tap into the energy of nuclear power. But, the greatest unused, untapped energy in the world is prayer.

Now, let’s look at the passage of Scripture, beginning here in Matthew chapter 7 and verse 7. These are the words of Jesus. Jesus said them clearly and plainly. And, we have no reason to doubt them, but we must believe them: *“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asked receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?”* (Matthew 7:7–11) So, we’re going to put the message tonight in three easy divisions, as we’re thinking about “The Principles of Prayer.”

## **I. The Reasons for Prayer**

And, the very first is “the reasons for prayer.” Now, you know, I have pondered much in my life about the reason for prayer. Why does God want us to pray? You see, look, Jesus taught, very clearly and plainly, our Heavenly Father *“[knows] what things [you] have need of, before [you] ask,”* (Matthew 6:8) isn’t that true? He already knows what we have need of, and He is infinite love. So, why should we have to pray? Why should we have to tell Him what we have need of? And, why should we have to ask of Him what He already wants to give us because He loves us? Have you ever thought about the mystery of prayer? Well, friend, why do we pray?

Well, go back, if you will, to Matthew chapter 6 for just a moment, and look in verses 7 and 8: *“But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.”* (Matthew 6:7–9) Now, in these verses, we learn some things. First of all, we do not pray to God to impress Him. You don’t have to be a junior-sized Shakespeare and pray in King James English. You don’t have to be a poet and use flowery language. You do not pray to impress God. “Don’t use vain repetition.” (Matthew 6:7) Nor do you pray to inform God—verse 8. *“Your Father [knows] what things [you] have need of.”* (Matthew 6:8) We pray not to impress God, not to inform God, but to invite God to work in our hearts and

in our lives. Well, why should we invite God to do this? Well, let me give you three reasons.

### **A. The Delight Factor**

Number one: There is what I want to call “the delight factor.” You see, God wants us to love Him. God wants us to fellowship with Him. God could run this universe without our prayers, but if He ran this universe without our prayers, you and I would not have the privilege of working with Him, and fellowshiping with Him, and being with Him as He administrates this great universe.

So, over in John chapter 15, He spoke of Himself as the vine—the Lord Jesus as being a vine, like a grapevine—and He spoke of us as being branches. And then, He said in John chapter 15, verse 4: *“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.”* (John 15:4) In a moment now, He’s going to be talking to us about prayer, but He’s saying that the reason for this prayer is to get us to abide in Him. We abide in Him. He goes on to say, *“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”* (John 15:7) Prayer is a way of God bonding us to Himself. It is a way of causing us to dwell in Him and He in us until we have the same kind of a union that a branch has with a vine. Now, we cannot do it without Him. He will not do it without us.

† Some time ago, a college called and said, “Can you come and be a speaker?” I said, “I would like to, but I cannot. I’m sorry; my schedule won’t allow it.” They said, “Well, if we’ll send a pilot for you, would you come and speak?” I said, “Well, I don’t know.” It said, “Well, we have a very fine pilot. He pilots a jet aircraft, and he can be there and pick you up.” And, I thought, “Well, fine. I will go.” And so, when I went out to the airport, it was a jet pilot, but it wasn’t a jet airplane; it was just one of these coffeepot airplanes. And so, we got up there, and we were flying over to this particular college where I was going to speak. And, this man says to me, “Do you know how to fly an airplane?” I said, “No, I don’t.” He said, “Would you like to fly this airplane?” I said, “Yes, I would.” We’re sitting side by side. He said, “All right, those are the pedals. Here are the controls. Do this, and do this.” So, we’re sitting up there, flying over Arkansas, and I’m flying that airplane.

And, I want to tell you, beyond the shadow of any doubt or peradventure, I could not have done that without that man for a very long time. I could not have done it! He could have done it without me; I could not have done it without him. But, he gave me the privilege of flying that craft with him. And, do you know, it was a lot of fun. It was an experience I still remember. And, while we were doing that, there was a bonding that was going on between the two of us that was very wonderful. We were having great fellowship as I was depending upon him, learning from him, and he was sharing his

responsibilities and his duties with me. And, there that airplane goes. And, I thought to myself, “That’s so very much like prayer: We can’t do it without God, and God could do it without us. But, when He allows us cooperate with Him, we have the thrill of helping God regulate this mighty universe.” Prayer comes when we abide in Him and He abides in us.†

## **B. The Development Factor**

So, there’s what I call “the delight factor.” Then, there’s also the development factor. Did you know that prayer is one of the ways that we grow? We are developed in prayer. In this same passage, in John chapter 15 and verse 7, He says, “*If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*” (John 15:7) Sometimes we pray and the answer doesn’t seem to come. And so, we begin to study the Word of God, we begin to seek the face of God, and we begin to “*grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*” (2 Peter 3:18) until the answer does come.

† Some boy may have his eye upon a particular girl and want to date that girl, and she won’t date him. And, he asks her for a date, and she says no. And, he says, “I wonder why she won’t date me? Could it be my breath?” So, he takes a little bit more care of his dental hygiene. And, he asks her again for a date, and then she says no. And, he says, “I wonder if it could be the way I groom myself?” So, he watches his fingernails, and gets his hair cut, and puts on a clean shirt. Again, he asks her for a date, and she says no. So, he does something else: “Maybe it’s my manners. Maybe it’s the way I drink my soup.” And so, he changes that. And then, one day, he asks her for a date, and she says yes. The whole time he’s been asking her, he has been improving, he’s been growing, he’s been getting more and more acceptable to her. And, you know, I think that’s the way prayer is: we ask God for something, and the answer doesn’t come; and we ask again, and we say, “Well, Lord, what could it be? My selfishness in my life? Could it be my lack of faith? Could it be my lack of Bible study? My lack of commitment?”†

## **C. The Dependence Factor**

And so, prayer is not only a delight; it is a form of development. It helps us to “*grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour.*” (2 Peter 3:18) And then, there is the dependence factor. God never wants us to live independent of Him. So, if God were to do things for us without our praying, we would fail to have the dependence that a branch has upon a vine. In John chapter 15, verse 5, Jesus said, “*I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.*” (John 15:5) It would be tragic if God were to run this

universe and leave us out of it because we'd never know the delight of prayer, we would never know the growth and the development that comes through prayer, and we would never know that dependence upon God, that bonding, that comes through prayer. So, whether we understand the philosophy of prayer or not, we know that our Lord has invited us and our Lord has commanded us to pray.

## II. The Request in Prayer

Now, not only the reasons for prayer, but let's look at the request in prayer. Notice what Jesus says in chapter 7 and verse 7: *"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."* (Matthew 7:7) Now, let's look at that.

### A. Ask: Desire

First of all, ask—just ask. We are commanded to ask God. Did you know that the great problem in prayer is not unanswered prayer; it is unoffered prayer? James chapter 4 says very clearly, in verse 2: *"Ye have not, because ye ask not."* (James 4:2) Jesus said we are to ask. Unoffered prayer is not merely a tragedy; it is a sin. We are commanded to pray and ask God. Luke 18:1 says, *"Men ought always to pray."* (Luke 18:1) Jesus said to His disciples in Mark 14, verse 38: *"Watch...and pray."* (Mark 14:38) Philippians chapter 4, verse 6 says, *"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God"* (Philippians 4:6)—in everything! Prayer ought to be as normal, as natural, as breathing. Paul said, *"Pray about everything."* (Philippians 4:6) You say, "Really? Everything?" Well, if it concerns you, it concerns God. A good test of whether or not you ought to be participating in something, or wanting something, or attempting something is can you pray about it? Now, if you cannot pray about it—if it's wrong to pray about it—then it's wrong to do it, or it's wrong to want it. Don't divide life up into the secular and the sacred. Don't say, "Well, I'll pray when I'm preaching a sermon, but I won't pray when I'm fishing." Why not? Do you think it would be wrong to pray when you go fishing and ask God to help you when you go fishing?

¶ I was fishing down in Florida some years ago, right at Cape Canaveral, out there on a sandbar, with some buddies. I hadn't been fishing for so long. And, I had a mirror lure, and I had a spin-casting outfit. And, I was away from my buddies. I was in water about up to my knees out there in the Florida sun, and I could hear off in the distance other men catching fish. I wasn't catching any. And, I prayed; I said, "Lord, I'm not catching any fish. These other guys are catching fish." And, I said, "Lord, I've been working real hard. This is the only time I've got to go fishing in a long time. And Lord, I'm going to ask you to let me catch a speckled trout—not a little one, but a big one." I prayed that prayer, Brother Jim, and threw that mirror lure over into a deep hole there in

the sandbar, and it sank to the bottom. And, I twitched it and reeled it in a couple of times, and I saw something about that big, and yellow, coming out of the water. It was the mouth of a great big speckled trout. And, he took that mirror lure, and we wrestled it all over the sandbar. It was about...a great big fish; I mean, the biggest—listen, for me—the biggest speckled trout I’ve ever caught. It was a prize-winning trout.

Now folks, I had just prayed. I just said, “Lord, I want to catch a big fish,” and I caught a big fish. Do you know what I did? I said, “Lord, that was so great; I want to catch another one.” So, I said, “Lord, let me catch another one.” And, I cast, and I caught another fish right after I’d prayed. Now, I’d been fishing for a long time and not praying. I wondered, “Hey, why didn’t I pray sooner?” So, I caught another one. I didn’t want to push it any further. I never prayed for another fish. I was afraid I might have to say, “God, they ruined my illustration. God doesn’t answer all the prayers.” But, I was just so blessed.†

Now, you may think that’s a little frivolous, but folks, I want to tell you something: none of us has any business doing anything that we can’t pray about. I don’t care what it is—if you can’t pray about it, you’ve got no business doing it. If you can’t ask God for it, you have no business wanting it. The Bible says, *“In every thing by prayer and supplication”*—can you think of anything too big for God to handle or anything too small for God to notice? You think about it—*“in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”* (Philippians 4:6) And so, we are to ask.

You say, “Well, what about if I want a wrong thing?” You even ought to pray about that. You ought to say, “God, I’m wanting a wrong thing. Help me. Fix my wanter.” No matter what it is, carry it to God in prayer. Our responsibility is the asking; God’s responsibility is the giving. But, He cannot do His responsibility unless we do ours, so our Lord says, “Ask.” (Matthew 7:7)

### **B. Seek: Discernment**

But then, not only does He say, “Ask” (Matthew 7:7); look at that verse again—He also says, “Seek.” (Matthew 7:7) So, not only should there be a desire; there needs to be discernment. Now, you say, “What do you mean by ‘discernment’?” Well, when you’re seeking—think with me now—when you’re seeking, there’s something that you don’t see or there’s something you don’t know. You’re on a quest. If you’re seeking something, it’s lost or unknown. And so, you’re trying to get some things to get out. You’re trying to find something. You’re trying to discover something. And, prayer is not only a matter of desire, where we ask, but it’s a matter of discernment, where we seek.

Now, we might be seeking the purpose of God. Did you know we might be praying out of the will of God? And, *the only thing that lies outside the reach of prayer is that*



*which lies outside the will of God.* Remember James chapter 4, verse 3: “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss”—if you’re asking for the wrong thing, God’s not going to bless you; God’s not going to give it to you. Maybe it might be that you’re selfish in your motivation—“ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.” (James 4:3) I can ask for personal needs, but I can’t ask for selfish needs. It may be just God Himself that He wants me to seek. Maybe before God gives me what He wants, He wants me to want Him more than I want the thing I’m asking for. And so, He says also in that same fourth chapter of James, in verse 8: “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.” (James 4:8) So, it may be that God wants me just to draw nigh to Him and to seek Him, to get away from my frivolous, half-hearted, giddy prayers. *God does business with those that mean business.* It may mean that God wants me to seek the power of God that comes through purity, for He goes on to say in James chapter 5, verse 16: “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” (James 5:16)

### C. Knock: Determination

Look, there’s the desire that asks. There’s the discernment that seeks. As I pray, I say, “Lord, what is it? How do you want me to pray? What do you want me find?” But now, watch it: desire, discernment—now, watch this—determination. “Ask...seek...knock”—“knock.” (Matthew 7:7) Well, what do you knock on? You knock on a closed door. The door is closed. And, when you pray, you have to keep on praying until that door opens. There are barriers that we have to overcome when we pray. And actually, this verb is in the present tense. What it literally means is “keep on knocking.”

Sometimes God’s answers are direct. You ask God for something, and He gives it to you just like that, *ipso facto*. We’ve all had that happen to us. Sometimes God’s answers are different. We ask for one thing; He gives us something else. Sometimes God’s answers are denied. We ask for something, and God says, “No, that’s bad for you. I don’t want you to have it,” or, “You’re asking for the wrong motive.” Sometimes we ask, and God’s answers are delayed. And, that’s what I’m talking about right now. We have to knock, and we have to keep on knocking.

Now folks, this is kind of hard to understand, but it is a Bible truth so we’re going to slow down here just a little bit on this thing of knocking. Keep on knocking until you get the answer. Look with me, for example, in Luke chapter 11. Turn to this one: Luke chapter 11, verse 5. Jesus, here, is talking about prayer. And, His disciples said in Luke 11, verse 1: “Lord, teach us to pray.” (Luke 11:1) So, the subject here is prayer. Now, go down to verse 5: “And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are

*with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.*” (Luke 11:5–7) Now, do you get the picture? Here’s a man who is knocking on a door. He is knocking on his neighbor’s door. He’s knocking on his friend’s door. He’s knocking on the door of somebody who knows him and loves him, and he says, “I have a need. I’ve got an unexpected guest. The cupboard is empty. I would be embarrassed if I did not feed this friend. I need three loaves of bread, and I need them now.”

But, notice what happens here—verse 7: *“And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut”*—and, by the way, let me say, that may not seem much to you—*“the door is now shut”*—but in those days, locks were very complicated. It was not easy to unlock a door. Locks were complicated—*“and my children are with me in bed”*—everybody didn’t have separate bedrooms. They all slept, more or less, in the same bedroom. To get up would wake up the baby because everybody had to get up. And, there were sometimes animals, and so forth, kept in the same house with the people. The livestock might wake up. The neighbors’ dogs start barking. He says, “Look, I’m not going to do this. Just be quiet. You’re waking the neighborhood. I’m not going to do it.” But, notice verse 8—*“I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity”*—that is, his urgency and his persistency—*“he will rise and give him as many as he needeth”*—now, watch this now—*“And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”* (Luke 11:7–9) That’s the same verse that we’re using over here in Matthew. You ask; that’s desire. You seek; that’s discernment. And, you knock; that is determination. Now, whether you agree with it or not, whether you understand it or not, friend, you’ve got to knock on heaven’s door, and you’ve got to keep on knocking, sometimes, to get those prayers answered.

Now, you’re in Luke chapter 11. Just turn to Luke chapter 18. Let me show you the same thing. Let me hear the pages turn. Luke chapter 18—begin here in verse 1: *“And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray”*—now, watch this—*“and not to faint”*—the word here means “not to quit praying.” So many times we pray. We knock once. We rattle the doorknob. The voice within says, “Go away,” and we just go away. But, He doesn’t want us to go away. He wants us to keep on knocking, keep on asking—*“men ought always to pray, and not to faint; Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man”*—sounds like some I know—*“And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming”*—just underscore that—*“by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with*

them?” (Luke 18:1–7)

You say, “Pastor, why does God stay in bed and not get up and open the door right away? Why does God not avenge me of my adversary right away?” Because *God does business with those that mean business*. And, Jesus said we are to keep on knocking for whatever reason. We need to understand that the Bible says, “*Therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you.*” (Isaiah 30:18)

Let me give you another example of this same thing, of this determination. In Matthew chapter 15—we won’t turn to that—but in Matthew chapter 15, many of you remember the story of Jesus and the Syrophenician woman. Jesus was there for dinner. This woman came and said to Jesus, “Master, have mercy on me! My daughter has a demon! She’s grievously vexed with a demon! Have mercy on me!” (Matthew 15:22) And, Jesus said, “I haven’t been sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. You’re a Syrophenician woman! You’re a pagan! Get away! I can’t take the children’s bread and give it to dogs.” (Matthew 15:24; Matthew 15:26)

Now, how would you feel? How would you feel? I mean, you’ve got a demon-possessed girl. You come to this One who’s supposed to be the Savior and the Lord of the universes—this One, full of compassion—and He says, “Hey, dog! Away! Get away! Get away! I’ve just come to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. I don’t have anything for you. You’re an outcast.” (Matthew 15:24; Matthew 15:26) What would you do? You know what she said? She said, “You’re exactly right.” She said, “I don’t deserve anything. But,” she said, “you know, the dogs get the crumbs that fall from the table.” (Matthew 15:27) And, Jesus said, “*Woman, great is thy faith,*” (Matthew 15:28) and He gave her exactly what she asked for.

You say, “Why are you comparing God to a selfish neighbor? Why are you comparing God to an unjust judge? Why are you comparing God to a bigoted person?” You don’t understand what the scripture’s about here, folks. Jesus is not saying God is an unjust judge. Jesus is not saying that God is a selfish neighbor. Jesus is not saying that God is a respecter of persons. But, what the Bible teaches is that we need to press through in prayer. We need to ask. Many times, “*[we] have not, because [we] ask not.*” (James 4:2) And then, we need to seek—not only desire, but discern. Is there something God’s trying to teach us? Is there some key to this puzzle that we don’t need? And then, once we ask and once we seek, then we knock and we knock and we keep on knocking.

Let me give you another example. In 1 Kings chapter 18, Elijah has prayed, and he shut up heaven. And, it would not rain on the earth for a number of years. And then, God tells Elijah, “You go tell Ahab that it’s going to rain.” (1 Kings 18:1) Now, I’m going to pick up the reading here—you can turn to it if you want to—in 1 Kings chapter 18, beginning in verse 41: “*And Elijah*”—he’s an Old Testament prophet—“*said unto*

*Ahab*—he’s an Old Testament king—*“Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain”*—by the way, it had not rained a drop when he said this. Not a drop—*“So Ahab went up to eat and drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel”*—that’s a mountain. I’ve been on top of Carmel sometimes. Our friend is here who has just come from the Holy Land. I don’t know whether you went to Haifa or not. Did you go to Haifa? That’s where Mount Carmel is—*“And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees, And said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times”*—now, here is a man who already knows. He’s been told of God that it was going to rain. But, he prays once, twice, thrice, four times, five times, six times, seven times—*“And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man’s hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down that the rain stop thee not.”* (1 Kings 18:41–44)

Why didn’t God send the rain the first time? I don’t know, but He didn’t do it. I mean, and He had promised that He was going to send the rain. But, he had to ask seven times. Delays are not denials, and we just can’t pick God’s blessing before they’re ripe. God has the right time. I don’t know when it is.

Did you know that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself knocked on heaven’s door? Would you think that Jesus’ prayers, because He was the Son of God in the flesh, had His prayers answered automatically? I was shocked when I really considered this scripture today, but in Matthew chapter 26, verse 44: *“And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.”* (Matthew 26:44) Can you think about that? Jesus—Jesus; I said, “Jesus”—prayed the third time with the same words. There’s a mystery here, folks. But, there is also a truth, whether we understand the mystery or not, and that is we are to keep on knocking. Ask, seek, and knock.

“Well, Pastor Rogers, does there come a time when you stop knocking?” Sure, when the door opens; sure, when you have what you ask for, or when you have the assurance in your heart if you don’t have it in your hand, or if God tells you, “No.” Paul, the mighty apostle, had something that he wanted. He said, “I asked God for it three times, and on the third time, God said to me, ‘No, I’m not going to give you what you’re asking.” (2 Corinthians 12:8–9) Paul was asking God to take a thorn from his flesh. And, Paul said in 2 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 8: *“For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.”* (2 Corinthians 12:8) But, God said to Paul, “Paul, listen, I’m not going to take it away. I’m going to give you added grace.” So, Paul stopped knocking then. He didn’t pray the fourth time. When do you stop? When the door opens—you have what you ask—or when you have it in your heart and God has given you the assurance.

About six years ago, God told me that He heard a prayer from me. I had been knocking. As a matter of fact, I'd been kicking the door some and saying, "God, I've got something on my heart, and I want to remind you about it." And, I prayed again and again and again and again, and God said to me, "I've heard your prayer. You can stop asking." I didn't have the answer in my hand, but I had it in my heart. And, God had heard my prayer. But folks, listen, there is a desire—that you ask. There is a discernment—that you seek. There is a determination—that you knock. Many of us, I believe, do not press through in prayer.

Joyce and I, this past week, went to Dallas-Fort Worth Airport for a conference on prayer and fasting. And, for three days Joyce and I fasted and prayed along with some other people. It was an incredible experience. We began about 7:30 in the morning and ended about 9:30 at night—no breaks, no food; just prayer, just prayer, seeking God with praise worship. Brother Jim, some of the sweetest praise worship—and I want you to meet this guy that led this praise worship; he's incredible. And then, little vignettes—different people talking, giving prayer subjects. And, a few of us brought small messages. I had the joy and the privilege of bringing a message. This was sponsored by Campus Crusade for Christ—a wonderful, wonderful experience in prayer! And, I can tell you, folks, that my own heart has been renewed and refreshed in this subject of prayer, and we just need to thank God for this prayer.

Now, let me say something about this knocking here for just a moment. You could, in a sense, say that God answers every prayer. Sometimes the answer is "yes." Have you ever asked God for something—just asked Him for it—and He just gave it to you just like you asked Him for it? Let me see your hand. That's it! All of us say, "God, I..." and He says, "Okay." He does that enough, we know, and the answers to prayer are so clear that we say, "Hey, this could not be a coincidence. It is unmistakably an answer to prayer." And, I would not bore you or draw this out by telling you times when I have just asked and received and there's no way possible, in my humble but accurate opinion, that it could have happened any other way except a direct answer to prayer. Sometimes the answer is "yes." Sometimes the answer is "no." God says, "You're asking for something wrong. I'm not going to give it to you." Sometimes the answer is "wait": "I'm going to give it to you, but you just have to wait on me. I'm developing you." And, sometimes God is giving us, not what we ask for, but He's giving us something better than we asked for.

### **III. The Reward of Prayer**

Well, here's a final thing. Now look, I've talked to you about the reasons for prayer. I've talked to you about the requests for prayer. Now, let me talk to you about the reward of prayer. Go back, if you will, to our scripture where we began, in Matthew chapter 7, and

look at the reward of prayer. How do we know that God is going to answer this prayer? Well, He tells about His nature, beginning now in verse 8: *“For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened”*—friend, if you will ask in faith, if you will seek discerningly, and if you’ll press on through, your prayer is going to be answered. And then, Jesus illustrates it again. What a great teacher Jesus was!—*“Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?”* (Matthew 7:8–11) Now, why can we be so assured that God’s going to answer our prayers?

### **A. God Is Good**

Because God is good. Notice the logic of Jesus: “If evil men—if evil men—will take care of their children, how much more shall a good God answer the prayers of His children?” (Matthew 7:11)

### **B. God Is Wise**

And, not only is God good, but God is wise. God is not going to give you something that would harm you. God’s not going to give you stones if we ask for bread. And, thank God, He’s not going to give us stones if we ask for stones. He’s going to give us what we want. God is wise.

### **C. God Is Love**

And, God is love. He calls Him *“Our Father which [is] in heaven.”* (Matthew 6:9; Luke 11:2) And, we sang it tonight: “What a Mighty God We Serve.”

## **Conclusion**

So, let’s remember to come to God in prayer—just to keep on praying and to keep on asking.†

# When Parents Pray

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: May 14, 2000**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 7:7–11**

*“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?”*

MATTHEW 7:11

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## Introduction

Would you find, please, Matthew, chapter 7, and in a moment we're going to commence our reading in verse 7. But let me talk to you a little bit before we read the Scripture. We're going to be talking about when mothers pray. But we're not going to exclude dads, and maybe we could just call this message "When Parents Pray." I've already told you that children are a great incentive to prayer. Nothing will put you on your knees like having children. Somebody asked, "How far apart should children be spaced?" The answer is about a mile and a half. But they're wonderful. Thank God for them. But to be

a parent means that you're going to go to your knees in prayer. Let see what our Lord has to say about it. Matthew, chapter 7, verse 7. Jesus says, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you whom, if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father, which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him?"

Now, there are three key words in the passage that I read before you. They are ask, seek, and knock. Ask, seek, and knock. They're all found in verse 7. Look at it. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Now, these are three little words, but I want to tell you a big door can swing on little hinges and open up into a vast room where there are multiplied treasures. So I want us to think about these three key words in getting prayer answered. Now remember, this is not some theoretician speaking; this is Jesus, and this is a rock-ribbed, ironclad promise from the Word of God. "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Now I submit to you, that's either true or it's not true. It is true, and, therefore, we need to learn about prayer today, and especially if we're parents, but not only if we're parents.

## **I. When We Ask, Desire Is Expressed**

Now, three things I want to lay on your heart today. Number one, when we ask, desire is expressed. When we're asking, there are things that we want, we desire. Now, may I tell you that the greatest problem that we face is not unanswered prayer; it is unoffered prayer. Jesus said that we are to ask. Now, there's an, there's an ancillary Scripture that you might jot in your margin. Let me share it with you. It's from James, chapter 4. James was very practical, and he picked up on what Jesus said here, and James asks this question in James, chapter 4, verses 1 and 2: "From where come wars and fighting's among you/ Come they not hence, even of your lusts which war in your members?" The reason why we can't get along with one another is we just can't get along with ourselves. That's what he's saying. "Ye lust, and have not; ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain; [And then, here is the plain statement] ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not." God alone knows how many blessings we could have had had we only asked. I suppose that unoffered prayer is not only a tragedy, it is a sin. Our Lord has commanded us to ask. Our Lord has commanded us to pray.

I've just listed a few Scriptures where God not only has invited us to pray, but has commanded us to pray. Luke 18:1 says, "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." That is, not to give up, not to quit



praying. And Jesus commanded in Mark, chapter 14, and verse 38: “Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.” Now Jesus commanded to watch or pray or He said, “You’re going to go down.” And, again, the apostle Paul, writing from prison, in Philippians, chapter 4, and verse 6 says, “Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.”

Look up here and let me tell you something. There is no substitute for prayer. Now, you can get a substitute for, for some things. If you lose a limb, maybe you can get an artificial limb. Ha. If you if you don’t want to use a telephone, you can use a fax machine. If you don’t want to use a fax machine, you can use e-mail. If you don’t want to use e-mail, you can use female. Telephone or tell-a-woman, it makes no difference. Ha,, but you can communicate. All right, I’ll get it later on, but my marriage is secure. It’s all right. What I’m trying to say is, there are some things you can get a substitute for, but there is no substitute for prayer not enthusiasm, not intellect, not energy there, not ingenuity. There is no substitute for prayer. Why the spiritual poverty of some people? Why the powerless of some Christians? You can put it down in one word-it is prayerlessness.

Have you ever thought about why God wants us to ask? He says, “Ask, and it shall be given to you...” Why is that? He already knows what things we have need of. You’re in Matthew, chapter 7. Just go back to Matthew, chapter 6 and look, if you will, in verses 7 and 8. He says here, “And when thou prayest, thou,” excuse me, “But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do; for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye, therefore, like unto them; for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.” Ha, ha. Before you ever say a word, He already knows what you have need of. And yet, he says over here in Matthew 7:7: “Ask, and ye shall receive...” Now, He knows what you need, but you have to ask.

Why do we pray? Well, we certainly don’t pray to impress God. He says, “Don’t use vain repetition as the heathen do” God is not impressed with your rhetoric. . And we certainly, we don’t pray to impress God, and we don’t pray to inform God. God already knows what we have need of. Well, if we don’t pray to impress God or inform God, what do we pray for? We pray to invite God. That is so very important. God wants us to ask Him. Now why? Well, let me give you three reasons why we, we need to learn to ask God.

#### **A. The Fellowship Factor**

First of all, the, the fellowship factor. You see, prayer is a way of having fellowship with God. It is working with God. A good Scripture that would back that up would be 11 Corinthians, chapter 6, and verse 1. It says, “We, then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.” We are workers together

with Him. And so, when I am praying, I'm having fellowship with God. I am working with God. And so God could do it without me, but He loves me too much to leave me out.

### **B. The Development Factor**

But not only is there the fellowship factor when we ask, there is the development factor. I grow when I pray. God wants me to grow, and prayer helps me to grow. John 15, verse 7. Jesus said, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, then ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." So God wants me to abide in Him and to receive strength from Him to help me to grow. You see, this word ask, this word seek, and this word knock is in the Greek language in the present tense, and what it literally means is keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking, because that's when we, we grow when we kept on doing these things.

Why do we have to keep asking? Sometimes we ask God for something and He doesn't give it to us right away. Well, the Greek actually says, "Just keep on asking, keep on asking." A boy wants a girl to go out with him. She says, "Julia, would you go out with me on a date, Susan?" No, let's stay with Julia, O.K. "Julia, would you go out with me on a date?" She looks him up and down and she says, "Well, you know, I've been very busy lately," and she gives him some excuse. Later on he says, "I wonder why she wouldn't go with me? Was it she really didn't like me or is there some other reason. So again, he calls up and says, "Julia, do you think we could do thus and such?" She says, "Well, I, I'm busy, thank you." And then he asks again. He gets to thinking, "I wonder what it is? I wonder I wonder if I've been using the right manners? I wonder if my fingernails are dirty? I wonder if I have body odor? I wonder? I wonder? I wonder? I wonder if I have shown her proper respect?" And so he begins to work on himself, and one day, he's kind of transformed, and he says, "Julia, would you do thus and such?" She looks him up and down and says, "Yes, I believe I will, I believe I will." Well, what, in asking, just asking her and being refused or having to wait, causes him to examine his life and to grow. Prayer is very much the same way. We, we have fellowship with God when we pray, when we ask. God is growing us when we ask. And if God doesn't give us what we ask, we wonder why did God not answer my prayer? And we examine our hearts a little bit more.

### **C. The Dependency Factor**

Prayer is also God's way of causing us to be dependent upon Him. You know, if God just gave us what we needed without our asking, we would cease to be dependent upon Him. It's, it's a way of binding us to Him. And so we are to ask. And, and asking God for what we need ought to be just as natural as breathing. Well, you say, "Pastor, what can I ask God for?" Well, a good test of whether you have any right to want anything is this can you ask God for it? Now, if you can't ask God for it then you have no right to want it.

Don't get the idea you just ask God for the spiritual things, and you take care of the secular things. Can you imagine Jesus dividing His life into the secular and the sacred? Everything is important to God. You say, "Well this is beyond God, or this is too small for God to deal with." No! Can you think of anything too big for God or too small for God to notice? Ask Him for any desire of your heart. If you cannot pray and ask God for it you have no business wanting it. You say, "Well, Pastor, what if I want something that I can't pray about?" No, you can pray about it, you can pray about it. Tell Him, "God, I want something you don't want. Fix my wanters." You pray about everything. "In everything, by prayer and supplication..." Just come to God and ask Him. And I'm telling you, there will be that fellowship factor. There will be that growth factor. There will be that dependency factor. Just simply ask God.

Now I want to say again, Jesus says, "Ask, and it shall be given you..." That is so true. I want to tell you again, the great tragedy in life, mothers and dads, is not unanswered prayer; it is unoffered prayer. Now, let me tell you something. Listen very carefully. The devil cannot keep God from answering, so what he will endeavor to do is to keep you from asking, to keep you from asking. Jesus said, "Ask, and it shall be given you..." Well, you say, "I've asked and I haven't received." Well, He's not finished yet. Read the whole verse. First of all, when we ask, a desire is expressed.

## **II. When We Seek, Direction Is Explored**

But now, secondly, when we seek, when we seek, direct, direction is explored. Now, sometimes we don't know what to ask for, and sometimes we ask for the wrong thing. And so, we have to find direction in our prayers. We have to seek. And asking is always linked with seeking. "Ask, and ye shall find; Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find..." The idea of seeking is that there is something that's lost and we need to find it, or there's something unknown and we need to understand it. And so, what is it that we seek when we pray? Well, first of all, we may be seeking the purpose of God. We may be seeking the will of God.

Go back to the passage in James. Remember what James said, "Ye, ye have not because ye ask not." And then he also said, "And ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye might consume it upon your lusts." You might be asking God for the wrong thing. Now, God is not going to give you the wrong thing, no matter how many times you ask Him. "You ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss," you ask wrongly, "that you might consume it upon your lusts." Now, we can ask for personal needs, but we cannot ask for selfish needs. And so, it maybe that when we seek, we're trying to find the will of God about a matter. I can, God's not just some glorified bellhop that I say, "Now God, do this, or do that." No, no, no. I can ask and it will be given me, but that asking is linked to seek, seeking, that I may find. It might be the purpose of God

that I'm trying to seek for.

It might be the presence of God that I'm seeking when I pray. James, in this same fourth chapter, goes on. He's talking about prayer and he says in James 4, verse 8: "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." It just might be that God's very presence is what you need to see. You know, the gift without the giver is bare.

Or, it might be that it's the power of God that you need to see. And James goes on to say, in James 5:16: "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." So, when I pray, I ask. I ask. I say, "Here God, here's what I need, here's what I want." The answer doesn't come. Then I begin to seek. "Lord, what is your purpose? Lord, where is your presence? Lord, what about your power?" And I begin to seek these things with all of my heart.

Now, first of all, I ask. That's a desire expressed. And then I seek. That is direction explored. I'm trying to find the will of God. Prayer is not bending God's will to fit our will; prayer is finding the will of God and getting in on it. And so, that's the reason we must seek God in prayer.

### **III. When We Knock, Determination Is Exerted**

But then, thirdly, thirdly. Look. First of all, asking is desire expressed. Seeking is direction explored. But then, thirdly when we knock, determination is exerted. What is the idea now? It's not just saying, "Lord, here's what I want, or Lord, show me your way." It is saying, 'O God, Ooooo God, I need this door opened.'" And remember, it's present tense. It is knocking and keeping on knocking. Their maybe closed doors. Their maybe barriers. Laniakea sang us, gave us the song, "Prayer Warrior." Prayer is a battle. There, the devil, we're up against all the minions of hell, and, indeed, we sometimes have to knock. It is present tense. Keep on asking, keep on seeking, and keep on knocking.

#### **A. Sometimes the Answer Is Direct**

And let me tell you something about how prayers are answered. Sometimes prayers are direct, and the answer to prayer, you just ask God for something, and He gives it to you. Have you ever done that? How many of you have just, just simply said, "God, I want thus and such, or let me do thus and such, or do thus and such," and just ipso facto immediately, God has answered your prayers? Have you ever had a prayer answered like that, lift your hand. That's all of us, most of us. You just ask and you received. Sometimes the prayer is so direct, it is unmistakably the hand of God. That's

one-way God answers prayer.

### **B. Sometimes the Answer Is Different**

But another way God answers prayer is not only is the answer direct, it is different. He doesn't give us what we ask; He gives us something better than we've asked. Hm. And you know, if He doesn't give you what you asked, He'll give you something better if you're asking in the will of God and asked in the right spirit, "...that we know not what we should ask as we ought, but the spirit himself makes intercession for us." So, sometimes the answer is direct and sometimes the answer's different.

### **C. Sometimes the Answer Is Denied**

Sometimes the answer is denied. He just says, "No.: Why? Because what you're asking for is wrong. "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss...." God is not going to give you something that will harm you or hurt you. If you're shaving in the morning, and your little two-year old wants to play with your razor, you say, "No." Not because you don't love him. You may give him something else, but you just simply say, "No. This is not good for you."

### **D. Sometimes the Answer is Delayed**

And so, sometimes the answer is direct, sometimes different, sometimes denied, but sometimes delayed, sometimes delayed. And that's the reason the Bible says, "...knock, and it shall be opened unto you." And again, I remind you, it is present tense. (Knocking on lectern) Keep on knocking, keep on knocking, keep on knocking, keep on knocking. Don't quit praying. Over and over again, the Bible teaches that we are to continue in prayer. Now let me, let me give you an illustration of this.

We're in the gospel of Matthew. Just turn over to Luke. Matthew, Mark, and Luke. And, and take a look at Luke, or as Sidlow Baxter would say, "Take a look at Luke." Luke 11, verse 5. Jesus is speaking. "And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; For a friend of mine is come in his journey, or a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he, from within, shall answer, and say, Trouble me not; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity [That is, his persistence] he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and he that knocketh, it shall be opened unto you." I'm so glad that Jesus gave this parable, because it so illustrates what I'm talking about keeping on knocking.

Now you have to understand the background here. In, in Bible times there were no

motels and hotels, and there were no convenience stores and all of this. And one of the greatest sins that a person could commit would be to fail to show hospitality to a friend, to a stranger, much less a friend. So here's a man, and it's late at night. Here's a friend on his journey, his other friend. He comes, it's about midnight, and says, "can we spend the night here tonight?" The man says, "Oh, you're so welcome in our home. Come on in. Sit down. get comfortable. We'll give you a little something to eat before you go to sleep. I know you've been journeying all day." He says to his wife, he says, "Fix something for our friends." She says, "There's nothing in the house, there's no food." He says, "Just a minute. We, we'll have something for you. Just sit down there." She says, "Go ask the neighbors." Now, it's midnight. He goes over to the neighbor's house. (Knocking on lectern) "Who's that?" (Knocking on lectern) "Who is it? "Be quiet. You're going to wake up the kids. Who is it?" "It's your neighbor. It's John. I've got to have some, some bread. You got any bread, man?" "Look, man, go back. You're going to start the dogs barking. If, if, if you wake up these babies... ..I'm telling you." You see, everybody, the houses were small. They kept the animals under the house many times and up top is where the people slept. The rooms were very small. Sometimes they'd all be in one bed, the babies, and everything there. The, the locks were very complicated. Not just a key like we have. To get a door open was very difficult. He says, "Look, go away." The man says, (Knocking on lectern) "I said go away." He says, (Knocking on lectern) "What do you want?" He says, "Look, man, I have got to have some bread. I've got a friend here. I've got to feed him." He says, "All right. If you'll just stop that knocking you just stop, just be quiet, I'll get up and get some bread for you." That's the parable that Jesus is telling. He says, He said, "Look, my, my babies are in, in bed with me. It's night, and so forth," but the man won't quit. He just keeps on. Now that's the illustration Jesus gave to illustrate this text. "Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Is He saying that God is like that man in bed, doesn't want to be bothered with us? No, that's not what He's saying. What He is saying is that asking is very much like knocking on that door. That is what He is saying.

Over and over in the Bible, God gives us illustrations of people who just persisted in prayer. Let me give you another one. You're in Luke 11. Just fast-forward to Luke 18. Luke 18. "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint. [That is, not to quit praying]. Saying, There was in a city a judge, who feared not God, neither regarded man. And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto, unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man, Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, {Jesus said] Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long

with them?” Now, again, God is not saying that I am like an unjust judge. What God is saying is, get the idea. This woman won't stop asking this judge. And so, he finally says, :I'm going to get her out of my hair. Whatever it is she wants, I'm, I'm going to get rid of her. I'm tired of her. I'm weary with her” Now, notice in verse 7. “And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily...” Now, you can find this over and over in the Bible. I, I can't explain it, but I'm telling you that delays are not denials. Ask, seek, knock, keep on asking, keep on seeking, and keep on knocking.

I was reading last night, just before I went to bed, about Elijah. And Elijah was praying for rain. You can read about in, in 1 Kings 18, I believe. And he's, he's praying for rain. There has been a drought in the land, three and a half years. And he goes, he sits down and he puts his head between his knees and begins to pray. And he says to his servant, “Go look and see if there's any rain. See if you see a rain cloud.” He went and said, “Nope, no rain cloud.” Elijah prayed some more. He said, “Go look again.” No rain cloud. Prays some more. He says, “Go look again.” No rain cloud. He prays some more. He says, “Go look again.” Seven times he sent his servant. On the seventh time, the servant said, “I see a little cloud, a little cloud about the size of a man's hand.” Elijah said, “All right. Get up. I hear the sound of abundance of rain.” You just keep on asking, keep on seeking, and keep on knocking. Whether you understand it or not, whether you agree with it or not, there is a principle, and it is a wonderful principle that, even though it seems that God is delaying, He is not denying.

## **Conclusion**

### **A. When Should You Stop Asking?**

Well, that brings a real question. When should you stop asking? When should you stop seeking? When should you stop knocking in a particular matter? Three times.

#### **1. Stop Asking When You Have What You Asked For**

Number one, you stop asking when you have what you asked for. When God gives it to you, you don't have to keep on asking.

#### **2. Stop Asking When You Have the Answer in Your Heart**

Number two, you stop asking when, though you don't have the answer in your hand, you have the answer in your heart. I have a very big prayer that God gave me in my heart one time. And God said, “Now Adrian, you're asking me to do something I'm not going to do, but what you really need is this, and I've heard your prayer.” I didn't have it in my hand, but I had it. And time has shown me that I did have it. Now that, that is, you just stop asking. You say, “Thank You, Lord. I, that's it. Thank You.”

### **3. Stop Asking When God Says No**

Now, when, when you already have it in your hand, or else when you have it in your heart, or thirdly, you stop asking when God says no. He just may say no. Paul was asking God to take away a thorn in the flesh, and he said, “Three times I asked Him.” And God said, “I’m not going to do it, Paul. My grace is ma, is sufficient for you.” And so, sometimes God just simply says no.

Now, parents, mothers, we need to pray for our children. What is the assurance that God will hear our prayers? Notice how Jesus concludes this. Look, if you will, now in verse 9: “Or what man is there of you whom, if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father, which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him?”

#### **B. Why Do We Have the Assurance of Answered Prayer?**

Why do we have the assurance of answered prayer? Well, in these couple of verses, three reasons.

##### **1. Because God Is Good**

First of all, because God is good. You know, we’re not good; we’re imperfect, but we love our children, don’t we? We love our, imperfect as we are. “If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father in heaven, give good things to them that ask him?” God is good all the time.

##### **2. Because God Is Wise**

And number two. Not only is God good; God is wise. God knows what we need. Now, if we ask a stone, He’s not going to give us bread. If we ask a fish, He’s not going to give us a serpent. God is not capricious. But let me tell you something else. God is so wise, if you ask a stone, He’ll not give you a stone. And if you ask a serpent, He’ll not give you a serpent. ‘The Lord thy God is a sun and a shield. The Lord will give grace and glory. No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.’ He is too wise to make a mistake and too good to be cruel. So God is good, God is crue, God is kind and wise.

##### **3. Because God Is Able**

And last of all, we know that our prayers are going to be answered not only because God is good and God is wise, but God is able. Look. He speaks of your Father which is in heaven. Hm. Now, in the sixth chapter of Matthew, Jesus taught us to pray, “Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name....” And then we, He, He concludes that prayer by saying, “...For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever.” Our Father is in heaven. Now think about it. Your Father is a King. “...thine is the kingdom...” I can say to my heavenly Father, “Lord, You, Yours is the kingdom.”



You see, when I pray, I have a, a Father who will hear me, and I have a King who can answer me. Isn't that great? A Father who will hear me, and a King who will answer me. Do you know what I have together when I pray? I have the sympathy of a father and the sovereignty of a king. "...thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever." "That's what Jesus is saying. "...how much more shall your Father, which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him?"

No one should ever try to be a mother or father who doesn't know how to pray. Learn to pray. Ask. Seek. Knock. When you ask, that's desire. When you seek, that's direction. When you knock, that is determination. Just like that man, saying, 'Look, get up and open this door. I need some bread.' I'm telling you, God will hear your prayer if you'll learn how to pray as Jesus teaches us to pray. And if He doesn't give you what you ask, He'll give you something better than you asked. But now, all prayer must be in the name of Jesus to have heaven's authority. And you cannot pray in the name of Jesus without having Christ in your heart as your Lord and your Savior.

Would you bow your heads in prayer. And if you're not absolutely certain that you're saved, I want to lead you in a prayer. And in this prayer you can receive Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. And when you receive Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, three things will be true. First of all, every sin will be forgiven and God will give you the gift of righteousness. Something you could never earn by your own good works. God will count you righteous. God will put your name in His book. And at the moment you receive Jesus Christ, you will become His child forever and ever and ever. Secondly, God will send His Holy Spirit into your life to give you peace and power and joy and purpose and guidance. You'll not be floundering around. Thirdly, He will give you a place, a home in heaven. When you die, or when Jesus comes, He'll take you directly home to be with Him in heaven when you pray and ask Christ into your heart. Now, salvation is a gift. Jesus purchased it for you with His own blood on the cross, but you must receive that gift. Are you ready to do it? Pray this prayer. "Dear God. I am a sinner and I need to be saved. Jesus, You died to save me and you promised to save me if I would trust you. I do trust you." Tell Him that from your heart. "I do trust You, Jesus. Right now this moment, in this seat today, I trust you to save me. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Make me your child. Come into my heart. Give me strength. And help me never to be ashamed of you. Thank you for saving me. Begin now to make me the person you want me to be. In Your name I pray. Amen."

# The Holy Highway

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** April 14, 1993

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 7:13–14

*“Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”*

MATTHEW 7:14

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## Introduction

We're making our way through the Sermon on the Mount under the general heading "Building on the Rock." Matthew chapter 7, verses 13 and 14—these are verses that talk about "The Holy Highway." Now when you came to church this morning, you came on some kind of a road. And that's what we're going to be thinking about today. There are all kinds of roads in the world. As a matter of fact, there are over four million miles of roadway in the United States alone—some good roads and some very bad roads; some dangerous roads, because we have people on our highways that have more horsepower than horse sense. And I know that you will agree with that.

I was thinking of some roads that I have traveled. I have had the experience of being in Rome and traveling on the Appian Way. The Apostle Paul traveled in that road built by the Romans. It is still in better condition than some roadways in the world today. And

one of those reasons is that the Romans laid a deep foundation. And that ought to be a lesson for us.

I was thinking of some roads in this area. The Natchez Trace begins down in Natchez, Mississippi, and ends up in central Tennessee. Going back up to the eighteenth century it was an old Indian trail. I was thinking of the Overland Trail beginning in St. Louis and going out to the Far West where the stagecoaches would travel. There are many roads in the world today. After our Passion Play I was thinking of a short road, but an important road: The *Via Dolorosa*, the Way of Sorrows, that our Lord took as He went from the judgment hall to Calvary.

But really, the road I want to talk to you today about is the Holy Highway, the straight and narrow, the old S & N. Look at it here—verse 13: *“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto light, and few there be that find it.”* (Matthew 7:13–14) This is the King’s highway, the holy highway, the strait and narrow way; and the desire of my heart and the prayer of my heart is that if you have not done so, today before this service ends you will put your feet on the strait and narrow path that leads to life.

I’ll just tell you up front what I’m all about. I am trying to get you on this holy highway. And I want you to see three things that are in this passage, these two verses. I want you to see, as I look at it, there is a decision to face, and there is a direction to follow, and there is a destiny to find. That’s what these verses tell me.

## **I. There Is a Decision to Face**

First of all, they tell me there is a decision to face. For our Lord says, “Enter in.” That is, it’s up to you. There is a decision that you must make. Now there are only two ways. There is the broad way and the narrow way. There is the way the way that leads to life; there is a way that leads to destruction—only two ways. Modern man does not like this. People get all uptight when you tell them that there is only one way to heaven. We like to put people in all kinds of categories and gradations. And we like to talk of men as being upper-class and middle-class and lower-class. But, you see, God never divides men horizontally; God always divides men vertically: right and left, sheep and goats, saved and lost—that’s all.

Now, you know, the Lord Jesus never preached to please the crowds. You talk about a person who cut it right down the middle: it was the Lord Jesus. Look in these verses—just look for a moment and see what our Lord is talking about in verses 13 and 14. He says there are only two kinds of travelers and two kinds of roads. Look in verse 17. He says there are only two kinds of trees. *“Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil*

*fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.” (Matthew 7:17–18)*

You’re a traveler on one of two kinds of roads. You’re a tree bearing one of two kinds of fruit. You’re a builder building one of two kinds of houses. Look in verse 24: *“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock.” (Matthew 7:24)* Verse 26: *“And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand.” (Matthew 7:26)*

Two kinds of travelers, two kinds of trees, two kinds of builders—that’s what our Lord says. And in the congregation today, just look around: everybody kind of looks the same. We’re all here this morning in our Sunday morning glad rags. But God doesn’t look on the outward appearance; God looks on the heart. (1 Samuel 16:7) And in the congregation today we say that they are young and old, rich and poor, weak and strong, and so forth. But, friend, there are only two categories of people here today: the saints and the *ain’t*s. That’s all: the saved and the lost; those who are with Jesus, and those who are against Jesus; those who are loving Him, and those who are hating Him; those who are receiving Him, and those who are rejecting Him; those who are crowning Him, and those who are crucifying Him; those who are on the road to heaven, and those who are on the road to hell. And you, every one, are in one of those two ways—and that’s all. Either you’re on the holy highway, or you’re on the broad way.

Now I know what the going merchandise is in the minds of men today. They say, “Well, Pastor Rogers, don’t be narrow-minded.” Now that’s just what we are talking about today: a narrow way. “Don’t be narrow-minded. We are all headed toward the same place, just on different roads.” Have you ever heard that? “We are all headed to the same place, just on different roads.” May I tell you what Jesus Christ said? The Lord Jesus Christ said in John chapter 14, verse 6, *“I am the way...no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” (John 14:6)* He said, *“I am the way.”* Jeremiah chapter 21 and verse 8 says, *“Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death.” (Jeremiah 21:8)* That’s all. That’s narrow.

Now I know there are a lot of people that say it’s not nice to be narrow. I know there are a lot of people that want to broaden the old S & N, the old strait and narrow. But Jesus did not preach that way. And so, look. If what I have to say today bothers you, or irritates you, don’t come up and argue with me about it; just read the Bible and tell God about it. Just say, “God, you made a mistake when you put this in the Bible.” But don’t take the issue with me. You ought to take the issue up with me if I don’t preach the Word of God. Jesus said, “Strait is the gate; narrow is the way that leads unto life.”

Now I know that poem by Markham:

*He drew a circle that shut me out—  
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.*

*But Love and I had the wit to win:  
We drew a circle that took him in.*

—EDWIN MARKHAM

That sounds all wonderful. But let me tell you what the Apostle Paul had to say. Here's what the Apostle Paul had to say. Put this verse in your margin—Galatians 1, verses 8 and 9. The Apostle Paul said, *“Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed”*—*anathema*. Do you know what that word literally means? “Let him be damned.” Now Paul wasn't a curser. But what Paul said is, “The road to hell is any other gospel other than the gospel of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” And then Paul reiterates it in verse 9: *“As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”* (Galatians 1:8–9)

Now the Bible is a narrow book. There can be no compromise with the gospel. Far better it would be for you to say two and two is five than to compromise with the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I don't know why it is, but people don't like ministers to say this is the way it is. Now they want their airplane pilots to be very narrow-minded. You're flying on an airplane, and you say, “Now you are narrow minded. You let the flaps down and let the landing gear down,” and so forth. They want their pharmacists to be very narrow-minded. They want their banker to be very narrow-minded when he's handling their money. They want everybody in all of these disciplines to be narrow-minded. But somehow in the thing that matters the most—eternal life—they say, “Well, it really doesn't make any difference.”

Now I'm saying that the Lord Jesus said there are two ways and there is a decision to face. Jesus said, “Enter the strait gate, the narrow gate.” Let me tell you something about that decision. Now, listen.

#### **A. The Freedom to Decide**

First of all, there is the freedom to decide. You have the freedom to decide. Don't ever let anybody tell you, you have been predestined to go to hell. You have the freedom to decide. Otherwise Jesus never would have said, *“Enter.”* Jesus said you can choose. And you must choose. We are not machines. We are human beings. And this morning, you are free to do as you wish.

But now, pay attention. Apart from the grace of God, you are not free to do as you ought. Now, understand the distinction. You're free. You are free to do as you wish. But it takes the grace of God for you to do as you ought. You say, “Well, I can do whatever I want.” Well, that's true. But, you see, the problem is with your *wanter*. You always want what is wrong, until you have the grace of God in your heart. The only reason that you can choose to do right is because He first chose you.

But you, my friend, are free to choose. And He has chosen you, and He has invited you, and He has said, “Whosoever will, may come.” (Revelation 22:17) And He will give you the power and the ability to come. And He will take you, *if you want to come. There are not enough demons in hell or out of hell to keep you from coming. But if you choose not to come, there are not enough angels in heaven to drag you down this aisle.* There is the freedom to decide. But the only reason that you have that freedom to decide is because He has loved you and set His grace upon you.

### **B. The Forcing of Decision**

There is the freedom of decision. But now, wait a minute. There is also the forcing of decision. Did you know that while you’re free to decide, you’re not free not to decide? While you are free to decide, you are not free not to decide. You are forced into a decision this very moment. There is no way that you can do what Pilate thought he was doing—that is, wash your hands of Jesus Christ. You cannot do that. Pilate said, “Well, I won’t decide. I’ll let the people decide.” And that lily-livered pussyfooting politician said, “I wash my hands of Jesus.” But history and eternity has proven that Pilate’s indecision was his worst decision. And the decision not to decide was a decision. And when you refuse the Lord Jesus Christ, you’re not merely neutral, because Jesus Christ said in Matthew chapter 12 and verse 30, *“He that is not with me is against me.”* (Matthew 12:30) There is no way that you can be neutral. The decision not to decide is a decision.

And so today, listen carefully. You will leave this building on the strait and narrow, or you’ll leave it on the broad way. You’ll leave this building on the road to hell, or you’ll leave this building on the road to heaven. And you say, “I will not decide for Jesus Christ.” By that very act, you have decided against Jesus Christ. Put it down in your margin—Matthew 12 and verse 30: *“He that is not with me is against me.”*

### **C. The Fruits of Decision**

You see, listen. There is the freedom of decision. There is the forcing of decision. And there are the fruits of decision. Now, let me say something else. You are free to choose. You’re not free not to choose. And you’re not free to choose the consequences of your choice.

*Now, for example, you can get in a ten-story building and open the window and say, “I’m free to jump out.” And you are. But about that time, your choices get diminished. What I mean is, you are free to jump out, but you’re not free to negate the law of gravity. You are free to choose, but you’re not free to choose the consequences of your choice.*

These people talk about *free love*: “I will sleep with anybody I want to.” Well, all right, you’re free to choose that, but you’re not free to choose the consequences. And when the warm flames of lust turn to the fiery flames of hell, that’s a part of the consequences of your choice, according to the same Bible that says, *“Flee fornication,”* (1 Corinthians

6:18) and the Bible that says, “*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*” (Exodus 20:14)

You talk about the freedom of choice. People want to say, “I am pro-choice.” Choice to do what? Choice to kill a baby! You say, “We have decided not to have this baby.” No, my dear friend, you already have a baby. What you are deciding is, will it be a live baby or a dead baby. That’s what you’re deciding. You already have a baby. There is a baby that is living with in you. And you say, “I am pro-choice.” You are free to choose, but you’re not free to choose the consequences of that choice.

There are some awful consequences. Choice is before all of us. Our Lord says, “Here’s a narrow way. Here’s a broad way.” He says, “Enter in.” Everybody is free to choose. You’re not free not to choose. And you’re not free to choose the consequences of your choice. So you have to choose very carefully.

Now you don’t have to choose to go to hell. To go to hell, all you have to do is refuse to receive Jesus. Because, why? You’re already on the broad way. Our Lord doesn’t say, “Don’t enter the broad way.” He says, “Enter the narrow way.” Why? Because you are already on the broad way.

There’s a gospel tract. On one side of the gospel tract it says, “What must I do to be saved?” And the answer is given: “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*” (Acts 16:31) On the other side of the tract it says, “What must I do to be lost?” And it’s just a box there with nothing in it. “What must I do to be lost?” Nothing. You’re already lost. You’re already lost without the Lord Jesus Christ. You must choose Christ.

## **II. There Is a Direction to Follow**

We are sinners by birth, sinners by nature, sinners by choice, sinners on the broad way, sinners on the way to hell. And so the very first thing I see in this passage of Scripture as I think about “The Holy Highway,” friend, is there is a decision to face. Secondly, there is a direction to follow. Look at it again, if you will. He says here, “*Enter...in at the strait gate:*”—that’s the decision—“*for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way.*” (Matthew 7:13–14) After the decision, there comes the direction.

Now, let me talk to you about the narrow way today. The narrow way is the way that every blood-bought child is walking today. It is the holy highway.

### **A. It Is a Disciplined Way**

And the first thing I want to say about the narrow way: It is a disciplined way. When the Bible says “*strait*” here, it is not talking about *straight* like “a straight line.” It means discipline: “Rigorous is the way.” If you’re looking for a cheap way, an easy way, a lazy way, to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, forget it. The Bible says we’re to endure hardness

as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

We say, “Well, it pays to serve Jesus.” Yes, it does. But it also costs to serve Jesus. It costs everyday. It costs every step of the way. And there is no fine print in the contract that Jesus Christ gives. The problem with many people today is they have sort of a cheap grace, an *easy believism*. The way of Jesus Christ is, while salvation is free, on the one hand, yet there is a discipline to the Christian life. Any dead fish can float down the stream.

You see, without discipline, there is no power. Loose wires just disconnected don’t make a beautiful sound. But if we connect them and put them in one of those marvelous pianos and stretch them until there’s tension there, discipline there, then we get the music.

Steam and vapor in the air—and there’s no power there. But we compress it and put it in an engine, and it will turn the turbine and the pistons, because there is power there. Take a river and just let it meander—and there’s no power there. But dam it up, and it makes a power dam that can light up a city. “Broad is the way”—easy is the way—“that leads to destruction.”

A few years ago there was a young African; he was martyred for the cause of Christ, but before he died, he wrote these words. They were found in his room. It said this: “I am a part of the fellowship of the Unashamed. I have the Holy Spirit power. The die has been cast. I have stepped over the line. The decision has been made. I am a disciple of Jesus Christ. I won’t look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still. My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, and my future is secure. I am finished and done with low living, sight walking, small planning, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tame visions, mundane talking, chintzy giving, and dwarfed goals.... My pace is set, my gait is fast, my goal is Heaven, my road is narrow, my way is rough, my companions few, my Guide is reliable, my mission is clear.... I won’t give up, back up, let up, or shut up until I’ve preached up, prayed up, paid up, stored up, and stayed up for the cause of Jesus Christ.... I must go until He returns, give until I drop, preach until all know, and work until he comes me. And when He comes to get His own, He will have no problem recognizing me. My colors will be clear.”

Compare that with the Christianity we see today. We are looking for a cheap way, an easy way, a lazy way to serve the Lord Jesus. But Jesus said, “*Strait is the gate.*” It is a disciplined way.

## **B. It Is a Different Way**

But not only, friend, is it a disciplined way; it is a different way. Our Lord says, “*Few there be that find it*”—“*few there be,*” not many. Don’t expect the crowds to be on this way. And don’t follow the crowds. The crowds are almost always wrong. What is



happening in America today is, because the crowds are wrong, we have morality by majority. Do you know what most folks are taking comfort in? They're saying, "Well, I'm just like everybody else." Isn't that what they are saying? "I am just as good as those other people." Friend, our way is a different way. It starts at a different source. It follows a different course. It ends at a different conclusion. And if you're on this way, you're going to be going against the tide most of the time, because we are twice-born people in a world of once-born people, and they are different from us, and we are different from them.

### **C. It Is a Delightful Way**

It is a disciplined way. It is a different way. And it is a delightful way. Do you think what I am saying is negative? Friend, you don't know the joy of serving the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me give you a verse. Oh, I love this. It's one of my favorite passages in the Old Testament. Put it in your margin. You may turn to it—Isaiah chapter 35. It talks about the holy highway. By the way, the song that our choir sings, and we sing—"The Holy Highway"—is one of my favorite songs. Isaiah 35, verses 8 and following—here our Lord is talking about the way that Jesus is in the Old Testament; He's prophesying this holy highway. Listen to it. God says, "*And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: and the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*" (Isaiah 35:8–10)

#### **1. Because It Is a Clean Way**

It is a delightful way. Why? Because it's a clean way. Verse 8: "*The unclean shall not pass over it.*" That's what He says. It's the way of holiness. There are no mud holes on the holy highway. And no *Tennessee trash* is going to be following that holy highway. And if your heart is full of sin and filth and dirt, and you've never repented, don't tell me you're on the holy highway. The Bible says here it is the way of holiness. "*The unclean shall not pass over it.*"

#### **2. Because It Is a Certain Way**

It is a clean way. And I'll tell you, it is a certain way. It's delightfully clean. It's delightfully certain. He says, "A wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein." (Isaiah 35:8) Do you know what that means? It means, a stranger without good sense can find his way on the holy highway. You don't have to have a Ph.D. to travel this holy highway. The Bible says, "God has hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, and has revealed them unto babes." (Matthew 11:25; Luke 10:21)

And you may be here today and you say, “You know, Pastor Rogers, I don’t know much about religion. I don’t know much about the Bible. I don’t understand all that you are saying.” Well, my friend, let me tell you that Jesus Christ loves you. And it is so clean and so pure and so simple. Come to Jesus. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. That is gloriously simple. And it is simply glorious.

### **3. Because It Is a Confident Way**

This way is delightful, because it’s clean. This way is delightful, because it is clear. I’ll tell you it’s delightful, because it is confident. Oh, listen. You don’t have to worry about losing your salvation. You don’t have to worry about Satan pouncing you while you’re on the holy highway. Verse 9: *“No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there.”* Oh, what a wonderful road!

### **4. Because It Is a Cheerful Way**

You get on this road and you let the Lord Jesus be your companion, and this road, which is a clean way and a clear way, is a certain and a confident way. Oh, He keeps us! And then it is a cheerful way. The Bible says, *“And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”* I love Jesus. If I had a thousand lives, I’d give Him every one. Don’t feel sorry for me because I am on the Holy Highway. Oh, friend, this is what it’s all about! *“The ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads.”* What a wonderful, wonderful road this is!

We love to sing that song, “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.” It was written by John Newton. John Newton was one of the most wicked, vile sinners that ever lived. He committed almost every sin known to man. He was a drunken rum runner. He was a South Sea slave trader. He got so low in debauchery and sin that he finally ended up selling himself as a slave of slaves. And Jesus Christ miraculously saved John Newton. He is the one who wrote the song “Amazing Grace.” His own epitaph he wrote. Do you want to hear what he wrote about himself to be put on his grave marker? Listen. He said, “John Newton, Clerk, once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slaves in Africa, was by the rich mercy of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ preserved, restored, pardoned, and appointed to preach the faith he had long labored to destroy.” No wonder he could sing on the holy highway, “Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.”

## **III. There Is a Destiny to Find**

What is our Lord telling us in these verses? Number one: There is a decision to face. Number two: There is a direction to follow. It is a disciplined way. Oh, friend, this way is

a delightful way. But now, here's a third thing: Not only is there a decision to face; not only is there a direction to follow; but there is a destiny to find. Every road is going somewhere. And the one your on right now is going somewhere.

Now I want you to ask this question: "When I get to where I'm headed, where will I be?" Ask it. "When I get to where I am headed, where will I be?" Now the Lord again in a very narrow way said, "There are only two destinations." One He calls "destruction," and the other He calls "life." You see, decision determines direction, and direction determines destiny. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure that out, do you? Decisions determine direction, and direction determines destiny. That's what our Lord is saying. And today many of you are saying, "Well, to tell you the truth, Pastor Rogers. I'm on the broad way."

Some days ago I was on an airplane going to St. Louis. The steward got on the microphone and said, "This is flight *thus and such* headed to St. Louis. If St. Louis is not in your plans for this afternoon, I would suggest that you deplane right now." Now, friend, maybe you're on the highway to hell; and if hell is not in your plans, I would suggest you get off. I mean, if you do not want to die and go to hell, then why don't you do something about it?

There is a destiny to find. Now it may be a fearful destiny: destruction. I don't want to sugarcoat what Jesus said. Jesus—the loving Jesus—had more to say about hell than any other person in the Word of God. Jesus did. It was Jesus who talked about destruction. Don't you point your finger at me and say, "That man is a hellfire preacher." Just take it up with Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "The broad way leads to destruction."

In Chicago there was a nightclub. Would you believe it? They named the nightclub The Gates of Hell. Can you imagine naming a nightclub that? The Gates of Hell. One man out on a lark asked a policeman, "How can I get to The Gates of Hell?" On the same street where this nightclub was there was a church. And do you know the name of the church? It was Calvary Church. Do you know what that policeman told that man? "You want to get to The Gates of Hell? Go right past Calvary, and you'll come to The Gates of Hell." And God has lifted up Calvary with the bloodstained Prince of Glory hanging in agony and blood, and He says, "Stop! Stop! Stop!—or you'll end up at the gates of hell."

There is a destiny to find. It may be a fearful destiny, or it may be a fabulous destiny. It may be life. You see, that life begins not when you die; it begins when you step on the old S & N. Jesus said, "I have come that you might have life, and have it abundantly." (John 10:10) And not only does He add years to life; He adds life to the years. And if there were no heaven, and if there were no hell, it is worth the trip just to be on this highway. I mean, there is a destiny.

But, thank God, we're on our journey home. Each step I take is one step closer

home. How wonderful that is! It will be worth it all when we see Jesus. I may be just a heartbeat away from the end of my journey. How wonderful that is! Friend, there is a destiny to find. It may be a fearful destiny. It may be a fabulous destiny. But listen to me. It will be a final destiny.

There is no chance after death. Ecclesiastes chapter 11 and verse 3 says, *“And if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.”* (Ecclesiastes 11:3) That’s just a poetic way of saying, “When you die, your destiny is fixed.” Revelation chapter 22, verse 11: *“He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still.”* (Revelation 22:11)

I’ve studied this book for many years. I’ve read it, loved it, and preached out of it. I cannot find one place where God offers one shred of hope to those who die outside the Lord Jesus Christ—not one! To the contrary, the Bible says, *“It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.”* (Hebrews 9:27)

## Conclusion

Now if you’re on the broad way today, you’re on that turnpike to torment, you’re on that highway to hell. And there are a lot of people, and you’re having a big time; and God brought you to this service this morning, and God put this preacher in front of you, and this preacher is holding up a sign. And do you know what it says? “Heaven: Exit now.” It never says the next exit; always now, because the next exit may be hell. There may not be another exit.

You say, “Well, I’m not going to decide today, Pastor.” You see, you’ve missed what I said to you. When you say you’re not going to decide, that is a decision that keeps you on the broad way that leads to destruction. You say, “Well, I’ve got plenty of time.” I hope you do. But the Bible says, *“Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.”* (Proverbs 27:1) There is a decision to face, a direction to follow, and a destiny to find. That’s what Jesus says.

# Beware of the Wolves

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** April 25, 1993

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 7:15–23

*“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.”*

MATTHEW 7:15

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## Introduction

Take your Bibles and be finding Matthew chapter 7. We continue our study through the Sermon on the Mount, and we take up where we left off last week. Matthew chapter 7 and verse 15 begins with a warning. Jesus says, *“Beware of false prophets”—that’s a good word for today, isn’t it?—“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravaging wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so”—Jesus says—“every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their*

*fruits ye shall know them. Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” (Matthew 7:15–23)*

¶ Have you ever passed a house, or have been walking up to a house, wanting to knock on the door, and you see a sign that says, “Beware of the dog”? Have you ever seen that? What do you do? Well, you beware of the dog, don’t you? Where there is a sign there that says just, “Beware of the dog,” you stop right away, and you look around and wonder, “Should I go in there?” But, whatever, it sensitizes you. I want you to imagine walking up to a house and seeing a sign that says, “Beware of the wolf.” Now, just suppose, rather than having a dog in the yard, there is a wolf in the yard. I think you would do a double-take.¶

The title of our message today: “Beware of the Wolves.” That’s what Jesus is saying. And, these wolves have disguised themselves in sheep’s clothing. Early this morning I read a little bit more about wolves. I found out that wolves are known for their boldness. They are known for the fierceness of their attack. They were the most dreaded and hated enemy of the shepherd—not the lion, not the bear, but the wolf. As a matter of fact, the article that I read early this morning said that a wolf will kill for food, but once he gets a taste of blood, he goes into a frenzy and will kill far more than he can possibly eat. And, Jesus said that false prophets are like wolves, and Jesus said, “Beware.” Now, when Jesus says, “Beware,” then we ought to beware. And, Jesus says, “Not only are these wolves so dangerous; they are so deceptive. They come to you in sheep’s clothing.” Now, you cannot be wise and not beware. You see, the Lord has warned us. Many times, warnings have gone unheeded.

¶ Captain Smith was the captain of the Titanic. He received a message, a radio message, when the Titanic was on its maiden voyage, and that radio message said that they were entering into iceberg-laden waters. According to the account I read, Captain Smith took that message written on a piece of paper, crumpled it, shoved it into his pocket, and the Titanic went sailing on. And, when it sank, 1,490 people went to a watery grave in the icy North Atlantic.¶

¶ I read somewhere years ago about Sergeant Lockhart—Sergeant Joseph Lockhart. He was sitting at the radar at Pearl Harbor, and he noticed a squadron of airplanes coming. The day was December 7, 1941. He reported to his commanding officer, “I see some unidentified aircraft approaching.” Do you know what the commanding officer said? “Forget it.” And, three thousand of America’s best perished in that day of infamy.¶

Warnings—if there were ever a generation that needs to be warned about false prophets, it's this one. I mean, if ever, *if ever*, it's this one. And, Jesus is saying, “*Beware of false prophets.*” (Matthew 7:15) David Koresh is only one of many. For every David Koresh whose name you'll read in the newspaper, there are many names that you may not read about who have honeycombed this nation and this world—false prophets, our Lord says.

Remember this: that Satan is not opposed to religion. Satan is opposed to biblical Christianity. And, religion is one of Satan's chief arms. Satan comes against the Church in two basic ways.

### **A. Satan Comes Against the Church by Persecution**

Satan comes against the Church by persecution. And, he's not above persecuting the Church; he's not above persecuting this church or any true New Testament church. But, many times, for Satan, persecution will not work. Many times, God's people, rather than folding up, stand up against persecution.

† I remember when we were in Romania. The pastor there of the great Second Baptist Church, the largest Baptist church in all Europe, told me, as we went past the church—he said, “You see all of these apartment buildings that are near our church?” He said, “Let me tell you how they got built.” He said, “Ceausescu, that maniacal, diabolical, ungodly, antichrist dictator, when he passed by the Second Baptist Church of Oradea one time, he looked over there and he saw the church. He asked his aide, ‘What is that?’ He said, ‘That's a Baptist church.’ He said, ‘Destroy that nest of insects.’ They said, ‘Well, Mr. Ceausescu, if we just destroy them, why, the world will hear about it. It will look bad for Romania. After all, we have won most favorite nation status.’ ‘Well,’ he said, ‘then hide it.’ And so, you know what they did? They built apartments all around the church and brought the people right to it—people coming to the Lord Jesus Christ and getting saved.”†

Many times, God cuts Goliath's head off with the sword that Goliath sharpened, amen? Sometimes the devil comes against the Church by persecution.

### **B. Satan Comes Against the Church by Infiltration**

But, he has a better way to come against the Church: it is not persecution; it is infiltration. Put these verses in your margin. Here's the great danger to today's church. It is the infiltration of false prophets wearing sheep's clothing. Acts chapter 20, verses 28 and following: The Apostle Paul said to the Ephesian elders, to that wonderful church at Ephesus, “*Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock*”—God's sheep—“*to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.*” (Acts 20:28–

29)

Then the Apostle Paul said to those folks in Corinth, in 2 Corinthians chapter 11, beginning in verse 13—put this verse in your margin—2 Corinthians chapter 11, verses 13 and 14: *“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ”—*that is, they are wearing sheep’s clothing—*“And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.”* (2 Corinthians 11:13–14) Satan is the captain of camouflage. He is the master of deceit. And so, again and again and again, the Bible warns us of false prophets. Our Lord Jesus said in this same book of Matthew that we are studying, in Matthew chapter 24 and verse 24: *“For there shall arise false Christs”—*that’s what David Koresh said that he was: the Messiah—*“There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.”* (Matthew 24:24)

You know, every now and then, somebody will say, “Oh, the Bible is not true. The Bible is a bundle of blunders. The Bible is a book of lies, and I’ll tell you why it is…” They say that the Bible is not true because of all of these false religions, all of these false prophets, all of these fruit loops. Friend, let me tell you something: those people don’t prove the Bible not to be true; those people authenticate the Bible. If there were no false prophets, the Bible would not be true because the Bible says they’re coming. It is Jesus Christ who said the David Koreshes are coming. They are coming. *“Beware,”* (Matthew 7:15) He says. These things confirm and authenticate our faith.

So, there are three basic things I want you to learn this morning, as we look at this message under the title “Beware of the Wolves.” The very first thing I want you to see is the fleece they wear. The second thing I want you to see is the fruit they bear. The third thing I want you to see is the fate they share. Now, here’s what our Lord Jesus is telling us about these false prophets:

## **I. The Fleece They Wear**

First of all, the fleece they wear. He says they *“come [wearing] sheep’s clothing.”* (Matthew 7:15) That is, they appear like part of the flock. Now, this is the disguise they wear. Now, what I want to do today is simply just rip away the disguise. What I want to do is to pull back the sheepskin and let you see the wolf beneath.

Now, false prophets come in three categories. There are three kinds of false prophets. If you just look for one kind, you’re apt to miss the other two. Wonderfully, God has given us a description of all three in one verse, so I don’t want you to miss that verse. Turn to it in the next to the last book in the Bible. We call it an “epistle.” It’s more like a postcard, it’s so small. It’s the little book of Jude. And look, if you will, in verse 11. Now, let me say this: that all of the book of Jude is about false apostles, false prophets, and apostates. That’s what it’s about. The book of Jude is a warning about false



prophets. But, happily and wonderfully he describes all three kinds in one verse—verse 11: *“Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain”*—that’s one kind of false prophet—*“and ran greedily”*—underscore the word *greedily*—*“after the error of Balaam for reward”*—that’s another kind of false prophet—*“and perished in the gainsaying of Core”* (Jude 1:11)—that’s another kind of false prophet. Three kinds right there. All of them will be wearing sheepskin. But, I want us to look at them. What do they represent?

#### **A. Cain: Those Who Pervert the Gospel**

Cain, the first one, represents those who pervert the gospel. Now, pay attention. Who is Cain? Well, you remember that God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and then God gave them sons: Cain and Abel. Do you remember that story? And, the Bible says that Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a farmer; he was a tiller of the ground. And, there in Genesis chapter 4, verses 1 through 8, you have the story of two brothers. Two brothers went out to make two offerings. One brother offered to the Lord the firstlings of the flock. A perfect lamb was killed, and the blood of that lamb was offered to the Lord as an atonement for sin. The other brother came—you will remember the story—offered to God the fruit of his hands, of his work, the sweat of his face. This is what he offered to the Lord. And, what you have here are two brothers, two offerings, two religions, and two destinies. (Genesis 4:1–8)

Now Abel, as you will remember, offered the very best—the firstling of the flock to the Lord. Why? Because there, in the dawn of civilization, God was teaching the lesson that we see affirmed in Hebrews chapter 9 and verse 22, which is what? *“Without shedding of blood is no remission.”* (Hebrews 9:22) Isn’t that right? *“Without shedding of blood is no remission.”* (Hebrews 9:22) And, Hebrews 11:4 says, *“By faith Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice.”* (Hebrews 11:4) Abel had faith in the blood. Never forget it. He had faith in the blood. The blood that we sang about this morning is not incidental; it is not accidental. It is fundamental; it is eternal. For the Bible says in 1 John 1:7: *“The blood of Jesus Christ [God’s] Son [cleanses] us from all sin.”* (1 John 1:7)

Now, on the other hand, Cain offered the fruit of the ground. His offering was not based on blood, but the fruits and the flowers of his own effort. It may have been impressive. It may have been beautiful. It may have been costly. It may have looked like a county fair. There may have been beautiful flowers and fragrant herbs and the righteous fruits. But, God was not impressed. Why? You can’t get blood out of a turnip. My friend, *“without [the] shedding of blood is no remission.”* (Hebrews 9:22) What did Cain’s offering represent? Culture, not Calvary. Works, not grace.

Now, there are only two kinds of religion—pay attention—the true and the false. Now, we like to divide the world into Christianity, and Buddhism, and Islam, and Hinduism, rheumatism, and whatever. We even take Christianity and we subdivide

Christianity: Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, and Catholic, and others. But, I want to say there are only really two kinds of religion: the way of Cain and the way of the cross. That's all. The way of the cross leads to heaven. The way of Cain leads to hell.

Now, there are many people today who are trudging to churches, sitting down and worshipping all over America, but did you know they will not hear salvation by the blood preached? And, many people will not say that that man preaching is a false prophet, but friend, he's gone the way of Cain. I don't care how many fruits and flowers there are there. I don't care how beautiful they are. I care not how grand the choir is. I care not how many good works they do in the neighborhood. I don't care if they are offering to God the works of their hands rather than the blood of the Lamb. That man is a false prophet. That's the way of Cain—those who pervert the gospel.

### **B. Balaam: Those Who Prostitute the Gospel**

Now, what about the other man, Balaam? That's the second one that's mentioned there. Balaam represents, not those that pervert the gospel, but those who prostitute the gospel. You see, Balaam was orthodox. Many of the things that Balaam said were incredible. Who was Balaam? Well, Balaam was an apostate prophet. You can read his story in Numbers 22. The king of Moab was afraid of the Israelites. He couldn't figure out a way to overcome them. And then, he got this diabolical scheme. He thought to himself, "Well, maybe I can get their God to put a curse on them." And so, he said, "Well, who is a prophet that might put a curse on them?" Somebody said, "Well, Balaam, he knows all about that prophecy business and cursings and blessings."

Balak, the king of Moab, went to Balaam and said, "Listen, I want you to put a curse on Israel." Balaam said, "Are you crazy? Do you think I'm going to curse them? God says, 'Those who curse them I'll curse. And, those that bless them, I'll bless.' Do you think I'm going to put a curse on them?" Balak said, "I'll pay you." Balaam said, "You couldn't pay me enough to do that. No, thank you." And, Balak comes back and ups the annuity, and throws in some fringe benefits. And, after awhile, ol' Balaam gets to thinking: "Now, how can I do this? How can I serve God and rake off a few profits on the side? How can I do this?" And then, he said, 'I'll tell you what, I can't curse them, but I'll tell you what, I'll tell you how you can get them to curse themselves.' And, one of the most sinister—one of the most incredible—things that ever happened happened. He said to the king of Moab, "If you get them to sin, you won't have to curse them; I won't have to curse them; God will curse them." And, the daughters of Moab went in and began to flirt with the boys of Israel, and there was adultery, and fornication, and wickedness—the same thing that's going to cause God to curse America. And, my friend, the man of God would not stand up for purity and righteousness; and so, there

was a sensual feast with the daughters of Moab. And, God slew twenty-four thousand Israelites.

Now, what did Balaam do? He didn't pervert the gospel. No, His problem was he was orthodox but greedy. Remember what verse 11 talks about—how he greedily ran? (Jude 1:11) You see, there are not enough devils in hell or out of hell, or wherever they may be, to curse this church. But friend, we can curse it if we don't live right. And, there are many false prophets today who will not preach and teach what the Bible says about righteousness.

And, the reason that many preachers today and many teachers today are trimming the messages is for personal gain. And, that gain does not have to be financial. Sometimes it's for prestige. Sometimes it's for popularity. Sometimes it's for power. Put this verse in your margin—2 Peter chapter 2, verse 1: *“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who [privately] shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of”*—I've already read today in the newspaper some editorials where what I believe is the truth is being evil spoken of because of David Koresh. “Many will follow their pernicious ways. Those who are in the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.” But now, notice verse 3—*“And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you”* (2 Peter 2:1–3)—covetousness. That's what happened to Balaam.

Now, there are many false prophets, but you spell the word prophet P-R-O-F-I-T. They are in it for what they can get. They may stand up, and they may preach the blood. They don't pervert the gospel; they prostitute the gospel. They sell the gospel the same way that Madison Avenue sells cars. And so, Paul said in 2 Corinthians chapter 2 and verse 17, they peddle the Word of God. (2 Corinthians 2:17)

### **C. Korah: Those Who Protest the Gospel**

Now, there is a third kind of false prophet. You have to see all kinds. They are all out there, friend. They are in the woodwork. There are those who pervert the gospel; that's the way of Cain. There are those who prostitute the gospel; that's Balaam. But, there are also those who protest the gospel; that's Korah. The name is spelled differently in the Old Testament. It's *Korah* in the Old Testament. *Core* is the translation in the Greek New Testament. But, it is the same man.

Now, who was Korah? Well, you read about him in Numbers chapter 16. Korah was a gifted man and a man of privilege. He was a cousin of Moses. He was a Levite. He was a prince of Israel. But, somehow he got the idea that he did not like the leadership of Moses and he did not like the leadership of Aaron. Now, remember that Moses and

Aaron were a prophet and a priest. As a matter of fact, the Bible prophesies the coming of Jesus and says the coming of Jesus is this: that Jesus is going to be a prophet like Moses. (Acts 3:20–22; 7:37) Moses is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, and so is Aaron a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, because Christ is our High Priest. Christ is prophet and priest to the Church.

But, here's this man named Korah; and he rebels against Moses, and he rebels against Aaron. And, you can go back and read the story for yourself. He says, "You guys think you're just hot stuff. You're taking too much upon you. We don't like your leadership. We don't like what you say. We don't like what you do." And, he organized a rebellion against Moses and against Aaron. And, the Bible says that Moses fell on his face before God and told God about it, and there came a judgment where the earth opened up and swallowed Korah. He went down to hell—and all who followed him. (Numbers 16)

What was Korah's problem? He didn't pervert the gospel. He didn't prostitute the gospel. He just fought the gospel. He hated the gospel. These who represent God's prophet and God's priest, picturing the Lord Jesus Christ, he rose up in rebellion against them. And, I'm telling you, my dear friend, there are those in America who absolutely hate the message that we preach in this church. I mean, they hate it. They hate the blood—not that they deny it; they hate it. They hate the Word of God.

I was talking to a man the other day. He said, "I'm a psychologist." He said, "I used to listen to you preach." He said, "Man, I hated you. I said, 'That man's dangerous'" — talking about me—"That man's dangerous." By the way, he's gloriously saved now. He kept listening. He said, "You know what?" He said, "You know, you are dangerous—dangerous to another kingdom, to another way."

Oh, friend, listen, we have today those who despise the blood-bought way. We have those who prostitute the blood-bought way. We have those who pervert the blood-bought way. They are all false prophets—those who pervert the gospel, those who prostitute the gospel, those who protest the gospel. They are all wolves in sheep's clothing.

## **II. The Fruit They Bear**

Well, let's move on a little bit and think not only about the fleece they wear, but let's talk about the fruit they bear. Go back again and see what our Lord says. Are we helpless? Our Lord changes the metaphor. And, He says in verse 16: "*Ye shall know them*"—who? These wolves—"by their fruits"—now, He no longer speaks of them as animals, but as trees—"Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree

*bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.*” (Matthew 7:16–19) Now, God is saying that the devil cannot continue to cover up by deception because the fruit is there. Now, let me tell you three things about fruit:

### **A. The Root Determines the Fruit**

First of all, it is the root that determines the fruit. Isn't that right? That's what Jesus is saying. You don't get figs from thistles. It is the root that determines the fruit.

Now, if you had a fruit tree that wasn't bearing the right kind of fruit, what could you do to get the right kind of fruit on it? Well, you could prune it. And, all you do is just strengthen the root. There are a lot of people that think, “Well, you know, if I just get rid of this thing or that thing, well, I'll be a better tree.”

Well, not only could you prune it, but you can transplant it: you can take a bad fruit tree and put it in another place. That's what some folks do when they move their membership: they're just transplanting a bad tree. It's like moving a corpse from one mausoleum to another. I mean, you can transplant it.

What else could you do? Well, you could cultivate it. Now, it's a bad tree, so you cultivate it. A lot of folks are going off to church growth conferences today. They are talking about church growth. And, as I read some of that material, friend, they are telling them how to fertilize weeds. I mean, growth is not everything. So, you could cultivate the tree.

Or, maybe you could just rename that tree. It's a bad tree, so you just give it another name. That's not going to change the fruit. It's the root that determines the fruit.

What could you do? Why, friend, you could decorate it. You could pull off the bad fruit and tie on some figs, some pomegranates. No, no matter what you do—whether you transplant it, you fertilize it, you prune it, you rename it, you decorate it—it is the root that determines the fruit. That's what Jesus is saying.

### **B. The Fruit Reveals the Root**

But, wait a minute. Turn that around: it is the root that determines the fruit, but it's the fruit that reveals the root. Sometimes you can't tell what kind of a fruit tree that it is—you can look at the root and you can't tell. Lots of roots look the same. It's the fruit that tells you what the root is, but it's the root that produces the fruit.

Now, that's what Jesus is saying. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure this out. That's one thing about the Lord Jesus Christ. He was such an incredible teacher. You see, listen, how do you judge a preacher? Not merely by what he preaches, but by what he produces. Jesus said, “[*You will*] know them”— how?—“by their [*fruit*].” (Matthew 7:16)

Now, you may not be able to tell at first because you've got to wait 'til the fruit comes

out. He may be a good-looking tree. But, Jesus said in John 15, verse 16: *“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that at your fruit should remain.”* (John 15:16) What’s the mark of a man of God? There are plenty of people out there who know Jesus because of him. They will be loving Jesus. There will be fruit, and that fruit will remain. (John 15:16) And, our Lord says we are not to be unfruitful. (2 Peter 1:8) Galatians chapter 5, verse 22: *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith.”* (Galatians 5:22) That’s the fruit of the Spirit. I can’t produce that fruit, and you can’t produce that fruit. If we’ll abide in Him, we’ll bear that fruit—the fruit of the Spirit. It’s not your fruit. It’s not mine.

### C. The Seed Determines the Root and the Fruit

You see, how can you know them? Well, there is the fleece they wear, but there is the fruit they bear. Now, I said that the root determines the fruit, but the fruit reveals the root. Now, wait a minute. Stay with me. It’s the seed that determines the root and the fruit. Isn’t that right? It’s the seed that determines the root and the fruit. I mean, you’re not going to have the right kind of root or fruit if you don’t have the right kind of seed. And, the seed, Jesus says, is the Word of God. You read Matthew chapter 13 about *“a sower [who] went forth to sow.”* (Matthew 13:3) The seed is the Word of God. It’s the seed—the seed, the seed—that determines both the root and the fruit. What a teacher Jesus is!

### III. The Fate They Share

Now, here’s the third thing—and I just have a few moments. But, look in verse 21. I want you to see the fate that they share. *“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day”*—He’s now talking about the Judgment Day—*“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you”*—now, here’s the fate they share—*“depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”* (Matthew 7:21–23)

Now, my friend, pay attention now; listen carefully: *spiritual activity without scriptural authority is satanic iniquity—spiritual activity without scriptural authority is satanic iniquity.* Jesus is going to say to these, “Depart from me.” In spite of their false profession they say, “Lord, Lord.” He’s going to say, “Depart from me.” In spite of their false preaching: “We prophesied in your name.” He’s going to say, “Depart from me.” In spite of the false power: “In thy name we cast out devils.” He’s going to say, “Depart from me.” In spite of their false performance: “In thy name done many wonderful

works.” And, in spite of their profession, in spite of their preaching, in spite of their power, in spite of their performance, they never knew the Lord Jesus Christ, and He never knew them.

This is not a picture of someone who lost salvation—they never had it. They may have sung in the choir, but they weren’t saved. They may have taken the offering, but they were not saved. They may have preached, but they were not saved. They may have had healing campaigns in which they cast out devils, but they were not saved. And, what they did they did through the power of the great deceiver, Satan himself.

## **Conclusion**

You say, “Well, pastor, how can I know whether I’m saved or not?” Well, friend, you get God’s Word and you stand on it. And, if what I preach to you and tell you does not square with the Word of God, then I am a false prophet. You get the Word of God, and don’t put your faith in anybody else, and let the Holy Spirit of God speak to you. Let me tell you what to do. I’m finished—I’m finished. But listen; let me give you about five things—I’m just going to name them:

### **A. Study the Faith**

Number one: You need to study the faith. If you don’t study the faith, many can be drawn away into a false cult. Study the faith.

### **B. Show the Faith**

Number two: Show the faith. Do you know the best argument for Christianity and against Christianity is the life of a Christian?

### **C. Stand for the Faith**

Number three: Stand for the faith. Get a bulldog grip on the Word of God.

*Holy Bible, Book divine,  
Precious treasure, thou art mine.*

—JOHN BURTON, SR.

### **D. Support the Faith**

Next: Support the faith. Do you know what the tragedy of today is? That many good people are in bad churches. Get in a Bible-preaching church. I’m not saying this is the only one, and I’m not saying we don’t have a lot of room for improvement. But, you need to support the faith. People say, “Well, you know, I know that our church is an apostate church, but Grandma’s buried in the backyard.” Well, friend, Grandma would get up and leave if she could, I’ll guarantee you—because Grandma believed the old-time religion. Support the faith.

## E. Share the Faith

I'll say one last thing: Share the faith. Share it. People are waiting to know. We know the truth not because of us but by the grace of God. Share the faith. *We hear people say, "Well, keep the faith." Don't keep it; give it away. If you don't want to give it away, maybe you ought to give it up.*

Maybe you don't have the real thing. If there were ever a message needed today, it's this message, where Jesus Christ, the Son of God, says, "Beware of the wolves." (Matthew 7:15) It is Jesus who is giving that warning. And, if you are a mom or a dad here today and you've not yet given your heart to Jesus Christ, you'd better come and give your heart to Jesus Christ. You'd better come and give your heart to Jesus Christ and get your family in the Word of God or your children are going to be food and fodder for ravenous wolves, whose jaws will drip red with the blood of your children. I'm not talking about physical blood. I'm talking about the enemy who deceives to destroy, to devour. That's the nature of the enemy. And, God has given children moms and dads to guide them. But, even if you don't have children, you need Jesus. You need to be saved. You need to receive Christ as your personal Savior and Lord.†



# How to Weather the Storms of Life

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: April 2, 1993**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 7:24–27**

*“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock.”*

MATTHEW 7:24

## Outline

Introduction

- I. You Need to Erect a Sturdy Building
  - A. Hearing the Word of God
  - B. Heeding the Word of God
- II. You Can Expect a Stormy Blast
- III. You Can Experience a Steadfast Blessing

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and be finding the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter 7? And, we’re coming almost to the end of this great, great passage that we call the “Sermon on the Mount.” Now, before I read this scripture that we’ll begin in verse 24 in just a moment, let me tell you this: that we have a very, very, very serious problem in today’s world, in what we call “the Christian world.” And, the problem is dropout disciples, collapsing Christians, famishing church members—people who, when they ought to be standing up, are folding up. They get baptized, they come to church for a while, and then trouble, persecution, heartache, temptation comes, and they fall away. I call them “Alka-Seltzer Christians”: you drop them in water, they fizzle a little while, and then they are gone. Do you know folks like this? I think there are many like this. They are superficial saints. And, the reason they fall away, the reason they cannot stand, is they have no real foundation in their lives. And, when the storms come, they are blown away. That’s what Jesus Christ is talking about right here.

Many of us know people that will come to mind when I read this scripture, and many of you may be here today and you have no real foundation. You think everything is fine, but when the storm comes, you’ll be gone, too, because you don’t have a foundation. I

want you to listen to this. Jesus says in verse 24: *“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock”—a rock; he built his house upon a rock—“And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew”—but what happened? Look at it again—“and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock”—now, look in verse 26—“And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.”* (Matthew 7:24–27) That means, “And tragic was the fall of it.”

Now, that’s the passage that we have before us today, and what a pertinent passage it is! Jesus here is talking about building on a firm foundation. And friend, if the bottom has fallen out of your life, you had better go back and examine the foundation. There was something wrong with the foundation. Now, if you would learn how to weather the storm—and, by the way, the storm is coming—there are three categories here today: those who are just getting out of the storm, those in the midst of the storm, and those who are getting ready to get in a storm. All right, the storm is coming. Now, if you would weather the storm, there are three things I want to lay on your heart out of this passage of Scripture.

## **I. You Need to Erect a Sturdy Building**

The very first is this: that you need to erect a sturdy building. Our Lord says that we’re all building a house; our lives are like a house: *“whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock.”* (Matthew 7:24)

Now, you are all building some kind of a spiritual house. Everybody is. I cannot live in the house that you build. You cannot live in the house I build. I am stuck with the house that I build, and I will stand or fall in the house that I build. Now, our Lord here is talking about two kinds of builders. In verse 24, he talks about a wise builder who builds his house upon a rock. And, in verse 26, he talks about a foolish builder who built his house upon the sand.

Now, wait a minute. In many ways, these two builders are very much alike. The Lord, in this passage, is not talking about the out-and-out pagan; He’s talking about two categories of persons who have heard His Word, two so-called followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, notice the similarities. They both have the same basic purpose: they’re both house builders. As a matter of fact, they are both building their houses in the same basic place because the same storm that hit one hit the other. And, they probably all used the same basic plan. Remember, when you build a house, there is the

floor, the walls, the roof. You can have different designs, but there is the same basic plan. And, when I look out at this congregation this morning, you are all very similar. You're all in church, all hearing the Word of God, all saying, "We want to succeed in life." We have the same basic purpose. We're in the same basic place. We have the same basic plan. But, there was a vital difference in these two, but the difference was below the surface. And, there is a difference in this congregation today. The difference is not what we see when we look around. The difference is in the foundation.

There was the rock builder, first of all—the rock builder. He built his house upon the rock. Luke says, in Luke chapter 6 and verse 48—when Luke reported this, he adds something in his report of what Jesus said that Matthew does not tell us: that the builder dug deep and laid the foundation upon the rock. (Luke 6:48) You know that a house with a good foundation can stand the storm. But then, he said there was another man; this was the sand builder. Now, you can build a house more quickly if you don't bother with a foundation and just go out to a sandy lot and begin to build—pour the slab, or lay the joists on the ground, put down a base, build the walls, put the roof on. Hey, that's easier; that's quicker; that's less costly—and your house will look just as good as your neighbor's. As a matter of fact, if you're crafty, you can take some of your money that you would have put in the foundation and maybe put a little more gingerbread in your house. Now, these are the two kinds of builders—very, very similar, and yet vitally different.

Now, what makes a firm foundation? What is building on the rock? Jesus makes it very clear. Look in verse 24: *"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock."* (Matthew 7:24) There are two things necessary to have a firm foundation. What two things make the rock?

### **A. Hearing the Word of God**

Well, first of all, hearing the Word of God. Jesus said, *"Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine..."* (Matthew 7:24) Now, that's what we're doing today; we're listening to the Word of God—because the Bible says in Romans chapter 10, verse 17 that *"faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."* (Romans 10:17) So, that's part of having a rock foundation for your life: you must hear the Word of God. *"Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine..."* (Matthew 7:24)

### **B. Heeding the Word of God**

But, that's only half of it. Now, look very carefully in verse 24. It is both hearing and heeding the Word of God: *"whosoever heareth these [words] of mine"*—and what's that next word?—*"and doeth them"*—*"and doeth them."* (Matthew 7:24) And, that's where we begin to separate the rock builders from the sand builders.

Now, one of those who must have been there to hear Jesus give this sermon was a man named James, and I don't think that James ever forgot it. I want you to see what James had to say. Just put your bookmark there in Matthew 7 and turn with me to James chapter 1. Just fast-forward on through Philemon and Hebrews, and just keep on going and you come to James—right after Hebrews. Now remember, James heard Jesus say that it is the man who hears the Word of God and does the Word of God whose life is built on a firm foundation. (Matthew 7:24) And, notice what James says in James chapter 1 and verse 22: *“Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”* (James 1:22) I believe that James was thinking about what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 7 right here—*“Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only”* (James 1:22)—because any man is self-deceived who comes to church and hears the Word of God, does not do the Word of God, and has the idea that he has done what he's supposed to do.

You know, it's like a person who would come this morning and they would say, “You know, I enjoy the message; oh, the music—the music was wonderful,” but then there is no change whatsoever in their lifestyle, in the way they live. James said, “That man is deceived, and he has deceived himself. He is self-deluded”—*“Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”* (James 1:22) Jesus said, “Whosoever hears this word, and does it...” (Matthew 7:24)

Now, let's just stay with James for a moment. I want you to go to James chapter 2, and I'm going to read an extended passage of Scripture. And, it is one of the most controversial passages of Scripture in all of the Bible, but I am totally convinced that what I am about to read this morning is the message that most churches in America need. I want you to listen to it. And, many Baptist churches need this. Here's James. James is very straightforward. He says, “If you are a hearer of the word, and you're not a doer, you're deceived.” (James 1:22) And then, he asks a question in chapter 2, verse 14: *“What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?”*—now, the Greek manuscript would give it this way: “Can that faith save him?” That is, faith without works—*“If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body”—*what good does it do?—*“what doth it profit? Even so”—*listen—*“faith, if it hath not works, is dead”—*dead—*“being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble”—*that's more than some folks do—*“But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and*

*by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*" (James 2:14–26) I wanted to read the whole passage. I didn't want to leave anything out.

Now, what is all of this talking about? I want to make this abundantly clear, and I want every human being, every mother's child in this congregation, or those who may be listening by television or radio or tape... I want to make this absolutely, totally clear: you are saved by grace through faith alone, and not of works of any kind. Now, I want that to be very, very clear. It is *"not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us."* (Titus 3:5) The Bible says in Ephesians 2, verses 8 and 9: *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."* (Ephesians 2:8–9) And, Paul said in Romans 11:6—and I love this—he says, *"And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."* (Romans 11:6) Sounds like some sort of a little conundrum, a little riddle. Well, what's he saying? He said, "You can't mix grace and works. You just have to make up your mind: either you're saved by the grace of God or you're saved by self-effort."

But yet, here comes James, and James says that *"faith without works is dead."* (James 2:26) Now, are James and Paul having an argument? No, they are in agreement. *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God."* (2 Timothy 3:16) What James and Paul are talking about are heads and tails of the same coin, and they are exactly what Jesus is talking about when He says, *"Whosoever [hears] these sayings of mine, and [does] them, [is like] a wise man [that] built his house upon a rock."* (Matthew 7:24)

Now, we need to understand this: *while we are saved by faith alone, the faith that saves is never alone.* Did that get through? *While we are saved by faith alone, the faith that saves is never alone.* Now, the difference between James and Paul is Paul is talking about how to be justified in the sight of God, but James is talking about how to be justified in the sight of men. Look in verse 18: *"Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works."* (James 2:18) "You can't see my heart. You can't see any faith in me. God can see it, but you can't see it. The only way you can know my faith is what you see in me." Paul is talking about being justified before God. James is talking about being justified before men. Paul is talking about the root of our salvation. James is talking about the fruit of our salvation. Paul is talking about the foundation. James is talking

about the building. Paul is talking about the provision of our salvation. James is talking about the proof. Paul is talking about the means. James is talking about the marks. Paul is talking about a know-so salvation. James is talking about a show-so salvation. They are all the same. What James is saying is that if you're truly saved, it is more than just mental assent; it is more than just head belief.

Now, he says in verse 14 that without true faith, what you say is just a profitless profession. Look, if you will, in verse 14: "*What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can [that] faith save him?*" (James 2:14) Friend, it will take more than a pious platitude to get your soul to heaven. I ask sometimes at the end of this service, "How many of you are certain that if you died, you'd go to heaven?" And, you lift your hand; you say you have faith. But do you have faith? Has there been a radical, dramatic change in your life? You may have profession without possession. James said it's like saying to a man who is hungry and cold, "Well, go your way. Be warm; be full." James says, "What good does that do if you don't give him some food, if you don't put some clothes on him? And, what good does it do just saying, 'I know the Lord,' when you don't know Him? It is a profitless profession." He says, "It is a barren belief." (James 2:14–16)

Look in verse 18: "*Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works*"—and then, here's the illustration—"*Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well*"—if I were to ask in this congregation, "How many people believe that there is one God?" you say, "Oh yes." I say, "Well, that's good. You passed the test." "But," he said, "I want to tell you something else"—"*the devils*"—the demons—"*also believe, and tremble.*" (James 2:18–19) Did you know that the devils—the demons in hell—are very orthodox? They are not unorthodox. They believe more than some theological professors believe. You read where the demons cower before the Lord. They tremble. This word *tremble* actually means "to make the hair stand up on the back of their neck." They tremble at the very thought of one God. Jesus has authority over all of the demons.

Suppose the devil were to walk down this aisle this morning to join this church, and somebody sits down and says, "Well now, Mr. Devil, we want to know: Are you orthodox or not? Do you believe in one God?" "Oh, yes." "Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?" "Oh, yes." "Do you believe He was born of a virgin?" "Oh, yes." "Do you believe He died on the cross?" "Certainly do." "Do you believe that He walked out of the grave?" "Yes, sir. I believe that." "You check out pretty good there, devil. Well now, another thing, devil. I want to ask you a question. You're going to come to the Bellevue Baptist Church. You're not just going to be a Sunday-morning pew warmer, are you?" "Oh, no, no, no, no. I'll be glad to do anything you ask me to do. I'll be an usher. I'll sing in the choir if you want me to. I'll be glad to preach. I'd be glad to get in that organization

and work.” “But, one more thing, devil, we want to ask you: Are you willing to bow your knee to the Lordship of Jesus Christ?” “No, I’ll not do that.” And, he will not do that.

And, there are many people who think just because they have a mental assent to the facts of the gospel and just because they are working in the church some way that they are going to heaven, and they have no more faith than the devil himself because they have never ever surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, *“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven”*—that’s verse 21—*“but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.”* (Matthew 7:21) He’s not talking here about a works salvation, but He’s saying, friend, that we must surrender our lives totally to the Lord Jesus Christ or else our belief is a barren belief.

Now, James makes it very clear. He gives two examples and one illustration. Look in verse 21: *“Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?”* (James 2:21) Now, wait a minute. If you know your Bible history, when was Abraham counted righteous? Well, he offered Isaac upon the altar in Genesis chapter 22. But, in Genesis chapter 15, the Bible says that Abraham believed God, and it was *“counted...to him for righteousness.”* (Genesis 15:6) What’s the difference? What happened in Genesis 15, when Abraham believed God, was seen over here thirty years later in Genesis 22 when he offered up Isaac. That’s what Paul is talking about over here: Abraham truly believed God, and it showed up over here. Don’t tell me, friend, that you are saved and you love God if you’re not living by the Word of God. Jesus Christ said, *“Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”* (Luke 6:46)

And then, he gives another illustration: *“Was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she [hid the spies]?”* (James 2:25) Remember James is talking about being seen before men. You couldn’t see Rahab’s heart. But, let me tell you what happened to Rahab: Rahab was a harlot in the Old Testament who got saved, and her life was so changed that she married a prince of Israel, became the great-great-grandmother of King David, and is in the house and lineage of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Her life was changed.

Now, some who are members of churches are still living like a harlot, and you’re going to die and split hell wide open. Listen, *if your religion has not changed your life, you’d better change your religion.* Just simply saying, “I believe,” just hearing the Word of God—that does not save. It is faith.

And then, he gives the classic illustration. He gives two examples. And then, here’s the illustration. Look at it in verse 26: *“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”* (James 2:26) Now, let’s get a cadaver up here, a body up here, and look at it. Maybe we’ll do an autopsy on it. There it is. Well, say, what a wonderful piece of machinery that is! What a wonderful specimen of anatomy that is!

And, we can get our pad and say, “There are the lungs. There’s the liver. There’s the heart. There’s the esophagus. Here’s the stomach. Here are the intestines. Here’s the spleen.” All of those are facts. But, the body is dead. What good are theological facts without life? *“As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead.”* (James 2:26) Now, it’s not works that make a body alive. It is life that enables you to do those works. Do you see the difference? You can’t make a body alive by manipulating the body. That doesn’t give life. It is life that gives the works. There’s no contradiction. What we are saying is this: that if you would be a rock builder, you must hear the Word of God and heed the Word of God. *“Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only.”* (James 1:22)

There are millions of people who are trudging to churches on Sunday, listening to sermons, and they are going to die and go to hell because there has never been a change in their life. And, some are in this congregation this morning, and it will blow right past you. Jesus said, “Whosoever heareth these words of mine, and does them, he’s like a man that build his house upon a rock.” (Matthew 7:24) So, the very first thing I want you to see—listen to me—if you would weather the storm, you must erect a sturdy building.

## II. You Can Expect a Stormy Blast

Now, let’s move to the second point very quickly: not only must you erect a sturdy building—that’s one that has a firm foundation—but after you erect a sturdy building, you can expect a stormy blast. A sturdy building, a stormy blast—it is coming.

Go back now to our passage of Scripture that we are looking at in Matthew chapter 7 and see what our Lord says. And, we need to understand this. Children of God, you need to understand this. Listen very carefully. Jesus says that the storm fell upon both houses—verse 25: *“And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house.”* (Matthew 7:25) Which house? The house built upon a rock. Verse 27: *“And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house.”* (Matthew 7:27) What house? The house on the sand.

Now, when you get saved, does that mean there are going to be no storms in your life? There will be storms. The rain comes down; that’s pressure from above. The floods come up; that’s pressure from beneath. The wind blows; that’s pressure all around. *“Man that is born of woman is...full of trouble.”* (Job 14:1) Storms come to every life, saved or lost; built on the rock, or built on the sand. I can tell you from the authority of the Word of God, you are going into storms. And, do you know what the storm is going to do? The storm is going to show whether or not you have a foundation. That’s all it’s going to do. The storm is going to test your faith. And, *the faith that cannot be tested is a faith that cannot be trusted.*



Don't get the idea that when you get saved, there's going to be no more trouble, no more difficulty. The storms are going to come. And, if you get your theology from circumstances rather than from the Word of God, you're going to get the idea that God doesn't love you. Let me tell you, friend, storms are going to come. There's going to be sickness. There's going to be suffering. There's going to be persecution. There's going to be heartache. There's going to be difficulty. But, these things cannot separate a man whose life is built on the rock. Romans 8, verses 35 and following: *"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things"*—not in the absence of these things, but in all of these things; in the eye of the storm—*"we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."* (Romans 8:35–37) And, difficulty in your life does not mean that God has abandoned you. It does not mean that. He has said, *"I will never leave [you], nor forsake [you]"* (Hebrews 13:5)—Hebrews 13, verse 5.

### **III. You Can Experience a Steadfast Blessing**

What am I saying? You must erect, my dear friend, a very stable, a very secure, a very strong building. You must do that. And then, you must expect a stormy blast. And then, you can experience a steadfast blessing. Notice again what Jesus says. Jesus says here in verse 24: *"Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house"*—Luke says it *"beat vehemently upon [the] house"* (Luke 6:48)—*"and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock."* (Matthew 7:24–25) Why do some people fold up? Why do some people cave in? Why are some just blown away? I'll tell you why: they have built upon the shifting sand of good intention, they have built upon the silt and the muck of religious activity, but they have never built upon the Lord Jesus Christ. *"For"*—the Bible says—*"other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is [the Lord] Jesus Christ."* (1 Corinthians 3:11)

You say, "Pastor, I know one of the finest families in our church. They used to serve God, but difficulty came; and we don't see them any more. But, they were such a fine family, pastor." Yes, a beautiful house—well furnished, well painted, well designed. And, that was a wonderful family living in that spiritual house, but it had no foundation. John says in 1 John 2, verse 19: *"They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."* (1 John 2:19)

I'm not talking to you about sinless perfection. I'm not saying that if you get saved and give your heart to Jesus and the storms come, you won't have some doubts. You

will. I'm not saying that you won't stumble. You may. I'm not saying that you might not have a relapse. You might have a relapse.

Standing in the crowd when Jesus gave this Sermon on the Mount about two kinds of builders—you know who was there, most likely? A man named Simon Peter and a man named Judas. They were both there. They heard Jesus say, “Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock. The winds, the rains, the floods came, beat upon the house, but it stood.” Then they heard Jesus say, “But a foolish man is like a man that built his house on the sand. The winds, the rains, the floods came, and the house fell. And tragic, great, was the fall of it.” (Matthew 7:24–27) Judas was there. Simon Peter was there. Two kinds of builders—very similar: they both erected a spiritual house. Peter built one, and Judas built one. And, had you looked at the two houses, you know what you would have said? You would have said, “Judas can build a better house than Simon Peter.”

Do you know who was the best man outwardly? Do you know who had the prettiest house? Not Peter. Judas had the best-looking house. He did, didn't he? Do you know what they did with Judas? They made Judas the treasurer. Now, who do you get for the treasurer? The best. I mean, the most trustworthy. When Jesus said, “One of you is going to betray me,” (Matthew 26:21; Mark 14:18; John 13:21) not a one of them said, “Oh, I know who it is. It's that rascal Judas.” Not a one of the said that. They said, “I wonder if it's me.” None of them said, “I know it's Judas”—not a one! You know why? He had a good-looking house. I mean, a good-looking house! He knew how to build a house—almost.

But, there was a difference. Ol' Simon Peter, bless his heart, Jesus said, “Peter, who do you say that I am?” Peter said, “[*You are*] the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Matthew 16:16) And, Jesus said, “That's right. And, upon this rock I'll build my house; I'll build my Church. The very gates of hell will not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:18) Peter knew that. Peter was weak, just like I am and like you are. He wasn't much of a house builder, but boy did he have a good foundation! He laid his faith on a firm foundation.

Now, I want to tell you that a storm came, and it blew through the life of Judas; and a storm came, and it blew through the life of Simon Peter. And, when the storm was over, Judas's house was gone—it was gone. And, Judas died and went to hell. You say, “Did Judas lose his salvation?” He never had it. The Bible says that Jesus, speaking of Judas, said, “*Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?*” (John 6:70) The Bible says that “*Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not.*” (John 6:64) Judas never ever had real faith. Simon Peter did. Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, Satan has desired you, that he can sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith will not fail.” (Luke 22:31–32) He had faith, and the Savior interceded for

him. You know, when the storm hit ol' Simon, a few windows were broken out. Did you know that? And, some shingles blew off the roof, and some things happened to that house. I want to tell you something: after the storm, he was still standing. And, he became the flaming apostle of Pentecost, and do you know why? I'll tell you why: he had the real thing—he had the real thing. He knew God. He had heard the Word of God. He believed the Son of God. He bowed his knee to Jesus Christ. Weak, yes; failing, yes—but the house stood that was built on a rock.

## Conclusion

I wonder if you can say,

*My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness.*

[...]

*On Christ the solid rock I stand,  
All other ground is sinking sand.*

—EDWARD MOTE

You listen to this: there are thousands of people in churches today who, when the storms hit, they will be gone—some of them in this building today. When the storm comes, rather than standing up, you will fold up. And, I'll tell you why: you don't have a foundation. And, the storm is going to come for all of us—not some; all of us. You'd better make certain that you have a sure foundation. And, when the bottom falls out, just examine the foundation. *“Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”* (1 Corinthians 3:11) †

# What to Do When the Bottom Falls Out

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: March 21, 1999**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 7:24–27**

*“And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.”*

MATTHEW 7:27

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Surety of Rock-Solid Faith
  - A. You Must Have the Word of God
  - B. You Must Hear the Word of God
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- II. The Stability of Rock-Solid Faith
- III. The Security of Rock-Solid Faith

Conclusion

## Introduction

Now, you find Matthew chapter 7, and in a few moments we're going to begin reading in verse 24. As you are looking for Matthew chapter 7, may I ask you a question? Do you know somebody, somebodies, perhaps an entire family, that were faithful to the church, seemingly serving the Lord, presumably happy in Jesus, and then some calamity came, and they dropped out, they stopped coming, they seemed to collapse, to fold up, to throw in the towel? The bottom has fallen out of life, and they don't know what to do. Maybe they went to the doctor, and the doctor diagnosed cancer and didn't really know what to prescribe.

Now perhaps a child was hit by an automobile, a precious little child, sudden death, no explanation, just an act of carelessness, perhaps the child's fault, perhaps some reckless driver. Perhaps you've been in a company for a long time, serving that company, doing a good job; then your job is taken. Maybe somebody has undercut you, or maybe the company is just downsizing, and you're caught in the downsizing; and here you are: many bills, and no way to pay them. Maybe you thought you had a wonderful family and a godly husband. Maybe your husband was a pastor, a deacon, an

evangelist; maybe one of the leading lights in the church; and he announces to you that he's leaving for another woman. These things have happened to people. Things like this, and other things, have happened to people in this congregation. What do you do? What do you do when the bottom falls out?

Well, I'll tell you what you do. You examine the foundation. You examine the foundation when the bottom falls out. Look, if you will, in verse 24. This is a part of the Sermon on the Mount. And our Lord says, "*Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.*" (Matthew 7:24–27)

Now, folks, I might as well tell you that life is in nature tragic. All of us, sooner or later, are going to get sick. All of us, sooner or later, if Jesus does not come, are going to die. Sooner or later, one by one, our loved ones will be taken from us. Now I'm not morbid about that, and I'm not even negative about that, but we may as well face it: life, in its very essence, is tragic apart from God. I hope you understand that. I hope you realize that.

Now what our Lord is doing here is talking about our lives as if they were houses. Now we all need houses to live in. What is a house for? Well, a house is for shelter. A house is for security. A house is for sufficiency, satisfaction, and supply. It's our place where we retreat. A house is for serenity. And we all need some sort of a house; we want some sort of a place to live in—and so we provide for ourselves some kind of a house. Well, your soul also needs a house. There needs to be a sanctuary for the soul. There needs to be a place of security and sufficiency that your spirit can dwell in. That's what our Lord is talking about now. He's using the analogy of an earthly house to speak of a spiritual house—that is, a sanctuary for the soul that we live in. Now all of us are building that kind of a house. You are. I am. I can't live in a house you've built. And you can't live in the house that I've built.

Now in this passage of Scripture Jesus told of two kinds of builders. First of all, He told of builders that outwardly looked very similar, just like the people in this congregation this morning. You all look so nice. You all look so happy. You all look so holy. But I know that you're not all the same. You see, there are outward similarities. For example, if you look at this, both of these builders in the story that Jesus gave, they both have the same purpose: they are building a house, and actually they built in the same place, because Jesus is going to tell about a storm that struck; and evidently both

houses were in the same place, for the storm struck both houses; and actually they had basically the same plan—no doubt about that.

Every house has a floor, walls, and roof. There may be some differences, but there is so much similarity, just like our congregation this morning, and just like those of you who are listening to me through television or radio or later on a tape. There is much similarity, and as we look at people outwardly, there are very definite superficial similarities. But there's also a distinctive difference in everybody here today and everybody listening on television—and the difference is that which cannot be seen, because the difference is underground; it deals with the foundation.

One of these homes Jesus talked about had a rock foundation. The other home Jesus talked about was built on shifting sand. And so it is in our congregation today. We have those today who are built upon a solid foundation, and we have those who have endeavored to build upon the sand. The sand builder has no foundation. Now I want to remind you again that if you had walked up to these two houses, you would not have been able to tell the difference. Outwardly, they looked the same. Do you know what displayed the difference? The storm. When the storm came, then the difference in these two houses that were so similar was revealed. The house that is built on the sand, according to the story Jesus gave, fell. It had no foundation. When the wind, the rains, the flood came, the house that was built upon the rock stood. The difference was underground.

Now I said, what do you do when the bottom falls out? You go back and you examine the foundation. And if you realize that the bottom fell out because you had no foundation, then you begin to build again, but this time on solid rock. Now, listen to me very carefully. We're going to talk about that foundation. We're going to talk about rock-solid faith this morning, and how to have it; what it is, and what it is like. These are teachings of Jesus. I just hope my message doesn't ever get in the way of what Jesus has said and that you will hear Jesus today.

There are three things I want you to think about today as we look in this passage of Scripture—because, folks, I'm telling you, the storm is coming to your life, my life: it is only a matter of time.

## **I. The Surety of Rock-Solid Faith**

First of all, let's talk about the surety—write down the word *surety*—the surety of rock-solid faith. How can we be sure that we have rock-solid faith? Well, there are three things that are necessary for you to have rock-solid faith. Number one: You must have the Word of God. Number two: You must hear the Word of God. Number three: You must heed the Word of God. Now Jesus said that the foundation is the Word of God. He said, "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them is like a man that

builds his house upon a rock.” So it is the sayings of Jesus, the Word of God, that give us this foundation.

#### A. **You Must Have the Word of God**

Now what we’re talking about is the surety of the Word of God. Now, number one, let’s make sure you have the Word of God. Back up to verse 15 in this same chapter—Matthew 7, verse 15. Look at it. Do you have it? Look at it: *“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.”* (Matthew 7:15) Now what he’s saying is that you may be building on the shifting sand of philosophy; you may be building on the mud of false religion; you may be building on some quagmire rather than on the Word of God, because there are many false prophets that are out there in the world.

Now you can walk up to a house, and it may have a sign posted that says, “Beware of the dog.” Well, if you’re smart, you will beware of the dog. And if Jesus says, “Beware of the wolves; beware of false prophets, which are like wolves in sheep’s clothing,” then you ought to listen. Every mother’s child in this building needs to hear the word of the Lord Jesus Christ. Learn this. Our Lord is talking about false prophets, people who are in religion.

The devil is not opposed to religion. It is one of his chief tools. Two ways that Satan tries to war against the church: one is persecution; the other is infiltration. Infiltration is more dangerous than persecution, and here our Lord is talking about infiltration. He’s talking about those who pretend to be prophets of God; they wear sheep’s clothing, but it is a disguise; they really are the enemy within the gates. The Apostle Paul was talking to the elders of the Ephesian church. Now Paul was about to leave them, and he was afraid that they might allow some false prophets to come into the church.

And, friend, this does happen. I know of a very fine church not very far from here that had one of the finest, most godly, Bible-preaching pastors in America as the pastor. When that pastor retired, that church called a man that was not rock-solid in faith. And those of us who knew the church, and knew the man that they had called, said, “How on earth could a pulpit committee and a church make such a tragic error?”

Paul was concerned. And notice what he said in Acts chapter 20—put this in your margin—verses 28 and 29. He was talking to the church at Ephesus now and he said, *“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock,”*—that is, the sheep—*“over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”* And that’s my job: to feed the church with the Word of God. And then Paul said, *“For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.”* (Acts 20:28–29) Paul said, “Listen. Take heed. Be careful that you have the Word of God.” Now when you look for the devil,

never fail to look in the pulpit. Satan is occupying many pulpits in America today.

A little boy told me one time after I preached, “Pastor, when you were up there preaching this morning, I could see the devil just as plain.” Well, I hope he meant that he could see the devil that I was describing, not portraying.

But here’s what the Apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians chapter 11, beginning in verse 13: *“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness.”* (2 Corinthians 11:13–15) And though a man may have a clerical robe on, he may stand behind the sacred desk, but he has not been divinely anointed and divinely appointed: he has been ordained of the devil. You say, “Pastor Rogers, that is hard.” No, that’s the kindest thing I can say. I’m telling you, make certain, if you’re going to build upon the rock, that you have the Word of God. Look beneath the fleece. Satan is a master of disguise.

Now in the world today there are all kinds of religions. We have Christianity. We have Buddhism. We have Islam. We have all kinds of religions. And then if you take Christianity, people have even subdivided Christianity into Protestant and Catholic—Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Church of God, Church of Christ. But, folks, there are only two kinds of religion: the true and the false. That’s all: just the true and the false.

How are we going to know that we have the Word of God if we’re going to be building upon the solid foundation? Well, we’re not left to wonder. Look in verse 16. Jesus said, *“Ye shall know them by their fruits.”* (Matthew 7:16) It’s very obvious. I mean, we don’t have to guess about whether or not we’re building on the rock. You can know them by their fruits.

Now it is the root that produces the fruit. Now if you’ve got a tree, and you don’t like the kind of fruit that it’s bearing, what might you do with it? Well, you can prune it. But that’s not going to change the fruit; all it does is strengthen the root. You could transplant it. You would be surprised at how many people try to do that. They go from one church to another, without being born again. They follow one pastor—one church calls one apostate pastor after another apostate pastor. It’s like moving a corpse from one mausoleum to another. You can cultivate this tree. But what good is that? You know, today we have a lot of things called church growth conferences; but those church growth conferences are not based on the Word of God, and those who come are taught how to fertilize weeds.

Now, what could you do if you don’t like the fruit? Well, you could get you a bramble and tie figs on it. You could decorate it. No. You see, friend, you cannot change the fruit without changing the root. The root produces the fruit.



Now, listen to me. The fruit reveals the root. Sometimes you look at a fruit tree and you can't tell what kind it is. You don't know what kind of fruit tree. If you're not a horticulturist, you may not be able to tell. But I'll tell you, there is one way that you can tell: just wait till it bears fruit. When it bears fruit, if it has peaches on it, it's a peach tree. If it has apples on it, it's an apple tree. That's kind of a no-brainer. And so Jesus said, "By their fruits ye shall know them." While the root produces the fruit, and you cannot change the fruit without changing the root, it is the fruit that reveals the root.

Do you want to know what a man's ministry is? Remember what Jesus said in John chapter 15: "*Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.*" (John 15:16) I preached last Sunday night about the fruit of this church. And it is not the buildings, not the budget; it's not the baptisms; but rather, are you becoming more like Jesus Christ? That's the fruit. I mean, is this Word of God making you more like Jesus Christ? The Bible says in Galatians 5, verse 22, "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith...*" (Galatians 5:22) That is the fruit of the Spirit. That's just a description of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But now, listen. The root produces the fruit. The fruit reveals the root. And the seed determines both the root and the fruit. And the seed is the Word of God. The seed is the Word of God. When I'm preaching the gospel, what I'm doing really is simply sowing—planting seed.

## **B. You Must Hear the Word of God**

So, listen. We're talking about building on a firm foundation. Number one: Make certain that you have the Word of God. Beware of false prophets. Somebody says, "Well, I'm looking for a church that suits me." Who are you: God? You had better look for one that suits God. You had better find one that is based rock-solid on the Word of God. You must have the Word of God. Number two: You must hear the Word of God. Look in verse 24 again: "*Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine...*" (Matthew 7:24) Now it's one thing for you to belong to a Bible-believing church; it's one thing for you to have a copy of the Word of God in your home; it's one thing for you to subscribe to orthodoxy; but have you really heard the Word of God? Have you really listened to the Word of God?

In order to do this, you must dig deep. Now we said the man has built his house upon the rock. Put in your margin Luke 6, verse 48. Jesus is telling this same story, and Luke reports and adds some details. Luke says, "*He is like a man which built an house, and*"—watch this—"digged deep,"—boys and girls, that means he dug way down: "and dug deep"—"*and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a*

rock.” (Luke 6:48)

Now, what was our Lord saying? He was saying sometimes you have to dig to get to the rock. Now many of you want to come on Sunday morning and be spoon-fed a little truth; but you’re not digging; your home doesn’t have any foundation in your spiritual house, because, number one, you may not have the Word of God, and number two, you don’t hear the Word of God—because you’re not listening; you’re not digging. You see, why did the man build his house upon the sand? Obvious. It’s easy. It’s cheaper. It’s quicker. If you’re looking for a cheap way, an easy way, a lazy way to serve God, I pity you. The man that built his house upon the rock dug deep. You see, you must have the Word of God. *“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* (Romans 10:17)

So you must hear also the Word of God. When he says *hear*, He doesn’t mean simply let the sound waves come in your ears. Have you ever told a child to do something and then said, “Now, do you hear me?” You know they heard you; but you want to know, did they hear you?

### **C. You Must Heed the Word of God**

Now you must have the Word of God. You must hear the Word of God. Now here’s the point, though: You must heed the Word of God. Look again in this passage of Scripture in verse 24: *“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock.”* (Matthew 7:24) You have the Word. You hear the Word. You heed the Word of God. You must do the Word of God. I think the Apostle James must have remembered Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, because James said in James chapter 1, verse 22, *“Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”* (James 1:22) According to that, if you do not obey what you have heard, you are self-deceived.

What kind of a person would come to Bellevue Baptist Church on Sunday morning, enjoy the music, rave about the special songs, talk about the fellowship, and enjoy the message, but not obey? James called him self-deceived. Jesus called him a fool. “Not me, Jesus.” Jesus called him a fool. James said, “If you hear the Word of God, and you don’t do the Word of God, you are self-deceived, and your faith is dead faith.” Put down James chapter 2, verses 14 through 20: *“What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?”* The Greek is, “Can that faith save him? *“If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?”* That is, it’s just empty words. *“Even so”—in the same way—“faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.”* Now you’re saved by faith alone; but the faith that saves is never alone. The

faith that saves is never alone. It is always accompanied by works. James goes on with this challenge: “*Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?*” (James 2:14–20)

Did you know that the devil is more orthodox than some preachers? I mean, the devil at least knows the holiness of Jesus Christ. I was reading over there in Luke chapter 4, verse 34, where the demons cringed at Jesus and they said, “We know who you are, the Holy One of God,” and they trembled. (Luke 4:34) I would to God that some so-called theologians today would tremble at the same thing. And there are people today who have no more faith than the devil. They have an intellectual faith, but they do not live by their faith. And he says in verse 26—James chapter 2, verse 26—that “*the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*” (James 2:26) You must have the Word. You must hear the Word. You must heed the Word.

What good is a body of truth without the life of the Spirit? You might do an autopsy on your faith and see if it is the real faith. I was reading something humorous the other day in the Massachusetts Bar Association lawyer’s journal. They gave a list of questions that lawyers literally asked in court and their answers during trials. Here’s the one that I thought was the classic. Question—now this is a lawyer talking to a doctor: “Doctor, before you performed the autopsy, did you check for a pulse?” Answer: “No.” Question: “Did you check for blood pressure?” Answer: “No.” Question: “Did you check for breathing?” Answer: “No.” Then, question: “Then it is possible that the patient was alive when you began the autopsy?” Answer: “No.” Question: “How can you be sure, Doctor?” Answer: “Because his brain was sitting on my desk in a jar.” Question: “But couldn’t the patient have still been alive, nevertheless?” Answer: “It is possible that he could have been alive and practicing law somewhere.”

As the body without the brain is dead, faith without works is dead. What James is saying is that if you have faith, it’s going to show in your works. And so here is the very first thing. The surety of rock-solid faith is this: that you must have; you must hear; you must heed the Word of God. If not, the time is going to come when the bottom is going to fall out.

## **II. The Stability of Rock-Solid Faith**

Now, here is the second thing. I want you to see not only the surety of rock-solid faith, but I want you to see the stability of rock-solid faith. Now you can expect storms, whether you’re saved or lost. Verses 25 and 27: Both of these verses tell us that the storm beat upon both houses. And notice how the Lord, the master teacher, described the storms. Rain fell: that’s pressure from above. And then the Lord said, “*The floods*

*came*”: that’s pressure from beneath. And then Jesus said, “*and the winds blew*”: that’s pressure from all around. And we’re going to find this pressure from above, and pressure from beneath, and pressure from all around. And your faith is going to be tested. And the faith that cannot be tested is the faith that cannot be trusted. And your faith is not going to be tested in the sunshine; your faith is going to be tested in the storm. And the test of your faith is not popularity. It is not profession. The test of your faith is your stability in the storm.

Now I’ve talked to you about the surety of rock-solid faith. Now I’m talking to you about the stability of rock-solid faith. If you were to read the eleventh chapter of the book of Hebrews, the eleventh chapter of the book of Hebrews was written to a group of people who were about to throw in the towel. They were about to abandon the faith because of all of the great persecution that was coming upon the church. And so the writer of the book of Hebrews tells about the exciting victories of faith, and about all of those people—Daniel in the lions’ den, and all of these others; Moses at the Red Sea, and all of these things; how Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were taken out of the fiery furnace—and we all love those exciting victories of faith. I love those. But then he goes on at the end of the eleventh chapter of Hebrews to talk about the enduring virtues of faith and he says, “And others were stoned; some were sawn asunder; some endured a strange trial of affliction; and all of these, they did that by faith.” (Hebrews 11)

You see, faith doesn’t mean that you’re not going to have a storm. Remember the story that Jesus told. Please don’t forget it. The storms beat upon both houses. Now, come up close, and I’m going to tell you something. If you get your theology from circumstances, you’re going to come to the conclusion that God doesn’t love you. If you get your theology from circumstances, sooner or later, when the storm comes, you’re going to get the idea that God doesn’t love you. John 11, verse 5—the Bible says, “*Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.*” (John 11:5) And then John 11, verse 14: “*Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.*” (John 11:14) Mary and Martha said, “O God, heal Lazarus.” The Bible says, “He loved them.” But then, later on, He said, “Lazarus is dead.” And if you’ll read it, it says, “Lazarus is dead; and I’m glad.” (Luke 11:14–15)

If you get your theology from circumstances, you’re going to come to the conclusion that God does not love you. Difficulty does not mean that God has abandoned you. If you build a house, and the storms come, that does not mean that God has abandoned you. Habakkuk 3—we may need this soon—Habakkuk 3, verses 17 and 18: “*Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.*” (Habakkuk 3:17–18) Do you know what faith is? Faith is not receiving

from God the things you want; it is accepting from God the things he gives. The winds, the rains, the floods beat upon both houses.

### III. The Security of Rock-Solid Faith

Now I've talked to you about the surety of rock-solid faith. I've talked about the stability of rock-solid faith. Let's talk about the security of it. Look in verse 25, if you will: *"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock."* (Matthew 7:25) Why do people cave in when the rains fall? I'll tell you why they cave in. They have nothing to stand on. The bottom falls out. They're all house, but they're no foundation. They have profession without possession.

Look in verse 22 of this chapter: *"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."* (Matthew 7:22–23) They have no foundation. We see this often. Somebody will say, "Pastor, they don't come anymore. They were one of our finest families. What happened to them?" First John 2:19: *"They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."* (1 John 2:19) I'm telling you, when the doctor's report came, when the job was gone, when the child died, when calamity came, the bottom fell out, they threw in the towel, and they quit. The winds, the rains, and the storms were too much for them.

Now everybody here looks so similar. Had you examined Simon Peter and Judas, and somebody would say to you, "Which of these two apostles would be most likely to succeed?" I will promise you would have said Judas. You would have said Judas. Judas was the treasurer. Who do we make the treasurer? The person that we trust the most. Who was it that kept on putting his foot in his mouth? Who was it that was blustering, and always so arrogant and self-satisfied, in a way, and self-reliant? Wasn't it Peter? Sure it was! And if you and I had examined the lives of these two, outwardly their houses looked both the same, and both of these men went through a storm.

The storm came to old Judas. It was fear and greed, selfish aggrandizement—all of these things came to him. There was the storm of his betrayal of Jesus. There was the storm of his remorse and guilt. And he finally fills a suicide's grave. The bottom just fell out. And then there was Simon Peter. The storm came to Simon Peter too, because Jesus said, "Simon, Satan has desired you, that he might sift you as wheat. But, Simon, I've prayed for you; I've prayed that your faith fail not." (Luke 22:31–32)

Notice this: Jesus knew that Peter had faith. Some people have the idea that Judas lost his salvation. Friend, Judas never was saved. Jesus said, *"Have I not chosen you*

*twelve, and one of you is a devil?"* (John 6:70) And then the Bible says, *"Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not."* (John 6:64) Jesus didn't say, "Oops! I made a mistake." It was all a part of the plan of Jesus. But He knew. He knew that Judas had no faith. He realized that Simon Peter was weak and stumbling and bumbling. Failure, foible, fear—he had it all. But he also had faith.

You see, there came a day when Jesus had had these disciples in his seminary, and now comes the finals. He brings them to Caesarea Philippi and He asks them, "I want to ask you a theological question: Who do people say that I am?" "Some say you're Elijah. Some say you're John the Baptist. And some say you are one of the prophets." He says, "Peter, who do you say I am?" Boy, I love him for this. Peter said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus said, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona. Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto you:"—"you didn't just figure it out"—"my Father revealed it to you." And then Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church." (Matthew 16:13–19)

And old Peter had a rock to stand on, friend. He had something. I'll tell you, the storms came to Peter, too. We laugh and make fun of Peter, but I wonder what you would have done if you faced what Peter faced that time when they were about to nail the darling Son of God upon the cross. Friend, it was terrible. And I'm telling you, he went through the very vortex of a cyclone, a storm, and the rain fell on him, and the floods of hell rose against him, and the winds of doubt and despair were all around him. Old Peter's house was going just like this—rocking, the shingles perhaps coming off the roof, the windowpanes cracking, the shutters flapping—but he was on a rock. He was the same one who became the flaming Apostle of Pentecost. What is the difference between Judas and Peter? I'll tell you the difference: the foundation. That is the difference.

## **Conclusion**

Friend, I'm telling you from my heart, storms come to everybody. Outwardly, we look all alike. But if you want to see the difference, you've got to look beneath the surface to the foundation. And I beg you in the name of Jesus to make certain that you have rock-solid faith—number one: that you have the Word of God—beware of false prophets; number two: that you hear the Word of God—don't let it just blow past you; number three: that you heed the Word of God—"He that hath my sayings, and doeth them," Jesus said, "he it is that loveth me." "If a man be a hearer of the Word, and not a doer—a hearer only—he deceives his own heart." (James 1:22)

# Do You Have a Grudge with God?

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** December 7, 1997

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 11:1–12

*“And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.”*

MATTHEW 11:6

## Outline

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- I. Some Get Offended Because They Are Persecuted for Doing Right
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- III. Some Get Offended Because Their Expectations Are Not Met
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## Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and find, if you would, please, Matthew chapter 11, and when you’ve found it, I want you to look up here for just a moment and let me ask you a question: Have you ever been offended at God?

• Now we get offended easily at one another. Sometimes we think we have a right to be offended at one another. A lady came to a church and she said to her little boy when she went out, “Did you see the ugly look that usher gave to me?” And the little boy said, “Mama, he didn’t give it to you; you had it when you came in here.” •

We can take up offenses and we can get offended at little things. But have you ever really been offended at God? Have you been resentful, angry, perhaps pouting, at the way God is running the universe? Would it seem to you that perhaps God has been uncaring or unkind, or that God has been unfair with you in His dealings with you? Well, I’ve been in the ministry long enough to know that there are people who literally have an offense with God. Now it’s easy to get offended with God if you’re in the flesh. And I want to mention four ways today that many of us may sometimes get offended at God. Now we wouldn’t say it out loud; we’d just kind of harbor it in our heart.

## I. Some Get Offended Because They Are Persecuted for Doing Right

Sometimes people get offended with God when they are persecuted, and God doesn't seem to come to their side, God doesn't seem to help them. And they've been taking a stand for God; they have been doing what is right—not what is wrong, but what is right—and they suffer for it, and they say, “Well, where's God?” Now that happened to John the Baptist. And I want you to see it here in chapter 11, verse 1: *“And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities. Now when John...”*—and the John we're speaking about here is John the Baptist. And what a man was John the Baptist! Jesus said, “Greater has not been born of woman than John the Baptist”—*“Now when John had heard in prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do here and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.”* And now, watch verse 6: *“And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me. And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in king's houses. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet, for this is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.”* (Matthew 11:1–12)

What does all of that mean? What is the background of this? Why did Jesus say, “Blessed is the man who is not offended in me”? Well, let me tell you what happened. John the Baptist had been preaching the Word of God. And what a preacher was John the Baptist! You remember John the Baptist was the one who ate locusts and wild honey, wore a camel coat, a leather coat made out of camel's hair, and he was down there by the river Jordan, and he was saying, “You bunch of vipers! You rattlesnakes! Who told you to flee from the wrath to come? Repent! Get right with God! The Lord's coming! He's going to judge this world.” I tell you, the people were crowding out there to John the Baptist, and he was baptizing them—a wonderful thing! He preached of Jesus coming, and power and glory, and the kingdom of God, and all of this.

Now John the Baptist, that man who ate honey but he didn't preach it, that man who



had a rock for a pulpit and a babbling river for a choir, that man now has been taken by Herod—that man now has been persecuted; he’s put in prison. And, folks, I want to tell you, I’ve seen the area where John the Baptist was put in prison. It is on the east side of the Dead Sea. It is a place barren, indescribably hot, deserted; it’s like a fiery furnace. And there’s old John the Baptist. I mean, he’s God’s man, he’s God’s preacher—Jesus said the greatest that ever walked the face of this earth, not a greater than John the Baptist. And there he is down in a dungeon. Now, remember, he’s the prophet of the out-of-doors, and now he’s down in the dark, dingy furnace of a dungeon on the east side of the Dead Sea, the lowest part of earth. And he felt out of place. He said, “Lord, what am I doing here? Why should I be here?”

Now, folks, you’re going to ask the same question sometime. You’re going to find yourself in a place and you say, “Now, God, I was serving you. I was living for you. I was living the truth, telling the truth. And now I am in prison.” Now there’s more than one kind of a dungeon. You may be in a financial reverse; you may be in some kind of physical malady; but somehow, some way, you just feel like you deserve better than you’re getting. Now we might as well learn there’s no fine print in the contract when we come to the Lord Jesus Christ, and you might as well learn it clearly and plainly, because I’m going to give an invitation for you to come today and give your heart to Jesus Christ if you’ve never done it. But I want to tell you, friend, God has not promised to keep you out of the dungeon. God has not promised to keep you out of the fiery furnace. God has not promised to keep you out of the lion’s den.

Now if you don’t understand that, you’re going to get a grudge with God. When you’re walking through the valley of the shadow of death, you’re going to say, “Where is God?” And these things come to all of us, and they come all the more when we serve the Lord. *Christianity is not the subtraction of problems from life; Christianity is the addition of power to meet those problems.* And if you think that you’re going to get saved and all your problems are going to disappear, you’re wrong.

Now, see, John the Baptist now is beginning to have doubts. Do you know what John is doubting? John is doubting as to whether or not Jesus Christ is the Messiah. This is the same John that pointed to Jesus and said, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29) This is the same John who now—look, if you will, in verses 2 and 3: “Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto him, Art thou he who should come, or do we look for another?” (Matthew 11:2–3) “Are you really the Messiah? Or should we go to some other Messiah? Should we go somewhere else?” John is being persecuted, and he’s wondering, “If Jesus is king, if He can do all of these things, how come He can’t get me out of prison?” John had preached that Jesus was going to “burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire,” (Matthew 3:12) and now here’s Jesus, meek and mild, going about

doing good, and John just can't figure it out. Why can't He get me out of prison? Why am I down here in this prison? And John the Baptist, who had been an exclamation point, has now become a question mark, and now he is doubting God.

Have you ever been there? Well, let me say this, folks. I want you to turn to another passage just right now, if you will, in Matthew. Turn to Matthew chapter 24 for just a moment. Let me tell you what's going to happen in the last days. And all of us have an ominous feeling that we're living in the last days. Begin in Matthew 24, and look, if you will, in verse 9. Jesus is talking about the times that are going to come on this earth: *"Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake."* Listen, folks. When you stand for Jesus, don't get the idea this world is going to honor you. This world will break your neck if it can. *"And then shall many be offended."* (Matthew 24:9–10) Do you see that? *"Then shall many be offended."* When persecution comes, people get so easily offended at the Lord.

Go over to Matthew chapter 13, and look, if you will, in verse 20. Jesus is talking about people who hear the Word of God, and they are like seed in a stony field: *"But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth"—or "endures"—"for a while:"—now, watch this—"for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended."* (Matthew 13:20–21)

Now, are you picking up a trend here? People get offended with God when they get persecuted. They say, "This is not supposed to happen to me. I'm an upstanding, godly person. I pay my debts. I take care of my children. I go to church. I pay my tithe. I do this. I do that. Now, why has this happened to me? Why am I in this prison? Is Jesus really who we heard He was? Is He really the Messiah? Should we look for somebody else?"

Folks, I want to tell you what John the Baptist did, and it's what I want to invite you to do today. John took his doubts to Jesus. Go back to chapter 11 and look in verses 2 and 3 again. The Bible says, *"When John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto him, Art thou he that should come...?"* (Matthew 11:2–3) Now what John did was, he had an honest question, and he took his question to Jesus.

Now there are two kinds of doubters in the world: there are honest doubters and there are dishonest doubters. Dishonest doubters don't know the answers, because they don't want to know the answer. They can't find God for the same reason that a thief can't find a policeman. But honest doubters want to know the truth. And John had a doubt, and he sent to Jesus with a direct, honest question. And he got back from Jesus a direct, honest answer. Be careful how you deal with Jesus. If you ask Jesus a dishonest question, He will never answer your question; He'll just ask you a question. I

mean, in the Bible there were people who came to Jesus, always trying to trick Jesus, always trying to trap Jesus, always trying to get Jesus in a box, and they would ask Him some kind of a question. He said, “Well, you answer this, and I’ll answer that.” He answered the question with another question. And you could never put Jesus in a box. But whenever a person came to Jesus with an honest question, He always got back an honest, sincere answer.

And so John the Baptist just wants to know. He says, “Are you really the Messiah?” Jesus gives no rebuke. Jesus does not scold him for asking. And then Jesus gives the answer. Look in verses 4 to 6: *“Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.”* (Matthew 11:4–6)

Now what Jesus said to John is, “John, listen. I am running on schedule. I know what I’m doing. Don’t get upset if it doesn’t work out just as you’re expecting. I have not failed you. I never set out to convert the world. I never told you that everybody is going to be saved. As a matter of fact, it’s going to get worse and worse. But I’ll tell you this much, John: Blind eyes are opening to the truth of God’s Word, to the light of the world. Deaf ears are hearing the Word of God. Lame souls are walking. The dead in trespasses in sin are being made alive in Christ. John, I know what I’m doing. And, John, don’t pout. Allow me to be God. Blessed is the man who is not offended in me.” Now, folks, if things are not working out for you as you think they ought to work out, don’t get a pout at God. Don’t be offended at God.

Now, here’s something else that’s always a blessing to me in this passage of Scripture. Do you think that Jesus said, “Well, I’m really disappointed in John.” Folks, He’s never been disappointed in you. How could He be disappointed in you? He already knew what you were going to do. He wasn’t disappointed in John. Jesus knew John’s heart, and Jesus did not mistake the moment for the man. Jesus knew that John had an honest doubt. He asked an honest question; he got an honest answer. And then, look at the tribute that Jesus paid to John. Look in verse 11: *“Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist.”* (Matthew 11:11) Isn’t that great? Here’s this man who has a doubt and he carries that doubt to Jesus. Jesus gives him an honest answer, and then Jesus turns around and gives this man a compliment. And John the Baptist continued to serve the Lord up to the point of giving his head for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Do you know what real faith is? *Real faith is not receiving from God what you want; real faith is accepting from God what He gives.* Now, learn that, and don’t get offended at God if things don’t work out like you think they ought to work out. If you’re

serving God, doing good, all of these wonderful things, if you end up in some kind of a dungeon, just remember that God is God. Don't pout. And don't get a grudge with God.

## II. Some Get Offended Because They Are Rebuked for Doing Wrong

Now, let me give you a second reason that some people get a grudge with God. Some people get a grudge with God when they're persecuted while they're doing right. Other people get a grudge with God when they get rebuked for doing wrong. They get a grudge with God. Some people get a grudge with God because of particular sermons. Turn to Matthew chapter 15 here a moment and look, if you will, beginning in verse 7. Now the greatest preacher who ever preached, of course, was the Lord Jesus Christ. And here's what Jesus says: *"Ye hypocrites, well did [Isaiah] prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me."* And he would have to say that about some folks sitting in this building this morning. You sing these songs, and you give lip service, but Jesus knows your heart. And then He said, *"But in vain they do worship me..."*—that is, your attendance here this morning may be just a waste of time—*"in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?"* (Matthew 15:7–12) They got offended.

Now, what did they get offended about? How did they get offended at God? They got offended because He told them the truth. He rebuked their external righteousness and told them that their so-called righteousness and their goodness was not going to get them to heaven. He told them that inwardly they were rotten. And what He had done is he had touched their golden calf, their religion. He didn't accept their self-righteous religion. Do you know there are people who come to church like this and they want to be given some little feel-good pep talk, and if a preacher preaches about hell and about judgment, about righteousness and about the new birth and about salvation, they get offended—they get offended. Now most of you folks here would not get offended. But there may be some here who will be offended today. They say, "I just don't like that hellfire and brimstone type of preaching. I don't like finger pointers. I just don't like that." And they get offended. Well, I've never really gotten too upset when people get offended at my preaching, because I know they got offended at Jesus.

• They told Billy Sunday, who was an evangelist like Billy Graham of yesteryear, "Billy, you're rubbing the fur on the cat the wrong way." He said, "The old cat's headed toward hell. If she'd turn around, I'd be rubbing her the right way." •

And there are people who get offended at the truth. The disciples said, “Jesus, you’d better get some user-friendly evangelism. Don’t you know that the Pharisees were offended at you?”

- I was working in a counseling room in a revival meeting, and Billy Graham was attending the revival meeting part of the time, and one of Billy Graham’s associates was preaching the revival, and I was in charge of the counseling; and a beautiful young lady, a society debutante, came forward to give her heart to Jesus Christ. She went back to the counseling room, and her mother went back there with her. Her mother was incensed. She was outraged that this girl, her beautiful daughter, would come in front of those people and say that she was a sinner and that she needed to be saved. And that mother said to her, “Sweetheart, you don’t need this. You are a lovely girl.” Boy, I thank God for what that little girl said to her mother. She said, “Mother, you can’t see my heart.” She knew she needed to be saved. Her mother was offended—offended that people have to be born again, saved; that self-righteousness is not enough.

I’ve shared with you before about something that happened—I cannot get it out of my mind. There’s an evangelist who’s just recently gone to heaven—his name is Eddie Martin, a dear, great soul winner. He preached in this church years and years ago. But upon a time, Eddie Martin was preaching. He gave an invitation, and a lady came down the aisle. And she was one of these precise, very well-manicured, coifed, made up—you know, like some of these gals can do—I mean, she was the epitome. And she came down the aisle. And he was there to receive the people coming forward, and he was just rejoicing. He said, “Lady, I’m so glad that you’ve come. Why did you come?” She said, “Well, I want to give my heart to Christ.”

Well, that sounded wonderful, so he said, “Wonderful, lady.” He said, “I want you to pray after me—pray this prayer: ‘Dear God...’” She said, “Dear God.” “I am a sinner.” It was silent; she didn’t say anything. He thought, “Well, maybe she’s hard of hearing.” So he said, “Repeat it again: ‘Dear God...’” She said, “Dear God.” “I am a sinner.” She didn’t say anything. He said, “Lady, tell the Lord you’re a sinner.” She said, “I am not a sinner.” And he said, “Madam, the Bible says, ‘*All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.*’” (Romans 3:23) “Well,” she said, “if I’m a sinner, I’m a good sinner.” He said, “Lady, there are no good sinners. You’re not ready to be saved. Go back to your seat.”

She drew herself up like this and started back to the seat; and she did not get to the seat before the mascara started to flow, and God broke her heart, and the rebuke came from the Holy Spirit. She turned around and went back to evangelist Eddie Martin and said, “God have mercy upon me. I am a no-good sinner.” He said, “Now you’re ready to be saved”—“Now you’re ready to be saved.” •

People sit in churches heavy, high-minded, unbroken, unbent, unbowed, thinking

they're doing God a service, a favor, by even coming to church. They don't see themselves as hopeless, helpless, hapless sinners. And they get offended. I'm going to tell you something, folks. And I don't mean to be braggadocio about it. But the cruelest thing I could do would be to fail to preach to you the whole gospel: to tell you there's a hell; there's a God who's a holy God; that you must repent; that your righteousness is as filthy rags in the sight of this righteous and holy God; (Isaiah 64:6) and unless you get saved and born again, you're going to die and go to hell. And if that offends you, then I'm sorry, but it is the truth. It is the truth! People get offended. I'll tell you something else. I've learned that that kind of preaching will run people off. I'll tell you something else I've learned. For every one you lose, you'll gain ten; and the ten you get will be a lot better than those that you lost, because they want the whole Word of God.

Do you have a grudge at God? Do you have a grudge of God because of persecution and things are not working out the way you think? Or do you have a grudge at God, for example, because of the rebuke of the Word of God, and the Lord has your number and your name, and the Lord sees through your own self-righteousness? Don't get a grudge at God.

### **III. Some Get Offended Because Their Expectations Are Not Met**

I'll tell you another reason people get a grudge at God. People get a grudge at God sometimes because their expectations are not met. They join churches, they give their hearts to Christ, and they have certain expectations, and those expectations don't transpire. Turn, if you will, to John chapter 6 with me for just a moment. Now Jesus has just fed the five thousand. He's performed this wonderful miracle, and you would think that people would be interested in spiritual truth also; but begin in verse 53: *"Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."* (John 6:53) Now Jesus had fed them with bread. It must have been wonderful bread. Jesus multiplied that little boy's loaves. But now He's talking about eating His flesh and drinking His blood, and then He says in verse 54, *"Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever. These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum. Many therefore of his disciples, when they heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that*

*quickeneth: the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.*” (John 6:54–63)

Now, notice, John the Baptist got offended because he got persecuted for doing good. The Pharisees got offended because they got rebuked for doing bad. And now the disciples are offended because they’re not getting what they want. Now, you see, when Jesus fed the five thousand, they said, “Boy, this is the kind of a Messiah we want! This is wonderful! This man, He can take one lunch, and He can become a cafeteria. This is wonderful! We want to be on board.” And so they began to follow the Lord.

### **A. Political Motives**

You know, some came for political motives. Go back to chapter 6 and look in verse 15, if you will. There were some who were following Jesus for political motives. John 6 and verse 15: *“When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.”* (John 6:15) They said, “Look, let’s crown him king right now.” Now what they were looking for was a political Messiah. They were looking for somebody who could throw off the shackles of Rome. They were looking for somebody who could put them in the high places. And Jesus had to teach them, *“My kingdom is not of this world.”* (John 18:36)

Now if you’ve come to Bellevue Baptist Church, you walk down the aisle of this church, you give your heart to Jesus Christ, and you come for political reasons—I’m not talking about Democrat, Republican, or Independent—but if you’ve come thinking that “If I give my heart to Jesus, oh, boy, we’re going to whip the world; we’ve got it made; I have a new king; I’ve got power,” you don’t understand what the kingdom of God is all about. He is not going to deliver you from the unpleasantness of this world. Just mark it down. I’m not talking about persecution. I’m just talking about the unpleasant things of this world.

### **B. Material Motives**

There are some who came for political motives. There are others who came for material motives. Look in verse 26—John chapter 6, verse 26: *“Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.”* (John 6:26) He said, “The only reason you’re following me is you’ve got some bread.” And there are people who come to Jesus—some for political motives, some for material motives—they think that, you know, “If I go to Jesus, and I get saved, and I begin to tithe, man, I’ve got cash, Cadillacs, and a freezer full of steaks.” That’s what you hear sometimes from these fellows preaching on television. I preach on television, too. That’s what you hear. Hey, folks, it’s not so. It is not so! God never promises to make you wealthy when you

become a Christian. God never promises that Jesus is some sort of a political messiah. If you come for the wrong reason, that reason is not going to work out, and you're going to get a grudge, you're going to get a pout, you're going to be disappointed. And John chapter 6, verse 66, says, *"From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no longer with him."* (John 6:66)

• I've just been over to Spain. My son's a missionary over there. He has just a little handful of people. And I said, "Well, Son, may I ask you about a particular lady?" He said, "She doesn't come anymore, Daddy." I said, "Why doesn't she come anymore?" He said, "She has so many problems at home." And she did have problems, and she's not making much money, and her husband is hassling her. And she just said, "You know, I thought when I gave my heart to Christ, those things would change." And they didn't change. And so she got upset with the church and upset with the Lord. You know her problem? And she went back, just like these disciples in John 6, verse 66: *"From that time they went back and they walked no more with Him."* •

Now if you come to the Lord Jesus Christ and you come for some political motivation, you come for some material motivation; if you come for any other reason than to feed on Him who is heaven's bread, to eat His flesh, drink His blood, to know Him, you're going to be disappointed. And it's only a matter of time until you get a grudge with God. You're going to be offended at God, because things are not going to work out just like you think.

And we have many people on the rolls of our church right now who are not right here with the Lord Jesus Christ. They're not here in the church; they're not here worshipping. They are sitting at home pouting, resenting God, because things are not working out for them the way they thought they ought to work out. Do you know anybody like that? Folks, there are a lot of folks like that.

#### **IV. Some Get Offended Because of Envy**

Some get offended because persecution comes. Others get offended because of the Word of God that is preached and rebukes them. Some people get offended because they have certain expectations, and those expectations are not met, and they get a grudge with God. Let me give you one last reason. I've got to hurry. This will amaze you, but some people get offended at God, not because of persecution, not because of rebuke, not because of disappointment, but some people get offended at God because of envy. They envy other people. God has been too good to other people.

Now they see other people blessed, and they're not blessed correspondingly. Turn to the Gospel of Mark here with me for a moment. Turn to Matthew, Mark, and look, if you will, in the first verse there—Mark chapter 6—and see what happens here. Jesus is in Nazareth. Notice this: *"And he went out from thence, and came into his own country"*



*and his disciples follow him. And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things...”—now, notice this; underscore this. Here’s the key—“From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?” Now, watch this: “Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.” (Mark 6:1–3)* There it is again. Over and over again—offense, offense, offense, offense! They were offended at Jesus.

Now at this time they had no idea He was the Messiah. That’s not what offended them. What offended them was God’s blessing on Him. I mean, they knew Him. They grew up with Him. They said, “Hey, who does He think He is? We know His mother. We know His brothers. We know His sisters. We saw Him there in the carpenter’s shop. Where did He get all this wisdom? Where did He get all this power? We just don’t like Him being blessed that much.” Now, folks, His blessing was not their diminishment—just because God had anointed the Lord Jesus. Of course, they didn’t know He was the Son of God. It makes no difference to my point right now. The point is, the whole thing is this: they saw somebody else being blessed more than they were blessed, and they got a pout, they got a snit; they’re upset because somebody else had more than they had.

Do you know anybody like that? Hey, folks, the world is full of them. And they’re angry at God, and they say, “Well, God is not fair.” I’ve got news for you. God is not fair; God is just. There’s a difference. Hey, if you think that God is fair, that means that God owes you something. And if somebody else has more than you have, then God is not fair, because He owes everybody the same thing. And when you get something for God, you’re not grateful; you’re dissatisfied you didn’t get it sooner, and mad if somebody gets more than you got—if you think God is fair. God is not fair; God is just. The only thing we deserve is judgment. If God gives anybody anything, it is grace. You’re going to get upset in life, you’re going to get a grudge with God, if you see somebody in life who is more blessed than you’re blessed, and somehow you’re going to think that their blessing is your loss—somebody who has a greater insight into the Word of God, somebody who has more power with God than you have, somebody who God seems to be pouring out His blessing on.

Now, listen. If it’s Billy Graham, that won’t bother you at all. If it’s somebody out yonder somewhere, that won’t bother you. But, oh, let it happen to your next door neighbor; let it happen to somebody that you work with; let it happen to somebody that you know. You say, “Why, we know him. Who does she think she is? We were raised up together.” People are funny. They don’t like to see one of their own blessed unless they get blessed. They get envious, they get jealous, and they get mad at God; and they

say, “God, you’re not fair. You’ve blessed them more than you’ve blessed me.” And they get a pout with the Almighty, a grudge with God.

Now, you know, the sad thing about that is the Bible says there in Nazareth Jesus could do no mighty works because of their unbelief. When they got mad at somebody else’s blessings, they cut the throat of their own blessings. But they were so upset that God was blessing Jesus that they missed the blessing that Jesus could have been to them.

## Conclusion

What causes people to get a grudge with God? Persecution, disappointment, rebuke, and resentment at being rebuked; envy at the way somebody else is being blessed. Friend, I want to share a verse of Scripture with you, and then we’ll wrap this up. Turn to John chapter 16 and look with me for a moment. The Lord Jesus knew that we all had this tendency to resenting God, and Jesus has talked about the Holy Spirit in John 15, and Jesus says, *“These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.”* You see, there’s no fine print in Jesus’ contract. *“And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you. But now I go my way to him that sent me.”* (John 16:1–5)

And I’m going to stop reading there, but Jesus is saying, “I’m going to heaven. I’m leaving you here. Don’t get offended.” I love the scripture that says, *“Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.”* (Psalm 119:165) If you’ve got a grudge with God, tell God about it. If you’ve got honest questions, bring them to God. Don’t come to the Lord with false expectations. You say, “Pastor, I thought it was wonderful to serve Jesus.” It is. *If I had a thousand lives, I’d give every one of them to Jesus Christ.* I’m not disappointed in Jesus. But I don’t want to have a grudge with God because of any false expectations. All right, no fine print in the contract.

# Are You Angry with God?

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: May 15, 1988**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 11:1–11; 15:7–12**

*“And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.”*

MATTHEW 11:6

## Outline

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Conclusion

## Introduction

Now, would you take God’s Word, please, and be finding Matthew chapter 24. And when you’ve found it, look up here for just a moment. In Matthew 24, our Lord is giving the signs of the times just before His coming. He’s telling us what the course of the age will be, and He mentions many things: wars, and rumors of wars, and earthquakes, and famines, and pestilences. But there’s something else that He mentions that I want to point out here. I begin in verse 7: *“For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted,”*—now the *you* refers to those who are followers of the Lord Jesus—*“and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake.”* Now, notice verse 10: *“And then shall many be offended...”*—just underscore that phrase, and I’m going to stop reading right there: *“...then shall many be offended.”* (Matthew 24:7–10)

I’ve seen a lot of people start out to serve the Lord Jesus Christ and live for a while in the church, in the Sunday School class. They come. They sing in the choir. They act as an usher. They tithe. They do this. They do that. They work with the ball team. They seem to be happy. And then after a while, they drop out, and they don’t come anymore. And you wonder why. Was it that they never were saved? Well, that’s true with some of them; but others fall out, believe it or not, because they’ve gotten a grudge with God—

not a grudge with a church member. Now some do have those, and sometimes the grudge with God will show up as a grudge with a church member; but they'll only be hurting in one place and grunting in another. Their real anger is with God. There are people who do get angry with God. There are people who do resent God. There are those people who, to use a phrase that we use, get *bent out of shape* with God, frustrated with God, angry, pouting at the Almighty. You say, "Could a human being get angry with God?" Not only could they, but do they.

And I want to show you in the Word of God why people get angry with God. I want to show you a little bit about what we ought to do about it. Turn with me, for example, to Matthew chapter 11, and let me read you a passage of Scripture here. Matthew chapter 11 is the story of John the Baptist. It's a remarkable story, and I'm going to begin reading here in verse 1: "*And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities. Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.*" And now, notice verse 6: "*And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.*" (Matthew 11:1–6)

Now what had happened was this: John the Baptist was God's mighty preacher. What a wonderful man was John the Baptist! And John the Baptist had been down there by the river Jordan preaching the gospel and telling people to repent. He was pointing men to the Lord Jesus Christ. What a preacher he was! The Bible says, "*He was a burning and a shining light.*" (John 5:35) He had a stone for a pulpit, a brook for a choir. He ate honey, but he didn't preach it. He would point his finger in the face of those people who came, and said, "You generation of rattlesnakes, you brood of vipers, you sons of snakes, who told you to flee from the wrath to come?" He wore a leather girdle. He could point his finger in the face of kings. He was a fearless, Spirit-filled, anointed prophet, a humble man, a man who said of the Lord Jesus, "I'm not worthy to loosen your shoes," (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:7; Luke 3:16; John 1:27; Acts 13:25) a Spirit-filled man filled with the Spirit from his mother's womb. When he, Mary, and Elizabeth were in one another's presence, and both of them had babies in their womb—Mary had the Lord Jesus in her womb, and John the Baptist was in Elizabeth's womb—the Bible says, when the two mothers came close, that the babe in Elizabeth's womb leaped for joy in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Luke 1:44) What a man was John the Baptist!

But now John the Baptist had been put into prison. King Herod had taken John the Baptist and put him in a prison on the east side of the Dead Sea down in Machaerus—a

dark, dismal, dank prison. John the Baptist had been preaching for eighteen months; and now for twelve months—a solid year—John is in prison. John the Baptist was an outdoorsman; he was not a man to be caged up like a caged bird. He was a man who believed in freedom. And John learned it's one thing to stand on Jordan and give it; it's another thing to stay in jail and take it. And John, when he was in prison, kind of backslid. He couldn't figure things out. You see, John had preached Jesus as the Messiah, and the kind of Messiah that John had preached was a victorious Messiah. John said, "He's going to clean His threshing floor. He's going to gather His wheat into the barn. He's going to burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." (Matthew 3:12; Luke 3:17) And yet here is John the Baptist, and John is rotting in prison. John is saying, "What went wrong here? Why am I here? If He can raise the dead, how come He can't get me out of prison? Have I been mistaken? Is He really the Messiah?"

And John sent messengers and said, "Are you the One that should come?" (Matthew 11:3) And when he said, "Are you the One that should come," that was a phrase used for the Messiah. What he said is, "Are you the Messiah?" Can you imagine John the Baptist asking a question like that? "Are you truly the Messiah? Or, should we look for somebody else?" I'm going to tell you something about John—and this I appreciate about John: John had some doubts, but they were honest doubts, and he took them to Jesus. And that's what you need to do with your doubts: If it's an honest doubt, bring it to Jesus. And I'll tell you about Jesus, Jesus will give you an honest answer.

Now there were people who came to Jesus sometimes with trick questions, and Jesus always answered the question with a question. When they tried to hem up Jesus, they could never hem up Jesus. And they tried to get Jesus in an argument: They always were the loser. But anybody who came to Jesus Christ with an honest answer, Jesus would say, "Come and see." "Are you really the Messiah? I want to know!" And Jesus sent back word, and Jesus said, "You go tell John—go tell John—that the blind see. Go tell John that the deaf hear. Go tell John that the dumb speak. Go tell John that the dead are raised. Go tell John that the poor have the gospel preached unto them." (Matthew 11:4–5)

Why did He say, "Tell him *that*"? Because that's what the Old Testament prophecy in the book of Isaiah said that the Messiah would do. That is, "You tell John I'm on schedule. You tell John I am fulfilling Scripture. You tell John that I am doing exactly what the Bible says I would do. Yes, I'm the Messiah." And then He said, "And tell John something else"—verse 6: "You tell him this—tell him, '*Blessed is he [who's] not offended in me.*'" (Matthew 11:6) Now, John, you're in prison:—He didn't tell him this, but He could have told him—"It's going to get worse. You're going to have your head cut off. You're in prison. You're in trouble. But, John, if you're in prison, and I don't get you

out of prison, it's not because I don't want to, or am not able to, or I don't care about you. It's just, John, I have a better plan and a higher plan. And, frankly, John, you couldn't understand it if I told you, because my ways are not your ways and my thoughts not your thoughts. As the heavens are high above the earth, so are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8–9) "*Who hath known the mind of the Lord? ...who hath been his counsellor?*" (Romans 11:34) How inscrutable are the ways of God!

My friend, don't demand to understand, and don't get a pout with God if you don't understand why He doesn't get you out of your prison. There's more than one kind of prison. You might be in a financial prison: your blood pressure is up, and your bank account is down. You may be in a physical prison. You may be in a family difficulty. There may be some great dungeon of despair that you're in, and you're saying, "Why doesn't God deliver me? If God can do all of those things—if He can raise the dead, heal the lame—why doesn't God do something?" It's like the little boy, he said, "If God's so great, why didn't He put the vitamins in ice cream rather than spinach?" "Why doesn't God do it the way I want Him to do it?"

Frankly, friend, His ways, the Bible says, are past finding out; and it takes a lot of faith sometimes to let God be God.

## I. **Problems and Persecutions Cause People to Get Offended at God**

But I'll tell you one reason that some people get a grudge at God: because of problems and persecution. They get down in a dungeon, and when they get down in a dungeon, when problems come, heartaches come, trials come, difficulties come, persecution comes, they begin to doubt God. And, my friend, I want you to learn this straight—learn it big, learn it plain, and learn it, I hope, for good: *God has not promised to keep you out of trouble—okay? He came to get into trouble with you. Christianity is not the subtraction of problems from life; it is the addition of power to meet those problems.* God has not promised to keep you out of the fiery furnace. God has not promised to keep you out of the lion's den. God has not promised to keep you out of the valley of the shadow of death. And God has not promised to keep you out of the dungeon.

Now, if you think He has, you're going to get a grudge with God. You're going to say, "Where's God? Is He really the Messiah? Is that Christ that Adrian Rogers preaches, is He real? Why isn't it working for me?" Why didn't it work for John the Baptist?

Friend, I want to tell you, there wasn't a better man that ever lived than John the Baptist. You say, "How do you know?" I know. Let me tell you how I know there wasn't a better man than John the Baptist. Let's just read what the Lord Jesus said here. Look in verse 7, as we continue to read this chapter. Notice what He says here: "*And as they*

*departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John...*—now the people were there, and they heard these guys blurt it out: “Are you really the Messiah?” Now Jesus here is ready to protect John’s reputation—“*And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings’ houses. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist.*” (Matthew 11:7–11) Why is that the greatest compliment? Number one, He who gave it; and, number two, what He said. Jesus said it, and He said, “There hasn’t been a greater person born of woman than John the Baptist.” You can’t get better than that, can you? Jesus said that of John the Baptist.

And yet John the Baptist doubted. Yet John the Baptist had a moment of doubt, and that moment of doubt turned almost into an offense at God, a grudge against God. And Jesus had to warn the great John, “John, blessed is he who’s not offended in me.” Don’t get a grudge with God, even if you don’t understand what He does and why He does it. You let God be God. But aren’t you glad that Jesus didn’t mistake the moment for the man? Jesus knew that wasn’t the real John. Jesus knew that John had a lapse of faith. And, “though we deny Him, He’ll not deny Himself; He abides faithful” (2 Timothy 2:13)—and I thank God for that.

## **II. Presumption Causes People to Get Offended at God**

Let me tell you another way that people get a grudge at God. The first way is when problems come, when persecution comes, and we don’t get delivered when we think we ought. We get a grudge with God. I’ll tell you another way that people get a grudge with God: Not only over problems and persecutions, but presumption leads some people to get a grudge with God.

Turn with me to the Gospel of Mark here, chapter 6—Mark chapter 6—and I’m going to begin reading here in verse 1. Again, another episode in the life of Jesus—and the Bible says, “*And he went out from thence, and came into his own country;*”—that is, His own country is the village of Nazareth—“*and his disciples follow him. And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.*” (Mark

6:1–3) There’s our word again. They have a grudge with Jesus; they are offended at the Lord. Jesus said, “In the last days, many will be offended.” (Matthew 24:10) Jesus warned John, “John, blessed is he who’s not offended.” (Matthew 11:6; Luke 7:23) And now these—the villagers in the city of Nazareth—they’re offended at Jesus.

And why are they offended? Because of their presumption. You see, they had presumed just how God should work and what God ought to do. Now, when Jesus came there, Jesus sat down in the synagogue, and He taught with authority, and He did many mighty works. And do you know what they said? “Who does He think He is? I mean, how does He get off doing that? We know Him. Why, He was a little boy here. He grew up here. We’ve known Him since childhood. Why, we know His four brothers. We know His sister. We know His mother. Who is He, telling us what to do? Now, if God works, that’s not going to be the way God works. We’ve already got that figured out. I mean, we know what God would do and what God wouldn’t do. And one thing we do know is that He wouldn’t use that man.” You see, they had a presumption. They had presumed what God would do and what God would not do.

And, you know, the thing with Jesus was He was so common, so ordinary. They said, “He’s a carpenter—a carpenter! Why, we’re not expecting a carpenter to do anything.” Aren’t you glad, when Jesus came into this world, Jesus did not come to Rome, the city of imperial power; nor did Jesus come to Athens, the city of intellectual might; nor did Jesus even come to Jerusalem to be born, the city of religion; but an obscure village, raised as a peasant? Because, you see, God doesn’t work the way we work. “Man looks on the outward appearance. God looks on the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:7) We look at the things that are mighty and glorious and majestic, and we say, “That’s the way that God works.” But so many times we don’t see God in the small things, the ordinary things of life; and we presume, and we want to tell God, “Now, God, when you do it, here’s the way to do it.” God may have another plan.

Several years ago, there was a story going around about a man during a great flood that had come to a city. This old man had lived for God for many years. And so, when they came in the rowboat to pick him up, the old man said, “Now, boys, you go on. I’m going to stay here in the house and trust God.” They said, “Grandpa, you’d better come with us to higher ground.” He said, “Nope.” He said, “I’m going to stay here and trust God. He’s going to take care of me.” They said, “All right, Grandpa.” When they came back the second time, Grandpa had moved up to the second story, because the water had risen that much. And they said, “Grandpa, come on and get in the boat.” He said, “No, I’m telling you, I’m trusting God. He’s going to take care of me.” “All right, Grandpa.” They came by the third time, and Grandpa was up on the roof. They said, “Grandpa, the water is rising. Get in the boat!” He said, “No sir. I’m trusting God. He’s going to take care of me.” The flood came and swept Grandpa away.



Finally, down in the swamps, hanging onto the branches of a tree, he argued with God. Oh, he was angry with God. What a pout! How offended he was at God! He said, “God, why did you let me down when I trusted you so?” God said, “I didn’t let you down. I sent a boat for you three times!” So many times we say, “Now, God, when you do it, this is the way you’re going to do it. I mean, something as common, as ordinary, as a rowboat—could that be God’s way?” It may be.

Friend, the things that God is doing to you He may be doing, and you’re missing what God is doing, because you in your mind have it all figured out exactly how God is going to work, when God is going to work. And they said, “Why, God can’t be working through Him. We know Him. We’ve seen Him since He was a little boy. We know His mother. We know His brothers. We know His sisters. We know His occupation. God, you just can’t do it that way.” And they were offended, because God did not work according to their presumption.

### **III. Pride Causes People to Get Offended at God**

A third reason that people get offended at God: Not only because of problems, presumptuous attitudes and ideas; but a third reason that people get offended at God is because of their rotten pride—pride. Let me show you something else here. Open in the Bible to Matthew chapter 15 with me for just a moment—Matthew chapter 15—and let’s begin reading in verse 7. Jesus is preaching, and it doesn’t sound like He’s trying to win friends and influence people. Notice how He starts: *“Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?”* There’s our word again: *“Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this?”* (Matthew 15:7–12)

Why were they offended with the Lord Jesus? Because He had stripped away the veneer of their false religion—He had stripped away that veneer of religion that they were hiding behind—and their pride made them angry at God. The Pharisees, I suppose the one adjective that we would use to describe Pharisees more than any other would be *proud*—proud Pharisees. They were so proud of their religion. And religious they were. Oh, my friend, how religious they were! They had all of their little rules of religion: what they would do, and what they would not do; exactly how they were to live, especially keeping the Sabbath. They wouldn’t even eat an egg that was laid on Saturday. If they got a tack in their shoe, they wouldn’t remove that tack on

Saturday, lest they be accused of doing work on the Sabbath. It gets ridiculous. If a flea were having lunch on them, they would not remove the flea on the Sabbath: that was hunting—really!

You say, “That’s ridiculous!” It’s still going on today. Did you know if you go to Israel today on the Sabbath day they have what they call a Sabbath elevator? I was just there last year. A Sabbath elevator—it stops at every floor. You don’t have to push a button. That’s right. You get on the Sabbath elevator and go to the fifteenth floor—you’ll stop fifteen times. That’s right. You can’t just push one button. They won’t push a button on the Sabbath day. You talk about religious! Man! Jesus said in Matthew 23, “They tithe mint.” (Matthew 23:23) Do you know what mint is? A little plant like you put the leaf in your tea. They have a little mint plant, and they say, “One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine: these belong to me. Ten: that’s God’s. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine: these are mine. Ten: that’s God’s.” How careful they were! How religious they were! And how lost they were!

Many people have a grudge at God, and I’ll tell you why they have a grudge at God: because God demands repentance and faith, and He won’t accept anything else. God does not accept man’s religion, no matter how good it is; and nothing offends this world more than that. Did you know there are people who would never darken the doors of a gospel-preaching church, because it is an offense unto them, because they don’t like to be told that their good works will not get them to heaven? Not only will their good works not get them to heaven; but the Bible says that your righteousness is as filthy rags, in God’s sight. (Isaiah 64:6) I tell you, that offends this generation more than anything.

“Are you trying to tell me, Mr. Rogers, that my religion is not good enough? Are you trying to tell me that the good things I do are not going to get me to heaven? Are you trying to tell me that I have to be born again?” You got it! That’s what I’m telling you, dear friend. Jesus said, *“Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”* (Matthew 5:20) And I’ve told you before, and I’ll tell you again: *The worst form of human badness is human goodness when it becomes a substitute for the new birth.*

These Pharisees were offended—offended: “You mean He doesn’t appreciate all of the things that we do, all of these good deeds that we do?” Jesus said, “They’ll not buy eternal life for you.” It’s on the inside. It’s repentance and faith. You must know God in your heart. Oh, they honored Him with their lips. Many folks today in churches today, they do the same thing. They sit in a church like this and sing, “Oh, How I Love Jesus.” They don’t even love Him enough to get back on Sunday night when they could come. They say, “Take my silver and my gold; not a mite would I withhold.” They hold it with all their might. *“[They honor] me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.”* And they think they do God a favor when they come to church: “God, aren’t you lucky to get me?”

God doesn't buy it; and when they learn that God doesn't buy it, it offends their pride, and they'll get a grudge with God. How many proud Pharisees there are who are going to hell because they really have an argument with God!

Eddie Martin is an evangelist. Eddie Martin preached in a revival crusade one time, and a lady came down the aisle, elegantly dressed—a cultured lady. She took him by the hand, and she said, “Mr. Martin, I want to join the church.” He said, “Lady, do you mean you want to be saved?” She said, “Yes, Mr. Martin.” He said, “All right. Pray this prayer after me: Dear God...” She prayed, “Dear God...” “I am a sinner...” She didn't say anything. He thought maybe she didn't hear him. He said, “Pray, lady, after me: Dear God...” “Dear God...” “I am a sinner...” She didn't say anything. He said, “Lady, why don't you pray? Don't you want to be saved?” She said, “Mr. Martin, I am not a sinner.” “Well,” he said, “Madam, the Bible says, *‘All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.’*” (Romans 3:23) She said, “Well, Mr. Martin, if I'm a sinner, I'm a good sinner.” He said, “Madam, there are no good sinners. I don't think you're ready to be saved. Go back to your seat.”

She was offended, angry. She reeled around and started back to the seat. But after a while, the finger of God touched her before she got there. She broke. The mascara started to flow. She turned around and went back, and said, “God have mercy on me! I am a no-good sinner!” He said, “Now you're ready to be saved.” And she was.

People get offended at God because of the gospel. Oh, it's called the offense—the scandal—of the cross: that there's no way we can be saved except casting ourselves on the mercy of God.

#### **IV. Perplexity Causes People to Get Offended at God**

I want to mention a fourth way that people get offended at God—and this way is not by persecution, or not by presumption, or not by pride; but by perplexity—people who just get so perplexed at the way God does things, and the ways of God don't seem to make sense to them. They expect one thing out of God, and God does another.

Look with me, for example, in John chapter 6—the Gospel of John chapter 6—and I begin reading here in verse 57. I'm going to break right into the middle of this passage in verse 57. It takes place right after the feeding of the five thousand, where Jesus performed a miracle. And Jesus says, “*As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever. These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum. Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?*” Now, let me just rephrase: “It is a perplexing saying. We can't figure this out. Who can hear this? Who can understand what you're

saying?” *“When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you?”* (John 6:57–61) There again: offense. Why? Because they were perplexed. They could not understand what the Lord Jesus was up to when Jesus said, “I am the bread of life. You eat this other bread, and you’re going to die. You eat me, and you’ll live forever.”

You see, there were plenty of people who followed Jesus in that day, but they followed Jesus for the wrong motives.

#### **A. Some Followed Jesus for Political Motives**

Some followed Jesus for political motives. Notice in chapter 6, verse 14—just back up there a little bit; this is still in the same context of the feeding of the five thousand: *“Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did,”*—that is, the feeding of the five thousand—*“said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world. When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.”* (John 6:14–15) They said, “Oh, look at this! Jesus has power. He can do miracles. Why, let’s make Him a king. He’ll throw off the yoke of Rome. Our problems will be over. He will liberate us, and we’ll have no more difficulties down here.” They followed Him for political reasons. But Jesus absented Himself from them.

#### **B. Some Followed Jesus for the Miracles**

Then, look down, if you will, at verse 26: *“Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.”* (John 6:26) Now, here’s another group: Some followed Him because of the miracles and said, “Hallelujah! We’ve got a king now.” Others didn’t care about the miracle, but they did like the bread. They said, “Why, He’s a grocery store! He’s a living cafeteria! Wonderful! We can have plenty to eat!”

And today there are those who still want to follow Jesus, one, for political reasons; or two, for material reasons. And many in our churches today come with the wrong motivation, thinking that if they come to the Lord Jesus Christ, they’re going to get this or they’re going to get that; they’re going to have a king, or they’re going to have a cafeteria. And He didn’t come for that.

“Well,” you say, “I thought He fed five thousand.” But that was not His normal way. He was only giving an illustration of a greater spiritual truth, and they missed the greater spiritual truth. Look, if you will, in verse 47: *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life”*—not just temporary life, but everlasting life. *“I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.”* Now there are people who tell us that the job of the church is to feed everybody. Number one: We don’t have enough money to feed everybody. If you had five billion dollars and

bought everybody a Big Mac, in three hours they'd all be hungry. I am telling you, my friend, that there is something more than soap and soup: It's salvation. *"Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever."* (John 6:47–51) They didn't understand that. They were offended. They don't understand the message of the gospel. Sure, we're to feed every hungry person we can, to do acts of compassion; but, my dear friend, the message of the church has been, and always will be, "salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ."

## Conclusion

Ponce de Len came to Florida looking for the fountain of youth. He wanted something that would take the stoop out of his shoulders, and put the glow of health on his face, and cause his tooth decay to reverse, and let his eyes be bright, and his hair black as a raven's wing. He never found the fountain of youth. But I'm telling you today, if some pharmaceutical company could find a pill, a concoction, that you could take that would give you, if you took it, fifty years more of life and perfect health, I believe that I know that man would kill one another to get it—guaranteed fifty more years of life and perfect health. They would kill for it, if there were such a pill and that were the only way to get it.

But, you see, Jesus is not offering you existence; He is offering you life, and it is eternal life. But they were perplexed. They did not understand the message of Jesus; and therefore they were offended at Him.

And I'm telling you that problems, and presumption, and pride, and perplexity can cause people who don't understand the gospel to get offended. And that's the reason you'd better get in the Bible and understand the Bible, because the Bible says, *"Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them,"* (Psalm 119:165) when you know the Bible, when you know the Word of God. But you're going to get bent out of shape. You're going to have a grudge with God. You're going to get upset with God. And it's going to be one of the marks of the last days.

Horatio Spafford lived in Chicago in the end of the last century. He was a great, godly Christian lawyer. He lived in the beautiful Lake View section of Chicago. He was a Christian layman, very much like some of the laymen in this church—active in community affairs. He was one of the founders of the YMCA. He served as a trustee of a seminary. He was a friend of Dwight L. Moody and helped Moody in his campaign. Spafford had a wife named Anna. He had four lovely daughters. He was very wealthy, very successful, a great landowner. And the great Chicago fire came and burned many of his buildings. They were underinsured, and overnight his great wealth was taken from him. He did not blame God. He did not pout at God. Rather, he threw himself into

greater service for the Lord and took his remaining wealth and used it to help other people who had lost their possessions in the great Chicago fire. The strain took its toll on Anna, his wife, and he said, “Anna, I’m going to send you and the girls on a cruise to Paris. And when I get my business affairs taken care of, I’ll join you.”

He put them on the biggest cruise ship known of that day, and they sailed for Paris. Off the coast of Newfoundland, a ship hit that steamer right mid-ship. And there was a collision, and that steamer broke in half. It was a horrendous thing. Mrs. Spafford had her littlest baby in her arms. The twelve-year-old, when she saw what had happened, said, “Mother, don’t be afraid. God is in control of the sea.”

Well, those were the last words that the mother heard the little girl say on this earth, because that ship split and sank in twelve minutes. It sank like a rock; it went to the bottom. A mast fell and hit Mrs. Spafford and knocked the baby from her arms and plunged her beneath the water. Something caught her and buoyed her up again. When she came to the surface, a man reached out his hand and pulled her into a lifeboat. Of the five hundred aboard that ship, only twenty-two were saved. Mrs. Spafford was one. The four children drowned.

For weeks, the ship that hit them, which was still afloat, fought Atlantic storms trying to get across the Atlantic. Finally, they ended in Wales. The people were hungry and sick and hurt. Finally, Mrs. Spafford was able to send a wire back to Chicago. Because of the limitations of space, she only had two words. This is what she said: “Saved alone!” Spafford knew his wife was alive. His four children had gone to heaven. He made preparation to sail to Wales to get his wife. When he got on that ship and they crossed a certain place in the Atlantic, the captain of that ship said, “Mr. Spafford, as far as I can understand, this is the place where the ship went down and where your children’s bodies lie at the bottom of the ocean.” Spafford went below the deck, had a time of prayer, a time of committal, and then he wrote these words that we sing:

*When peace like a river, attendeth my way,  
When sorrows like sea billows roll;  
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,  
It is well, it is well, with my soul.*

—HORATIO SPAFFORD

*“Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.*

# How to Rest While You Work

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** September 4, 1983

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 11:25–30

*“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”*

MATTHEW 11:28

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Simplicity of His Rest
  - II. The Surety of His Rest
  - III. The Source of His Rest
  - IV. The Secret of His Rest
  - V. The Sweetness of His Rest
- Conclusion

## Introduction

Take your Bibles, if you would, and turn to Matthew chapter 11. Would you find it, please; we’re going to begin reading in verse 25. Now, while you are turning, I want to give you the sermon subject: “How to Rest While You Work.” So if you don’t work, you can’t rest, according to this message. That’s right. How to rest: not after you work, but how to rest while you work. I’m reading here now Matthew chapter 11, and I begin in verse 25—Matthew chapter 11, verse 25: *“At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and the prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light”* (Matthew 11:25–30).

Do you ever get tired? I heard of a lady who said that she was so tired that she felt as though she had been ironing all day in high heels on a low board with a cold iron. I don’t know whether you feel that tired or not, but you’re bound to be tired if you’re doing that. But life is full of burdens, and life is full of weariness, but, thank God, we don’t have to wait until we go to heaven to find rest for the soul. Though there may not be much for

the body, there is rest for the soul. Every now and then, we'll see on a tombstone these words: "Rest in peace." But, friend, I want to tell you, it takes more than a tombstone to bring peace. And if you don't have it before you die, putting it on a tombstone over your grave is not going to give you rest. As a matter of fact, the Bible says you'll have no rest day or night if you die without the Lord Jesus Christ (Revelation 14:11).

But while there may not be a rest for the body—or at least as much as we want—there is rest for the soul. And Jesus said in this scripture, "*Ye shall find rest unto your souls*"—the last part of verse 29. You have found out that, when you have rest for your spirit, then the body seems to get along pretty well. I told you, it's not the rpm's that wear the machine out—the revolutions; it is the friction that really wears the machinery out. And so many people do not really just wear out because they work so hard. As a matter of fact, a laboring man who has soul rest probably has the greatest vitality of any man: a man who works physically hard, but a man who spiritually is resting in the Lord.

Now we want to talk tonight about the rest that Jesus gives. Just as there is the forgiveness of God, and just as there is the peace of God, this weekend we need to also learn that there is rest in God. You see, according to this scripture, not only is He our grief bearer—and He is—but He's also our burden bearer. "*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden,*"—Jesus said—"and I will give you rest." Now I want us to look at this passage, therefore. I'm going to use a very plain and simple outline tonight, but I want you to think of the rest that Jesus gives.

## **I. The Simplicity of His Rest**

And, first of all, I want you to notice with me the simplicity of that rest. Look in verse 25: "*At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and the prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight*" (Matthew 11:25–26). Now the rest that I'm talking about is the rest that little children may know and sometimes intellectual top waters never find. It is rest that is exceedingly simple. You see, God gives it to the child-hearted.

Now we're not talking about being childish. God forbid that we should be childish. But we should be childlike. You see, there's something very wonderful about the gospel that's always blessed me every time I thought of it. An intellectual doesn't have a head start. Now you may think that's not true; but it is true. An intellectual doesn't have a head start. Because you are brighter than your neighbor does not mean that you're more right with God than your neighbor. As a matter of fact, if you will read this eleventh chapter, there were some men who were stunningly brilliant who got into an argument with the Lord Jesus; and He warned these brilliant people about committing the unpardonable sin. And then He said, after He had warned them about the unpardonable



sin and all of those things, then He said, clearly and very wonderfully, that a little child can find this rest.

You see, the only way that you'll know God is by revelation. You're not going to reason God out. Can a man by reasoning find out God? The answer is *no*. Now the Bible is not against reasoning, and, if you have a good mind, you don't have to crucify your intellect to be a Christian. And you can use your mind, and use it and use it. And you're to love God with all of your mind (Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27). But the gospel, friend, is not contrary to reason; it is just beyond reason—just beyond it. Therefore, the only way that you'll know God is by revelation. "God has hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, and He has revealed them unto babes." And so what I'm trying to say to you is that the rest, the soul rest, is exceedingly simple.

## II. The Surety of His Rest

But not only do I want you to notice the simplicity of it; I want you to notice the grand surety of it—the surety of it. Look in verse 27. Jesus said, "*All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, [except] the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him*" (Matthew 11:27).

Now Jesus, in a moment, is going to promise peace. He's going to promise rest. He's going to promise that He will lift the burden from all of us. Now Jesus does not make promises that He cannot keep. And the proof that He can keep His promises is this. He said, "*All things are delivered unto me of my Father*"—verse 27. He's got the whole world in His hands. That means the entire universe is under His control.

Don't you love that passage over there in Colossians that speaks of the Lord Jesus, in Colossians chapter 1, verses 16 and 17. It says, "*For by him*"—that is, by Jesus—"*were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things,*"—and then He says this—"and by him all things consist" (Colossians 1:16–17). That is, all things hang together; that, without Jesus everything would come apart. Jesus *is the* glue *of the* galaxies. All things were made by Him; all things were made for Him; all things are coming to Him; and through Him it all holds together. You see, dear friends, if you take Christ out of your life, your life will fly apart. If you take Christ out of your home, your home will come apart. All things are made by Him. And it is only through Him that things hang together.

Have you ever thought what would happen if Jesus were to retire from the universe? Do you know what gravity is? Oh, you know what gravity is. Maybe you don't know what gravity is. You probably only know what gravity does. Did you know that there's not a scientist on the world, or in the world anywhere, who can explain what gravity is? You

ask a scientist about gravity. “Well, gravity is that which holds us to the earth.” Okay, that’s what gravity is: it’s what holds us to the earth. And you say, “Now, you tell me what holds us to the earth.” He says, “Oh, that’s gravity.” You see? I mean, what he does is he describes it, but he never explains it.

Did you know what holds everything together? It’s not a what; it’s a who. And so the surety of this rest is that the Lord Jesus said, “*All things are delivered unto me of my Father.*” “All things are by me, for me, through me; by me they all hold together.” That’s the reason that Jesus could speak peace to that troubled storm; and, as Jerry Vines said, “When Jesus said peace to that storm, those waves lay down at his feet like a whipped puppy.” I like that phrase. Remember when he said that? Jesus had the power over that storm.

Now, why do you think Jesus stilled the waves? Just as a display of His strength or His miracle working? No. You see, in the Old Testament, what does the Bible say? “*The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest*” (Isaiah 57:20). You see, what Jesus was saying is that, “I have power over this physical universe. And I have that same power in your heart and in your life. You see, all things are delivered unto me; and, when I speak peace to a troubled soul, just as I speak peace to that troubled sea and it became as still as a millpond on a moonlit night, I can speak to you and give your life peace.” All things are delivered unto the Lord Jesus Christ; and, therefore, there is the surety of this rest.

### **III. The Source of His Rest**

But wait a minute: not only the simplicity of it, and not only the surety of it, but I want you to notice the source of it. Look, if you will, in verse 28. He says, “*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*” Now men have been trying to find peace and soul rest and everything. Some have the idea that money can purchase it.

I was witnessing one time to a man whose wife was a member of my church in another city. This man had recently retired. He was one of those men who retired fairly early. He had his home paid for. He had his automobile paid for. He seemed to have it all. And he was a self-confident man, and he was well-educated, one of the best-educated men in our town. And he liked me; and I liked him. And I tried to witness to him. But he was one of those fellows who always had an answer; he always just could keep you awake, just like this.

And one day I went to see him. And I got up my courage again, and I was trying to get the conversation on Christ, and I said, “Mac”—that’s what we called him; his last name was MacDonald—I said, “Mac, I want to talk to you about the Lord. You need the Lord.” “No,” he said, “I don’t need the Lord. I’ve got everything I need.” He said, “I’m

healthy. I've got a lovely wife." He said, "You see that house? It's paid for." Said, "You see that car? It's paid for. I've got money in the bank." Said, "I'm doing fine. I don't need the Lord." I said, "Mac, you do need the Lord." He said, "No, I don't." I said, "Okay. Well, I want to ask you a question. You say you have everything. But, Mac, you've always been honest with me. Mac, if I ask you a question, will you answer it truthfully and straightforwardly, and not beat around the bush?" "Why, yes," he said. I said, "Okay, Mac, look me right in the eye. I'm asking you this question. You say you have everything. Do you have peace in your heart?" "Oh," he said, "I told you I don't need anything." I said, "Mac, you're beating around the bush." He wasn't answering the question. I said, "Mac, look me straight in the face and answer this question. Do you have peace in your heart?" And for the first time in my life I saw that man break. His chin started to quiver, his eyes filled with tears, and he broke. He said, "No, I don't have peace. How did you know?" And I said, "Mac, because, 'There is no peace to the wicked, saith my God' (Isaiah 57:21)."

There is none. You cannot find peace in possessions. Money can buy almost anything but happiness, and take you almost anywhere but to heaven. Some people try to find peace out of the mouth of a bottle, and some pill, or in pleasure, or they think perhaps the doctor can prescribe peace to them, or a psychiatrist or a psychologist can lead them into peace. I thank God for doctors. I thank God for psychiatrists. I thank God for counselors. I thank God for psychologists. But I want to tell you, friend, the peace that I'm talking about is peace that the world cannot give, and therefore peace that the world cannot take away.

*I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
"Come unto me and rest;  
Lay down, thou weary one,  
Lay down thy head upon My breast."*

*I came to Jesus as I was,  
Weary and worn and sad;  
I found in Him a resting place  
,And He has made me glad.*

—HORATIUS BONAR

"Come unto me," Jesus said, "and I will give you rest." He is the source of that rest. You will never have it without Christ. Augustine said long ago, "Thou hast made us for thyself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in thee."

#### **IV. The Secret of His Rest**

Now I want you to notice the secret of His rest. Look, if you will, in verse 29. Jesus says, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye

*shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light*" (Matthew 11:29–30). We have a Sunday School class here in our church called the Yokefellows. What is Jesus talking about when He says, *"Take my yoke upon you"*? Well, a yoke was a wooden bar, carefully fashioned and carved with a harness on it that would fit across the shoulders of an ox and enable the ox to pull a load. And so what the Lord Jesus is saying is that you are to take the spiritual counterpart of that wooden beam upon you. We must learn to wear the yoke—pay attention now—if we are to enjoy His rest. He says, *"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me."*

Now in the Christian life there's nothing to earn, but there's a lot to learn. *"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me."* Now when Jesus said, *"Take my yoke upon you,"* He did not mean, I do not believe, as we have often heard it explained, that He is like an ox on one side, and we're like an ox on the other side, and He is our yokefellow, and that He is pulling along with us. Now that's a beautiful picture, but I don't believe that's what's taught here. There is a sense in which Christ becomes my strength and my help, and He comes alongside of me by the Holy Spirit; but that's not what He's talking about here. When He is saying, *"Take my yoke upon you,"* what He is saying is this: "Yield your life to my control, take my yoke upon you"; that is, "Submit your will to mine, put your will under the will of Christ." The yoke is a symbol of submission and service.

That's the reason why I said I was going to talk to you about while you work. So many people think that rest comes by taking the yoke off; but rest for the ox comes at the end of the day, that when the battle is over and the work is done, he takes the yoke off and then he rests. But Jesus said, "You want to find rest? Put on the yoke." Huh? That's one of the paradoxes of the Bible. "You shall find rest unto your soul." "Put your will under mine."

Now, friend, listen to me. It is not rest from service; it is rest in service. It is a strange rest that comes by putting on the yoke rather than putting it off. Now every now and then some people have the idea they're going to retire. Did you ever get that idea? Put it out of your head. God never called a man to retire—never! You may stop doing what you're doing now for pay. You know what that means? You've just got more time to serve for Jesus. That's all that means. It doesn't mean that you're going to sit around in some ol' rocking chair and get fat and lazy. All it means is that now you can cut loose and serve God in the way that you never could.

You see, listen, friend. Rest does not come from just merely inactivity. Surely, you need rest for your body, and as we get older we cannot do physically what we used to do; but it does not mean we drop out, we sit, soak, and sour. I want to tell you something, friend. The minute you put off the yoke, at that moment you take up the burden. When you put off the yoke, you lay on the burden. What Jesus is saying is, *"Take my yoke upon you, get into this thing of service; and you will find rest while you*

work, rest while you serve.” The most miserable people on this earth are the invalid rich who are trying to find peace of heart. And if you’ll go to the pleasure palaces of this world and look in the faces of those people who have come there for happiness and joy and peace, you’ll find the most haggard, weary-looking group of people you’ve ever found in your life. What Jesus is saying is this: the secret of the rest that He gives is that you find yourself by losing yourself.

Do you know we have a generation today of people who don’t want any yoke of any kind? Freedom is the watchword. We want release from all authority. I pity you, friend; for it is not until you put on the yoke of Christ that you will find rest. At that time you learn the rest of Christ. When you say, “Jesus Christ is Lord,” then you can “stand fast in the liberty wherewith He has made you free” (Galatians 5:1). You see, we just think, “If I had no restraints, if I had no responsibilities, if I had no boss, no authority, then I would be peaceful and happy.” You would be miserable.

The kite held by the string tugs against that string, and the kite has the idea, “If I could just get loose from this string, how high I could go.” And the string breaks, and down, down, down, down comes the kite. It was that string that added restraint that caused the kite to soar.

Now a tree is rooted in the ground. Perhaps there’s some tree that says, “I just hate to be planted here in the ground. I wish that somebody would come and free me from this ground.” And someone frees the tree. It’s uprooted and it is now free—free to die!

Here’s a train on those ribbons of steel, a railroad train, and the train says to himself, “Ha, I wish I weren’t confined by these old rails. I wish I could somehow leave these rails and go out across the meadow.” And so someone derails the train; and the train tumbles off the tracks and into the meadow, and it’s a tumbled mass of steel, and it can no longer function as a train.

Everything that God has made God has put restraints on it; and when you take away those restraints, you take away freedom. I wrote this in my devotional book one day; and I look at it from time to time, and it speaks volumes to my heart. Though it may not seem very profound to you, I think it’s one of the most profound things that I’ve ever written. Discipline—discipline—does not restrict you; it frees you say *amen* tonight. It frees you. Most of us are afraid of discipline; we don’t want to be restricted. But it is discipline, friend, that frees you and sets you free.

Our lady has played the piano tonight, and I thank God for the way she has played. She can sit there at the piano and play the most beautiful music. Now, how did she do that? Did she just sit down one day and say, “I’m just going to freely play the piano”? No, she disciplined herself: hours and hours and hours of practice. How does Larry play the organ as he does? He disciplines himself. And, oh, you know, you people say, “Oh, I’d give anything if I could just play the piano like you.” That’s a lie. You wouldn’t do it,

because you didn't do it. You see, they're the ones who gave something; you didn't—you didn't, see? Would you give the discipline that it takes? Would you give the practice that it takes? But I want you to see, when they sit down and they just ripple off those chords and play all eighty-eight keys with that freedom and that rhythm and that liberty and that joy, their discipline did not confine them. Really, what it did was set them free.

Now Jesus said, "Do you want liberty? Do you want the burden lifted? Put the yoke on." When you take off the yoke, you put on the burden; when you put on the yoke, you lift the burden. That's the secret of the whole thing, the secret of this rest.

## V. The Sweetness of His Rest

Now there's one last thing I want you to notice with me—and that's the sweetness of this rest. Look, if you will, in verses 29 and 30: "*Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*" Notice again that it's soul rest that we're talking about, what we would call today peace of mind. Isaiah 48, verse 22: "*There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked*" (Isaiah 48:22). Isaiah chapter 57, verse 20: "*But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt*" (Isaiah 57:20). Romans 3, verses 16 and 17: "*Destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace they have not known*" (Romans 3:16–17).

Oh, friend, the sweet rest that Jesus gives is such a wonderful rest! It's hard for me to understand why people wouldn't receive Him, why people fear Jesus. Earlier I told you the danger you will get into when you get to thinking negatively about Jesus, negatively about God—and so many people do!

I had a man come up to me, and he was a beggar. Well, he wasn't exactly a beggar, more of a panhandler—there's a difference; well, a beggar. I think of a beggar sometimes as a person who just is crippled or something and can't make a living. This man was more of a—well, he was a bum. He was a bum—that's really what he was. And he stopped me, and he said, "Mister, would you give me some money? I'm hungry. I haven't eaten in three days." Boy, that will get to you when you've just eaten. I had had a good meal, and he said, "I haven't eaten in three days." Now this guy, I mean, he was filthy. He had a big beard, grimy beard. It wasn't because he grew a beard; he just hadn't shaved. And if he did shave, he didn't stand very close to the razor. And it was kind of one of those old dirty beards. And he had a foul mouth, nasty; hadn't brushed his teeth. He just, you know, from a human perspective, you just wouldn't want to be near him.

And he said, "I haven't eaten in three days"—or four days—I forget how long he said. He said, "Would you give me some money for some food?" I said, "No, I won't." I said, "Tell you what I will do. I'll buy you some food." I said, "Here's a restaurant. Come

on in. Let's eat." "Oh," he said, "I'd rather have the money." "Well," I said, "you just come on in here if you're really hungry." I said, "If you haven't eaten, this is a fine restaurant." I said, "You just come on in. Here's the menu. You order, and I'll pay for it, and I'll sit here and have a cup of something, and we'll just visit while you eat." So he came in and sat down. He didn't order much; wasn't near as hungry as I thought he was. If a guy hadn't eaten in all those days, you know, my goodness, I would have thought, I was wondering, I just gave him carte blanche, "just order what you want," and he ordered a hamburger. And he sat there, and he ate that hamburger. And I started to talk to him about the Lord Jesus Christ. And I told him about the wonders of Jesus, and the joys of Jesus, and how sin could be forgiven, and how Christ could come into his life, and how Jesus could give him joy and peace—the Christ who says, *"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."*

I was just so certain because of my kindness and all of that I was going to win him to Christ. And I said, "Now, sir, wouldn't you like to receive Christ as your personal Savior and Lord?" Do you know what he said to me? He said, "No, I don't want to do that." I said, "Well, why not?" "Oh," he said, "man, there's too much to give up." I looked at him, and I thought, "The devil is a liar."

Isn't the devil a liar, friend? Too much to give up? Let me tell you something. The only thing God asks you to give up is your misery and your sin. The only thing that God asks a man to give up are the things that will hurt him—that's all. If it will make you healthy, if it will make you holy, if it will make you wholesome, God says, "Help yourself; I love you." Listen. The only thing God asks you to give up are the things that will hurt you. And what you give up is nothing compared to what you get. Who wouldn't give up dirt for diamonds?

Jesus says, *"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me... For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."* I hear people say, "Oh, man, it's so hard to be a Christian!" Where did you get that? Not out of the Bible! The Bible doesn't say it's hard to be a Christian; impossible, yes, but not hard; impossible, but God does the impossible, but not hard. You see, if Jesus said, "My yoke is easy, my burden is light," the Bible says, "The way of a transgressor is hard" (Proverbs 13:15).

I looked at that guy, and to tell you the truth, folks, he looked at me like he was having a tough time. And if I was him, I'd be willing to give that up.

"The way of the transgressor is hard." The only thing God asks you to give up are the things that will hurt you; and what you give up is nothing compared to what you get. And, friend, if we did give up something for Him, it's nothing compared to what He gave up for us. Oh, friend, He gave all for us. And if the Lord said, in order to be Christian and go to heaven, you have to give all of your riches and all of your wealth, and suffer excruciating pain, it would be worth it not to go to hell. Jesus said, "It would be better for

you to cut off your hand or pluck out your eye than to go to hell” (Matthew 5:29–30). Jesus said it would be better to be a crippled saint than a whole sinner going to hell. What I’m saying, dear friend, is this: that if the Lord were to require that of us—He doesn’t—but if the Lord were to require of us to cut off your hand in order to get to heaven, it would be a cheap price to pay. But what our Lord says is, *“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, I will give you rest.”* “I’ll give it to you.” *“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me... For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”*

## **Conclusion**

Jesus Christ was a carpenter, and He never made a yoke that didn’t fit. And when He says, *“Take my yoke upon you,”* He has one just for you. And His yoke is easy; you’ll not chap under it. And when you get under the yoke, and when you get in His service, for the first time in your life you’re going to find rest, joy, and happiness. And peace is something you don’t find by looking for it. It is the by-product of putting on the yoke of the Lord.



# The Master Soul Winner

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: September 11, 1983**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 12:18–21**

*“Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles.”*

MATTHEW 12:18

## Outline

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- I. The Commission of the Master Soul Winner
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Conclusion

## Introduction

All day long we've been thinking on the subject of soul winning and bringing people to Jesus Christ. Tonight, I want to speak to you on this subject: "The Master Soul Winner." And, of course, His name is Jesus. And because He is the master soul winner, the Lord Jesus is the model soul winner, because He is our example in everything. He's our example in this matter of bringing people to Himself. So I want us to begin reading here in Matthew chapter 12 and verse 18. This is a prophecy of Isaiah the prophet that Matthew quotes and applies to the Lord Jesus, and it's one of the sweetest passages in all of the Bible. The Lord God Almighty is extremely pleased with His Son the Lord Jesus, and so He says, *"Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in His name shall the Gentiles trust"* (Matthew 12:18–21).

Now, folks, He was talking about us a long time ago. Isaiah prophesied that, in the name of Jesus, Adrian Rogers, Jim Whitmire, and all of the rest of these who are here tonight who know the Lord Jesus Christ, would have trusted in Him. We're those

Gentiles that Isaiah prophesied would come to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. Isaiah described the coming Messiah, and He described the ministry and the method of His ministry. And what I want to do is to look at the life and the ministry of Christ as a master soul winner, and then I want to use that as an illustration and as an application for your life and for my life.

## **I. The Commission of the Master Soul Winner**

Now there are several things that I want you to notice that Isaiah prophesied about the Lord Jesus. First of all, I want you to notice His commission, in verse 18: *“Behold my servant, whom I have chosen”* (Matthew 12:18). *“My servant”* is the Lord Jesus. God the Father chose God the Son for a specific task. Jesus said, *“The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost”* (Luke 19:10). And, again, Paul said, *“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”* (1 Timothy 1:15). Now Jesus was the servant of Jehovah, and His task in serving was to bring men and women, boys and girls, to Himself, to a saving faith in Him.

Someone has written these words—they’re beautiful to me. They answer the questions, “What is evangelism? What is soul winning?” “It is the sob of God. It is the anguished cry of Jesus as He weeps over a doomed city. It is the cry of Paul, ‘I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren’ (Romans 9:3). It is the ringing plea of Moses, ‘Forgive their sin; and, if not, blot me out of the book which thou hast written’ (Exodus 32:32). And then again, it is the cry, the anguish of John Knox, who said, ‘Give me Scotland or I die.’ It’s the sob of a mother in the night as she weeps over a lost child. It is the secret of a great church, it is the secret of a great preacher, and of a great Christian.” That’s what somebody said evangelism is.

Are you a soul winner? Are you? Our Lord was a soul winner. Our Lord had been given a commission from God the Father. I like what R. A. Torrey said—and, by the way, you can buy R. A. Torrey’s books in our bookstore, and you ought to get them. They are some of the best books on plain, downright, good, honest Bible study you’ll ever have. Dr. R. A. Torrey said, “I would like to know what right a man has to call himself a follower of Jesus Christ if he’s not a soul winner.” That was a good place for an *amen*, folks. Listen to it again: “I would like to know what right a man has to call himself a follower of Jesus Christ if he’s not a soul winner.” Didn’t Jesus say, “Follow me, and I will make you to become fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19; Mark 1:7)? Now it follows, as night follows day, that, if you’re not fishing, you’re not following. “Follow me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.”

Do you know what Andrew Murray said? He’s a great Christian also. Andrew Murray said, “There are two classes of Christians: soul winners and backsliders.” Amen, or oh

me? Do you know what John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church, said? He said to his students, "You have only one business, and that is the salvation of souls." Boy, I'll tell you what: I believe old Wesley would be spinning in his grave right now if he knew what was going on. "You have only one business, and that is the salvation of souls." David Brainerd, a man who gave his life as a missionary to the North American Indians, wrote this in his diary—actually David Brainerd prayed himself to death and wore his body out as a relatively young man bringing the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Indians. He said this: "I cared not how I lived, nor what hardships I went through, if only I might gain souls for Christ." Boy, that challenges me. "I cared not how I lived, nor what hardships I went through, if only I might gain souls for Christ."

Compare that to our churches today. I mean, folks, we've got the latest and most modern equipment; we have radio, we have television, we have beautiful buildings, we have air conditioning, we have printing presses, we have jet airplanes, we have it all—and we do so little with so much. And they, those early Christians, did so much with so little. Somehow it seems like we're just losing the war. There's a tidal wave, an avalanche of sin and unbelief and immorality, that's coming in upon us. The spirit of the Lord Jesus was the spirit of soul winning, the spirit of service, and God says that, as He looked at His beloved Son, "*Behold, my servant whom I have chosen.*"

Now, how does that apply to me? Well, Jesus said, "*As [the] Father hath sent me, even so send I you*" (John 20:21). And Jesus said, in John 15, verse 16, "*You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain*" (John 15:16). God chose me to bring forth fruit, and the fruit of my life ought to be another Christian coming to know Jesus Christ.

Soul winning is every Christian's business. No one is excused. A Christian who refuses to win souls is like a barber who refuses to cut hair, like a bus driver who refuses to drive a bus. Jesus said, "*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden*" (Matthew 11:28), as I preached last Sunday night. But the same Jesus who says, "*Come,*" is the same Jesus who says, "*Go.*" He says, "*Come unto me,*" and then He says, "*Go...into all the world*" (Mark 16:15). And if we've heard Him say, "*Come,*" then again it follows that we must hear Him say, "*Go.*"

I want you to see the commission of the Lord Jesus. "*Behold, my servant whom I have chosen,*" and, "*As [the] Father hath sent me, even so send I you.*" "You've not chosen me; I have chosen you. I've ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." Now, friend, no matter what else you do, no matter how faithful you attend, no matter how circumspectly you walk, no matter how generously you give, no matter how well you sing, no matter how lavishly you serve, if you're not in the business of endeavoring to bring souls to Jesus Christ, you're not right with God—period, period—you're not right with God.

Now you can't all do it the same way; you can't all be door-to-door salesmen; you can't all be pulpit peers or gospel singers—but somehow, some way, in your way, according to your gifts, your talents, your background, your opportunities, you've got to be praying, "Oh, God, oh, God, oh, God, make me a soul winner," for Jesus said, "You've not chosen me; I've chosen you, and I've ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain." So the first thing that I want you to see about the master soul winner is His commission.

## II. The Commendation of the Master Soul Winner

Secondly, I want you to see His commendation. Notice what the Lord said about His Son: "*Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased*" (Matthew 12:18).

Now, when God the Father saw God the Son on a mission of salvation of souls, God the Father said, "I am well pleased with my Son." Why was God well pleased with His Son, the Lord Jesus? I'll tell you why. Jesus said, in John chapter 8, verse 29, "*I do always those things that please Him*" (John 8:29). Now, friend, you ought to have no greater ambition than to please God. And *if you please God, it really doesn't matter whom you displease. And if you displease God, it really doesn't matter whom you please.*

Do you want God to be well pleased with you? How can God be well pleased with you if you're not a soul winner, if you're not witnessing? You see, the church that is not witnessing is not pleasing God. The Christian who is not witnessing is not merely failing; he is in revolt; he's guilty of the crime of high treason; he's guilty of apostasy. Soul winning is not an option. Evangelism is not a nicety. To fail to witness for Jesus Christ is a clinched fist in the face of our high commander-in-chief, Jesus Christ, who has commissioned us, ordained us, commanded us, and sent us. And God is not pleased with us if we're not doing it. And that means that God is not pleased with most churches and most Christians. God looked at His Son, the Lord Jesus, and said, "Behold my servant, my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased." Why? Because Jesus said, "*I do always those things that please Him.*" The Lord Jesus wants to bring souls to Himself to bring glory to the Father.

## III. The Companion of the Master Soul Winner

The third thing I want you to notice about the Lord Jesus, the master soul winner: not only His commission, and not only His commendation, but I want you to notice His companion. Notice in verse 18 again: "*I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles*" (Matthew 12:18).

Now the Lord Jesus had for His companion in His humanity the Holy Spirit, as we

have for our companion the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the divine companion within the bosom of every born again child of God. He is a *paraclete*. That means, “a companion”; that means, “someone who has come alongside us to stand with us, to help us, to anoint us.” You see, the Lord Jesus, even though He was very much God, did not do what He did in the strength of the deity that was inherently His, but Jesus achieved what He achieved in the power of the Holy Spirit. *“I will put my spirit upon him.”* Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit. And I’m so glad that Jesus did not use the power that was inherently His as deity. I’m so glad that He laid that aside as such, became a man, and then as a man, though a perfect God, but yet as a man, was filled with the Holy Spirit and anointed with the Holy Spirit and therefore became my example.

Let me give you some verses to jot in your margin. Luke chapter 4, verse 18—Jesus stood up as He began His public ministry, and He began significantly with these words: *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach”* (Luke 4:18). Oh, I cannot tell you how many times I’ve looked at that scripture before I come in to this pulpit, and I’ve said, “Oh, God, Oh, God, I want you to anoint me to preach. Lord, I want your Spirit to be upon me as your Spirit was upon the Lord Jesus.” “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, for He hath anointed me to preach.” The Lord Jesus, a very God, could not, did not, preach without that anointing. “Behold, my servant, my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him.” Jesus was anointed with the Holy Ghost of God.

In Acts chapter 10, verse 38, the apostles preached, *“how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy [Spirit] and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him”* (Acts 10:38). That’s what we’re talking about: His companion, God the Spirit, in the form of the anointing.

Do you know the difference between the baptism, the filling, and the anointing? The baptism of the Spirit is once for all: that comes when you’re saved. “For by one Spirit have we all been baptized into one body” (1 Corinthians 12:13). Then there are many fillings; that is, when we yield to the lordship of Christ, and He takes over totally—body, soul and spirit, lock, stock and barrel, every inch, every nerve, every fiber, every sinew, every ambition—all of us. We give it to Him. We don’t get more of Him; He gets all of us. We already have all there is of Him. That is the filling.

But what is the anointing? Some people think Jesus was filled with the Spirit at His baptism. Oh, no, Jesus was filled with the Spirit before His baptism. John the Baptist was filled with the Spirit from his mother’s womb. Was the servant greater than his Lord? Do you think Jesus lived for thirty years without being filled with the Spirit? Of course not! But Jesus was anointed with the Spirit at His baptism. When the Spirit of God came upon Him, what is the anointing? The anointing of God is a special touch for a specific task. When there’s something you need to do, when there’s a witnessing you

need to do, when there's a song that you need to sing, when there's a sermon you need to give, when there's something for which you need that special touch of God, you need to pray, "Oh, God, anoint me." *"The Spirit of the Lord [God] is upon me, [for] he hath anointed me to preach."* He hath anointed me to sing. He hath anointed me to witness.

You see, the Lord Jesus had a divine companion—the Holy Spirit of God. He *"went about doing good...for God was with him."* I'll tell you, that anointing brings power. *"God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power."* *"Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me"* (Acts 1:8). It brings knowledge. First John 2, verse 27: *"But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him"* (1 John 2:27). Oh, the companion of the master soul winner!

#### **IV. The Composure of the Master Soul Winner**

Now the next thing I want you to notice: the composure of the master soul winner. Continue to read here in verse 19: *"He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets"* (Matthew 12:19). That doesn't mean that Jesus never opened His mouth when He went out of doors; it means in the sense of yelling and screaming and ranting and raving. Jesus didn't do that. Jesus had a perfect composure. He was calm. He was assured in His service and in His witnessing. And this was in such contrast with the arguments, the wrangling, of the scribes, the ravings of the false prophets, the arguments of the religious crowd of that day. Jesus was not that way. Jesus had such a sweet, pleasing personality. Somehow we get the idea that in order to be witnesses we've got to be some kind of a religious nut, psycho, weirdo.

I want to tell you about the Lord Jesus. Jesus was a loving and a winsome man. He was a friend of sinners. And He was the kind of a man that little children loved to come and put their arms around His neck. You can fool adults sometimes, but you can't fool little children too easily. They came to sit in the lap of the Lord Jesus. And He gathered little children to Him. And Jesus had the sweetest personality and the most pleasing personality.

Do you know what the Bible says, in 2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 24? *"The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach"* (2 Timothy 2:24). Do you know what I pray God will do to this congregation? Make you a group of beautiful people; winsome people; loving, kind, gentle, courteous people. That's the kind of personality Jesus had. He wasn't running around grabbing people by the lapels and looking at them with beady eyes and saying, "Mister, are you ready to meet God?" He wasn't that kind. That's not the kind of witnessing we need in this day and this age.

Sometimes people like that turn more people off than they bring to Jesus.

You see, Jesus was a witness, not a lawyer. A lawyer argues a case; a witness shares what he's seen and heard. Jesus said, "That which I've heard, that which I've seen: that's what I speak" (John 8:38). And He witnessed to God the Father, and then He said, "*As [the] Father hath sent me, even so send I you*" (John 20:21). And I want to tell you, God was pleased with Jesus, and—you listen to me—when I'm willing to be what Jesus Christ was to the Father, then Jesus Christ will be to me what God was to Him. When I am willing to be to Jesus Christ what Jesus Christ was to the Father, then Jesus Christ will be to me what God was to Him. "*As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.*"

That's the point of the whole thing. And the Lord Jesus had a composure about Him. How we need to learn to witness with calmness, with reasonableness, with sensitivity and sensibleness! May God help us to learn from the master soul winner! Now Jesus had a composure about Him, and the reason that He had this composure was that He was resting in the Lord. He had nothing to prove. He knew who He was. I hope you know who you are.

## **V. The Compassion of the Master Soul Winner**

Now the next thing I want you to notice about the model master soul winner: not only the composure, but I want you to notice His compassion. Look at it again, in verse 19: "*He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench*" (Matthew 12:19–20). Do you know what that speaks of? That speaks of the compassion of the Lord Jesus Christ to people who are like a bruised reed.

Have you seen a piece of grass that's been stepped on and stepped on and stepped on, and it's just broken, it's bent, and it's just about so fragile that it looks like it's about to die, it's about to break? There are a lot of bruised reeds around us, and "a bruised reed He will not break, and the smoking flax He will not quench."

Have you ever seen a piece of flax or a piece of cotton, a piece of thread, perhaps, that's been burning, maybe even the wick in a candle, and you've blown the candle out, and there's just that little glow on the end of it, just a little glow and a little wisp of smoke? Do you know how you can put that out? You don't even have to be afraid of getting your fingers hot. You just reach out and put it out—put it out.

You see, look, folks. There are people—I mean, they're all around—they've been stepped on so many times, they've been battered and bruised and broken, and their spark is about to go out. One harsh word out of you, one misstep, one act of inconsiderateness, insensitivity, one display of you standing up for your rights could be the thing that could break that reed and put out that spark.

I'm so glad that the Lord Jesus was so gentle and so sensitive to people. And I would to God that I could have a broken heart, that I could learn to be sensitive. Sometimes people irritate me and they aggravate me; sometimes I have the old Adrian in me that has a tendency just to tell them where to get off. Do you ever feel that way? You make me feel bad now. You're supposed to nod your head and say you feel that way too. And I get to thinking, "You know, I can't do that—I can't do that." That's somebody for whom Jesus died, and I don't want to say anything, or be anything, or do anything that would keep me, if I had an opportunity, from sharing the love of God with that person. So there are times when I'm willing for a person to take advantage of me. There are times when I'm willing not to stand up for my rights or not to say that thing that I think I have the right to say, because I know that that person may have just a glimmer, just a glow, just a spark, just a thread that they are holding by.

Do you know what my prayer needs to be and your prayer needs to be? "Oh, Jesus, may the things that break your heart break my heart." The compassion of the Savior. He's the model soul winner. I don't know who first said this, but it's so true. People don't care how much we know until they know how much we care. What this world is really looking for is love. What this world is really looking for are people who really do love, who really do care. Thank God for the compassion—the compassion, the compassion—of the Savior. God have mercy upon the coldness, the cowardliness, of our hearts. Oh, there is the compassion of the Savior!

## **VI. The Confidence of the Master Soul Winner**

Then I want you to notice the confidence of the Savior, the master soul winner. Look at it, as we continue to read here in verse 20: "*A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust*" (Matthew 12:20–21). Not "might" the Gentiles, but they "shall." Jesus had the note of victory in His ministry. He is our victorious Christ. And all hell could not stop the Lord Jesus Christ, and all hell should not be able to stop us. Jesus knew victory, and He expected victory out of us.

Jesus had a confidence. Today we'd say Jesus is an optimist. You know, I like the verse that says He's sitting on the right hand of God "*expecting till his enemies be made His footstool*" (Hebrews 10:12–13)—not if they might, but until they do; expecting that His enemies be made His footstool. Do you know what we need today in our churches? We need some old-fashioned confidence in our God. "*Greater is he that is in [us], than he that is in the world*" (1 John 4:4).

Friend, we've let the devil paint us into a corner, back us into a corner, chloroform and intimidate us, when we need to get militant. And it's time for us to stop singing, "Hold the Fort," and start singing, "Onward Christian Soldiers," to have the confidence



that our Savior had.

Listen to it again: “...till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.” There was something about the Lord Jesus, the radiance, the love of our Savior’s faith, the life that He lived that called forth hope and trust from sin-stricken humanity. And not everybody came to Jesus, but multitudes did come to Jesus. And they will in this day and they will in this age. Not everybody that I preach to is going to be saved, but thousands have been saved. Not everybody that I’ve witnessed to is going to receive Christ, but, thank God, multiplied hundreds do receive Christ as I witness to them and as you witness to them. And I believe God will do the same thing for us that He did for the Lord Jesus and that He did for that early church.

The Bible says that Jesus had “*favour with God and with man*” (Luke 2:52), and the Bible says of that early church that God gave them favor with the people (Acts 2:47), and I believe that God can give us favor with the people. I believe that God can take this church, and I believe that God can give this church favor with all people. And the more favor we have with some, the more others will hate us. *When you mention Bellevue, you have to duck or pucker, because they’ll want to kiss you or take a swing at you.*

But I’m going to tell you this, friend: that we need to get back to some old-fashioned confidence. And don’t let the devil intimidate you and tell you that people will not—cannot—come to Jesus Christ. You were saved, weren’t you? And you know your heart. And there are a lot of other folks just like you, that, if somebody would share with them, they’d be saved just like you were saved. “*He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him*” (Psalm 126:6).

Now Jesus was a master soul winner. Thank God for the confidence that He had. And I want to have that kind of confidence. I want to hear the Savior say, “As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you.” I know that I’m inadequate; I know that. I know that you’re inadequate. However, the same Jesus that is described here in Matthew 12 now lives in me. Do you remember Galatians 2, verse 20? “*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me*” (Galatians 2:20).

## Conclusion

Now, what does that mean? It means that the Christ that is described here with His commission, with His commendation, with His composure, with His compassion, with His confidence, and all of the rest of it—that Christ now lives in me, and what I need to do is to get out of the way and let Him express His life in me and through me.

Colossians 1, verses 28 and 29: “*Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching*

*every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: [for this] I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily”* (Colossians 1:28–29).

Listen. I was preaching the gospel I guess for at least five years out of seminary before I learned this truth; maybe not that long, but for a period of time as a seminary graduate. I had never really grasped the truth that God did not want me to do anything for Him; He wanted to do something through me. Now what I’m trying to say is this same Jesus is alive and well living in me; in His new body which is the Church. And so, as I described Him here, He can be let loose in this community through me and through you. Listen to that scripture again in Colossians chapter 1, verses 28 and 29, speaking of Jesus: *“Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: [for this] I also labour,”*—seems like Paul is doing it, doesn’t it?—*“striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.”* You see, I work, but He works. *“The life which I now live...I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”*

Someone wrote these words:

*O for a passionate passions for souls,  
O for a pity that yearns!  
O for the love that loves unto death,  
O for the fire that burns!  
O for the pure prayer-power that prevails,  
That pours itself out for the lost!  
Victorious prayer in the Conqueror’s Name,  
O for a PENTECOST!*

—AMY WILSON CARMICHAEL

Don’t you long to see it? I mean, wouldn’t you like to see God break out, erupt, in our city with Pentecostal power? Wouldn’t you like to see souls, not by the scores, but by the hundreds—bless God, by the thousands—come to Jesus, where this preacher and this church and nobody else got the credit for it, but just a mighty sovereign move of the Spirit of God, and God’s people go out ablaze for Him to share Jesus Christ? Christ is the master soul winner, but He’s also the model soul winner. He said, “As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.”

# God's Final Call

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: January 16, 2005**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 12:22-32**

## Outline

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- I. What the Unpardonable Sin Is Not
  - A. It Is Not Some Moral Sin
  - B. It Is Not Some Intellectual Sin
  - C. It Is Not Some Verbal Sin
- II. The Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit
- III. Why Is It Called an Unpardonable Sin?
  - A. It Is a Sin Against Redemption
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- IV. The Consequences of Sinning Against Light
  - A. The Deceiving Power of the Unpardonable Sin
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Conclusion

## Introduction

**T**ake your Bibles and turn tonight to Matthew chapter 12. I have a message tonight that I trust God will use to speak to those of you who are in this building who are not saved. Whether or not you are a member of Bellevue is not the important thing. The important thing is that you know the Lord Jesus Christ. And if you're not saved, there is a deadline in front of you. And if you cross that deadline, you will be as consigned to hell as if the doors of hell had already closed behind you.

*There is a time we know not when,  
A place we know not where;  
Which marks the destiny of men  
To glory or despair.*

*There is a line, by us unseen,  
Which crosses every path;  
Which marks the boundary between  
God's mercy and His wrath.*

—JOSEPH ADDISON ALEXANDER

And my prayer tonight is that, if you're here unsaved, you will not commit what the Bible calls an unpardonable sin, that you will not cross that line that will forever eternally damn your soul.

## **I. What the Unpardonable Sin Is Not**

The Bible teaches there is an unpardonable sin, a sin that will not be forgiven in this age nor in the age to come. And we're going to look at that in just a moment here in Matthew chapter 12. But before we ever open the Scripture and read the Scripture, I want to tell you what the unpardonable sin is not. For, every so often, I get a letter from someone—quite frequently, really—saying, “I believe I have committed the unpardonable sin.” And they're worried about the fact that they may have committed the unpardonable sin. May I say up front, if you're concerned that you have committed the unpardonable sin, you haven't. A person who has committed the unpardonable sin would not be concerned about his or her soul.

### **A. It Is Not Some Moral Sin**

What is the unpardonable sin? It is not some moral sin. It is not adultery. It is not fornication. It is not sodomy. It is not thievery. It is not child abuse. It is not abortion. It is not murder. All of these can be forgiven, and “the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). And aren't you glad?

*I heard of a boy who was dying on the battlefield. The chaplain came out and took the boy's head and looked into those languid eyes. The chaplain knew he was dying. The chaplain said, “Son, is there something I can do for you?” And the boy said, “No sir. I need someone who can undo some things.”*

Well, I want to tell you, Jesus is the One who can undo those things. Every stain, every blot, every blur, every blemish can be washed whiter than snow in the precious blood of Jesus Christ. And if tonight you think that it's too late for you, or that you've sinned too much, I've got good news. For those sins Christ died! And anybody on the face of this earth who asks Jesus Christ to forgive his sin, those sins will be forgiven, those moral sins.

### **B. It Is Not Some Intellectual Sin**

And the unpardonable sin is not an intellectual sin. It is not atheism. It is not some apostasy. It is not agnosticism. There are many who have been apostates, agnostics, atheists who have had their eyes opened and have come to Jesus Christ and have been saved. And tonight you may be an atheist, an agnostic. You may be listening on the radio.

May God open your eyes. If you die that way, you will go to hell. But your sin is not unpardonable.

### C. It Is Not Some Verbal Sin

What is the unpardonable sin? It's not some verbal sin. It's not some blood-chilling oath where you take the name of the Holy Spirit and curse and swear. Many people think that the unpardonable sin is cursing, using the Holy Spirit. They say, "Well, I would not curse and put the Holy Spirit into my cursing. I'll curse and blaspheme the name of Jesus. I'll curse and blaspheme the name of the Almighty. But I will not curse and blaspheme the name of the Holy Spirit." Well, if you have any brains, any moral sensibilities, you'll not curse and use the name of God the Father, God the Son, or God the Holy Spirit. But this is not some verbal sin, something that you might say: "Oh, I said something I wish that I had never said."

## II. The Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit

To hear God's final call is to hear the Holy Spirit of God speak to your heart and for you to deliberately, willfully, callously say *no* to the Holy Spirit of God. The word *blaspheme* in the Greek language means, "to speak insulting against someone; to defame his character or his reputation."

Let's look at the Scripture and see the background for this passage of Scripture and the warning. Matthew chapter 12, beginning in verse 31—Jesus Christ is speaking, and He says, "*Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men:*"—thank God for that, amen?— "*but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come. Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by its fruit*" (Matthew 12:31–33).

Now, what is all of this about? What is the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost that He's talking about now? Well, we just need to back up and go back to verse 22 and find out the setting. Jesus had healed a man who was blind and who was dumb. And the religious leaders of that day, whose hearts were eaten up with jealousy, gave a foolish, a hurtful, a harmful, statement, and they said, "Oh, yes, He did a miracle. We can't deny that. But He did the miracle in the power of the devil."

Look, if you will now, in Matthew chapter 12, verse 22: "*Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?*"

*But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: and if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand? And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God,—underscore that—“then the kingdom of God is come unto you. Or else how can one enter into a strong man’s house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house. He that is not with me against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.” And then here comes the warning: “Wherefore”—in the light of all of this—“I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men” (Matthew 12:22–31).*

Now the people that day who criticized Jesus were not just ignorant; they were unspeakably immoral. They knew that they knew what they were saying about Jesus was not true, but they said it anyway. They said, “Oh, yes, we can’t deny that this blind man can see, and this dumb man can speak, but we’re going to tell you how He did it. He’s in league with the devil. He cast out devils by the prince of devils, Beelzebub.”

Well, who was Beelzebub? The Phoenicians worshiped the god of filth. They noticed if there was some filth, some stench, some carrion, some rottenness upon the ground, if it stayed there long enough, out of that would come flies. And they said, “Well, look at that! Life comes out of filth.” And so they had a god of filth, the god of rottenness, the god of carrion, and they worshiped the god of filth. They called him Beelzebub. You can hear the sound of flies in the very name Beelzebub. And they worshiped the god of filth, because they did not know that the flies had come and put their microscopic eggs, their larva, into that filth, and that larva was hatched. They didn’t understand that. All they saw was that out of filth there came life, and so they worshiped the god of filth. To the Jews who believe in Yahweh, Jehovah, this not only was idolatry; this was unspeakable idolatry. And it was their name for the devil himself: Beelzebub.

Now I want you to see what they were saying about the Lord Jesus Christ. They said about the Lord Jesus Christ that He was casting out devils by the prince of devils, Beelzebub; that He was in league with the devil, the god of filth. They could not have said anything more wrong, more hateful, more blasphemous, than that.

### **III. Why Is It Called an Unpardonable Sin?**

Now I want you to notice the wickedness of this sin, why it is called an unpardonable sin.

### **A. It Is a Sin Against Redemption**

First of all, they are sinning against redemption. What had Jesus done? Jesus had opened blind eyes. Jesus had loosed a dumb tongue. Jesus had driven the devil out of a devil-possessed man. It was an act of love, an act of redemption; and they sinned against such love. The very Jesus who healed that man would have healed them. And when you deliberately turn your back upon Jesus, you are sinning against your redemption.

### **B. It Is a Sin Against Reason**

But not only did they sin against redemption; they sinned against reason. It wasn't reasonable. These men said that Jesus by the prince of devils cast out devils. Jesus said, "You're not thinking straight. A house divided against itself cannot stand. How does Satan cast out Satan? It's not reasonable" (Matthew 12:25–26). And they really knew this. You don't get to be a Pharisee by being a fool—that is, having intellectual incapacity. They knew what they were saying was not true, that Jesus somehow is in league with the devil. But this was the worst thing they could say, because they did not want to believe on Him, they did not want to accept Him; and so they sin against reason, and they knew better. And there are some of you in this building, and some of you who are listening by radio, you sin against reason. You know better.

Have you ever thought of some of the foolish excuses that people give for not being a Christian? "There are too many hypocrites in the church." Have you ever heard that? Well, if you haven't, you just must have lived for a short time. Do you think that a hypocrite could keep a person away from Jesus if that people really wants to be saved? You know, sometimes people say to me, "Pastor, do you know there are hypocrites in the church?" I say, "Oh, do tell." You think I could be a pastor for half a century and not know that? There have always been hypocrites, and there always will be till the end of time. Jesus chose twelve disciples. One of them was a hypocrite. The other eleven did not quit serving the Lord Jesus Christ.

A hypocrite is a counterfeit Christian. Men only counterfeit things that are valid and worthwhile. There's not a great business in America today counterfeiting gum wrappers. Men do counterfeit twenty-dollar bills, and hundred-dollar bills, and so forth. Why? Because every counterfeit that you see proves the worthwhileness and the validity of the real. Don't you let some hypocrite keep you from coming to Jesus, because, if you do, you'll spend eternity in hell with every one of them. Oh, too many hypocrites in the church!

Have you ever heard a person say, "There's too much to give up?" Young people, do you hear that—that if you give your heart to Christ, there's too much to give up?

I witnessed to a man on the street. He was panhandling. He said, “I need some money for some food.” He looked like a wino to me. And I said, “Are you hungry?” I said, “Well then, we’ll go in here together and get us a hamburger.” And I brought him into the restaurant. We sat down, and I said, “Order what you want.” He ordered. I ordered. We sat there and ate. And I turned to this man, this homeless man, this man panhandling on the street, this man unshaven and dressed in rags, and I told him of the love of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and asked him if he would like to invite Christ into his heart. You know what he told me? “Nope.” I said, “And why not?” He said, “Too much to give up.” Too much to give up! Who wouldn’t give up dirt for diamonds?

Listen, friend. The only things Jesus Christ asks anybody to give up are the things that will hurt them. *“The LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly”* (Psalm 84:11). To say, “I’d like to be saved, but there’s too much to give up,” would be like a man saying, “I’d like to be healed, but I hate to give up my cancer.” Anything that will hurt you or cause you to hurt somebody else, yes, the Lord will ask you to lay it aside. But every time He says that, *every time He says, “Thou shalt not,” He’s saying, “Don’t hurt yourself.” And every time He says, “Thou shalt,” He’s saying, “Help yourself to happiness.”*

Some people say, “Well, you know, I’m not going to get saved. I’m not going to go down there to church. My parents made me go when I was a child.” That’s so—pardon me, but—dumb. I started to use another word, but my wife says don’t use that word. It starts with *s-t-u-p-i-d*. So dumb! “My parents made me go when I was a child.” I bet your mama made you take a bath too, didn’t she? So now you’re a grown man, and you never take any more baths, because your mother made you take a bath?

### **C. It Is a Sin Against Revelation**

You see, the whole thing, these people, they knew better. They sinned against redemption. Here was a loving Christ. They sinned against reason. But here’s the main thing they did. They sinned against revelation. You see, it was very evident that the Spirit of God was working in that place. Notice what the Lord Jesus Christ said here in verse 28: *“But if I cast out devils”—now, watch it—“by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you”* (Matthew 12:28).

Now the Holy Spirit is God’s agent to open eyes, to bring conviction, and it’s very obvious that the Spirit of God was working here. You see, that’s the reason that you can blaspheme against God the Father and be forgiven. There are some people who honestly don’t believe that there’s a God in heaven; but God will forgive them. That’s the reason you can blaspheme against God the Son and be forgiven. You may not believe that Jesus is the



virgin-born Son of God. You may think a virgin birth is an impossibility. You may think that the story of Jesus is folklore and fiction and myth, and then have your eyes opened and be forgiven. But why is it here that you cannot sin against the Holy Spirit and be forgiven? Because, when you sin against the Holy Spirit, you sin against light.

You see, you can sin against love and logic, and be forgiven; but when the Holy Spirit of God speaks to you, and you willfully, deliberately say *no*, you have sinned against revelation. You've sinned against light. You cannot commit the unpardonable sin unless God has opened your eyes, unless you understand, unless God the Holy Spirit has spoken to you. And if God the Holy Spirit has spoken to you, and you say *no*, then you've committed an unpardonable sin, if you continually do that. That's the reason there's more danger of committing the unpardonable sin in a church than there is in a barroom; in a service like this than in a pagan Africa or somewhere like that.

You see, listen. Learn this truth, congregation. When we come to the judgment, when you come unsaved to the judgment, God *is not going to* judge *you primarily for the sin that you have committed, but for the light you have rejected*. Now I want to say that one more time just for emphasis. People are not going to be judged primarily for the sin they've committed, but for the light that they have rejected.

Now, jot these Scriptures down. John chapter 3, verse 19—Jesus said, *“And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil”* (John 3:19). Now you're in Matthew chapter 12. Go back. Just turn left to chapter 11, and look, if you will, here in verse 20: *“Then began he”—that's Jesus—“to upbraid”—that means, “to scold”—“the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum...”*—what was Capernaum? It was Jesus' headquarters city. It's where Jesus had done so many miracles. It was a religious city—*“And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.”* Now, listen to this: *“But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee”* (Matthew 11:20–24). Why? Because Capernaum had had more light. Jesus had done His miracles there.

Now the sin of sodomy is unspeakably immoral; but there is a greater sin than the sin of sodomy, and it is to sin against the light, to refuse the light, because the Holy Spirit is the One that brings light. And when you wound Him, when you misuse Him, when you abuse Him, when you blaspheme Him, then there's no more light. And no more light means that

you can't be saved. You see, you need more than sight; you need light! Again, I want to tell you, men are not going to be judged primarily by the sin they've committed, but by the light that they have rejected.

#### **IV. The Consequences of Sinning Against Light**

Now, what are the consequences of sinning against light when you know the truth, when God the Holy Spirit has spoken to your heart, and you willfully and deliberately say *no*? I want to mention three consequences.

##### **A. The Deceiving Power of the Unpardonable Sin**

This sin, the unpardonable sin, will deceive you. Put in your margin 2 Thessalonians 2, verses 11 and 12: *"And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness"* (2 Thessalonians 2:11–12).

You say, "Adrian, please explain that scripture: 'For this cause God will send them strong delusion.' I didn't know that God deceived people." But, friend, that's what black print on white paper says: "For this cause God will send them strong delusion." Well, why would God do that? So that they might believe a lie. Well, you say, "Adrian, it's getting worse. God sends them strong delusion that they might believe a lie. Well, why would God do that?" *"That they all might be damned."* Down, down, down it goes! Delusion, believing a lie, going to hell: why? Continue to read: *"Because they received not the love of the truth...but had pleasure in unrighteousness"* (2 Thessalonians 2:10–12). Are you listening?

The opposite of truth is not error. The opposite of truth is sin and unrighteousness. If you're sitting here in this building, or listening by radio, and you hear the truth, and you will not believe the truth, it is not because you cannot believe the truth; it is because there's sin in your heart and in your life. The Bible says, *"[Beware], lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief"* (Hebrews 3:12). I say it again, the opposite of truth is not error, but it is unrighteousness.

Now a man, a woman, a boy, a girl may hear a preacher preach the truth, and they know that if they hear that truth, receive that truth, obey that truth, then they're going to have to turn from their sin. There's going to have to be a lifestyle change. So over here on this side is the truth. Over here on this side is unrighteousness. And there's a decision that has to be made. So the person hears the truth, but he turns his back on the truth and has pleasure in unrighteousness. Now, listen. When he heads this way, God gives him a shove, because he heard the truth, he knew the truth, the Holy Spirit of God had spoken to him, and he turns and he goes away in unbelief. But unbelief is the baggage of his sin. That just comes along with it, because, when he heard the truth, he believed not the truth but had pleasure in

unrighteousness. Therefore, God will send him strong delusion. It is the righteous judgment of God. You cannot take the truth tonight that I'm preaching, hear it, and refuse it openly, willfully, deliberately, and just say, "Well, I'll put that truth in my pocket and spend it some day if I wish." No. You use it or you lose it. I'm talking now about a person who knows what they're doing, a person who sins against light. When you sin against revelation, when you sin against light, there is going to be the deceiving power of this sin.

Sometimes you can witness to a person who's committed the unpardonable sin, and he'll say, "I just don't see it." Well, he's not lying. He doesn't see it. I believe a lot of people are in false cults today because they've been blinded by their willful sin.

### **B. The Deadening Power of the Unpardonable Sin**

Now, not only is there the deceiving power of the unpardonable sin; there is the deadening power of the unpardonable sin. The unpardonable sin hardens the heart. That's the reason Hebrews chapter 3, verses 7 and 8, says this: *"Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts"* (Hebrews 3:7-8).

The Holy Spirit is speaking. He's saying, "Listen. Don't harden your heart. You see, when a person deliberately, willfully, knowingly says *no* to the Holy Spirit when the Holy Spirit is speaking, not only is he deceived; he's deadened. His heart gets hard.

I've often used the illustration of an old pine stump out in the woods where somebody's cut down a pine tree, and the sap and the resin have come out of that old stump, and there's a forest fire, and the trees are burning, and the brush is burning. And when the fire comes to that stump, because of the resin, it burns so brightly. The fire moves on, and the old stump goes out. Now it's blackened and charred. There may be in another year or two another fire. The underbrush has grown up again, and the fire is roaring and sweeping through the forest. If the fire is hot enough, that old stump may flicker and flame, but not nearly as bright; and then it goes out. But there will come a time, no matter how hot the fire, that old stump will never even glow, because it has been hardened. It has been charred. And while God's revival fire may be sweeping, and others are being saved, and in the spirit like this the Spirit of God is speaking to hearts, you can sit there and not be touched, not be moved. When the fire of God's Spirit goes, when He comes to you, it just jumps right over you, because you've been deceived, you've been deadened.

### **C. The Damning Power of the Unpardonable Sin**

And then, you'll be damned; you will die and go to hell. John chapter 12, verses 37 through 39: *"But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him:"*—that is, they had the light—*"that the saying of [Isaiah] the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord*

*been revealed? Therefore they could not believe*” (John 12:37–39). First, they would not believe. There were many miracles, but they would not believe. Therefore, they could not believe.

One of the most frightening scriptures in all of the Bible to me is found in Hebrews chapter 6, verses 4 through 6. God here is speaking of impossibility. I want you to listen to it: *“For it is impossible”—now, underscore that—“for those who were once enlightened,”—underscore that—“and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,”—underscore that—“and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame”* (Hebrews 6:4–6).

What does this verse say? Some people think that it talks about losing your salvation. No, it doesn’t talk about that. Salvation is not an issue here. In verse 9, the writer of Hebrews says, *“But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation”* (Hebrews 6:9). This is not something that deals with a saved person. This deals with a person, in my estimation, who has committed the unpardonable sin. He comes to a place where it is impossible—impossible—for him to repent and come back to God, because he has crucified the Son of God—and with his eyes wide open—and put him to shame. It’s a crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ. But, friend, they do it with their eyes wide open. They shall fall away. It’s impossible to renew them unto repentance, for *“they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh.”* Now Jesus had died, and has been dead for many years. But when a person is convicted by the Holy Spirit, they crucify Jesus again if they say *no*.

Now you remember what Jesus said to those who crucified Him the first time, what He said about them when He prayed? He said, *“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do”* (Luke 23:34). He couldn’t pray that for a person who has committed the unpardonable sin, because a person who has committed the unpardonable sin knows what he’s doing. His eyes are wide open. He has been made a partaker of the Holy Ghost. He has tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the world to come. He knows, but he says *no*. He will not repent. And he comes to a place where it is impossible to renew him to repentance. He’s like that old stump.

Let me give you an illustration. Here’s a man who goes to Kroger’s or Schnuck’s, and back in the back they have these women back there in aprons. And they have a table out there, and they have little square pieces of cheese out there. This man is a cheese hound. And she says, *“Here, try this cheese.”* And he tastes that on the toothpick. He goes along with her. He tastes it. He knows that it’s good. He says, *“I’ll take a pound of that.”* And he goes up to the cash register, and he sees something marked there on his bill. It says

twenty-seven dollars. He says, “What’s that for?” “Well, sir, that’s for the cheese.” “No, no, wait. That’s only a pound of cheese. Are you telling me twenty-seven dollars for a pound of cheese?” “Sir, that’s gourmet cheese.” He says, “Put it back. I don’t want it. I am not going to pay that price for a pound of cheese.” And he walks out. It’s not that he doesn’t know what the cheese is. He has tasted it. He’s gone along with the woman who hands him the cheese. But he says, “No, I’m not going to pay that price.”

The Bible says, when a man willfully, deliberately, says *no* to Jesus Christ, he can cross a deadline. He can come to a place where it is impossible to renew him to repentance. I’m going to give you four terrifying verses. Jot them down. Genesis chapter 6, verse 3: “*My spirit shall not always strive with man*” (Genesis 6:3)—“*My spirit will not always strive with man.*” There comes a time when the Holy Spirit says, “That’s it! I’m not going to speak anymore. My spirit will not always strive with a man.” Don’t get the idea that you can spit in the face of Jesus Christ, trample under your feet the precious blood of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 10:29), harden your heart and go your way, and then one day just whistle, and God will come running to save you. If you ask Him to save you, He would, but you’d come to a place where you would never ask Him, because the Holy Spirit would not convict you. That’s what the old-time preachers used to say: “when the lights go out on the road to hell.”

Here’s another Scripture—Romans chapter 1, verse 24: “*Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves*” (Romans 1:24). He’s talking here of sexual sin. People may choose the sin of fornication or sodomy over against the truth of God’s Word. They make up all kinds of silly excuses. Try to re-explain the Word of God, but God just backs up, and God says, “I give them up.” Romans chapter 1, verse 26: “*For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature*” (Romans 1:26)—“*vile affections.*” They say, “This is what I want.” They choose unrighteousness. And God gives them up. Romans 1, verse 28: “*And even as they did not to like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind*” (Romans 1:28).

“*My spirit will not always strive.*” God gave them up! God gave them up! God gave them over! When God’s Holy Spirit speaks, and people willfully, deliberately, knowingly, hurtfully, hatefully, callously, say *no*, they blaspheme the Holy Ghost. They don’t have to say a word with their mouths. You can pray without moving your lips, and you can blaspheme without moving your lips. If the way you live were to be put into words, it would be blasphemy against God.

Years ago, I read a story—and I’ll wrap it up with this story—a true story about a preacher in Arkansas, our neighboring state, named Dr. Joe Henry Hankins. Some of you

may have heard Dr. Hankins preach. He preached in Little Rock. Dr. Hankins said that he was preaching in a revival meeting one time, and God's Spirit was moving mightily, and souls were being saved. And he said, "I looked up there in the balcony, and I saw a man, a young man. He had the hymnal in his hand as they were singing out of the hymnal the invitation hymn." And he saw the boy close the hymnal and start this way like he was coming down out of the balcony to give his heart to Christ. But then he stepped back, and he opened the hymnal again and began to sing. A second time he closed it, and he turned like he was coming forward, but he hesitated; he stopped. He turned back and opened the hymnal again and started to sing. The third time, he closed it with a pop, laid it down; but, rather than coming forward, he walked out the back door of the balcony and out of the church.

Later on, that boy was diagnosed with a fatal illness. They told Dr. Hankins about it. And Joe Henry Hankins went to see this boy and recognized him as the same boy that had been in the balcony. And the preacher said, "Son, have they told you how sick you are?" He said, "Yes sir. You don't need to beat around the bush. I know I'm dying." "Well, son, I want to ask you a question. Sometime ago, when you were in church, I had my eyes on you. I thought you were under conviction. I thought you were about to come forward and give your heart to Christ. Was that true?" He said, "Yes, it was true." He said, "As a matter of fact, when you preached, I wanted to get down there so badly I felt I could jump over the balcony railing and come down there." "Well, son, why didn't you come?" He said, "I thought of my favorite sin, and I knew, if I went down there, I would have to give up my sin. And I closed the book and walked out of the church."

Dr. Hankins said, "Well, son, that was tragic you would do that. But you're going to die now, and you can't keep your sin anyway. Son, won't you come to Jesus now?" That boy looked at Joe Henry Hankins and said, "Preacher, there's something you don't understand. When I said *no* to God, something died within me." He said, "I can't come." Dr. Hankins wept and prayed, but the boy died, never giving his heart to Jesus Christ, because he sinned against light.

If you feel the smallest desire to come to Jesus, come! If you're afraid that you have committed the unpardonable sin, you haven't! Listen. "Whosoever will may come" (Revelation 22:17). Do you understand that? Anybody, anywhere, any place, who says, "I want to be saved," the Bible says, "*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*" (Romans 10:13).

## Conclusion

Now, tonight, you may not have committed the unpardonable sin, but you still may say *no* to Jesus. I'm going to tell you what will happen. Your heart will get harder until one day you'll cross the deadline. Your heart will get harder. "Today, if you hear God's voice, harden not your heart" (Hebrews 3:15; Hebrews 4:7). Those who are listening through radio, if you're in an automobile, stop the car, pull over and pray, and ask Jesus Christ to come into your heart and save you. You may be a member of Bellevue tonight and you're not saved. That doesn't mean you're a hypocrite. You may be very sincere in what you believe and do, but you know that you know that you've never had that real experience with God through Jesus. Don't let the pride of being a church member keep you from coming. As a matter of fact, if you're a church member and you come and give your heart to Christ, you know what will happen? Other church members who need to be saved will fall under conviction.

# The Unpardonable Sin

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: October 9, 1994**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 12:31–32**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. What Is the Unpardonable Sin?
  - A. It Is Not a Moral Sin
  - B. It Is Not an Intellectual Sin
  - C. It Is Not a Verbal Sin
  - D. It Is the Blasphemy Against the Holy Ghost
- II. The Sin of the Pharisees
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## Introduction

**W**ould you take God's Word and turn to Matthew chapter 12, and in a moment I'm going to begin reading in verse 31.

But first, this: In Scotland, many years ago, there was a man walking on the beach. In Scotland, the tide comes in very fast and very full. On one side was the ocean. On the other side, there were towering cliffs, almost impossible to scale without a stairway or help. As this man was walking way out on the beach, because the tide had gone out, he came to a marker, a sign. That sign said, "Do not go beyond this point. If you do, you will not have sufficient time to get back before the tide comes in."

Well, he disregarded that sign, thinking he could out-walk or outrun any tide that might come in. But then, the tide turned and began to come in and wash around his feet. He turned and made his way back toward the cliffs, but he had misjudged the distance. He had failed to heed the sign. Then, the water began to wash around his knees and his waist, and he began to struggle. And as he reached the cliff, he tried to climb up. There were those who were watching, and they tried to get to him, but they could not help him. Then, a great wave came and washed him down from the cliff. And the onlookers tragically watched him die. Tragically. Why? Because he had crossed the



deadline. He had gone beyond the point of no return.

Our Lord tells us about something like that in the spiritual world. In Matthew chapter 12 and verse 31, He gives one of the most solemn warnings in all of the Bible. Here's what he says: *"Wherefore, I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this age, neither in the age to come"* (Matthew 12:31–32). According to these solemn words by the Lord Jesus Christ, there is a sin that, if one commits it, he will never, never, ever be forgiven.

*There is a time, we know not when,  
A point we know not where,  
That marks the destiny of men  
To glory or despair.*

*There is a line by us unseen,  
That crosses every path;  
The hidden boundary between  
God's patience and his wrath.*

—JOSEPH ADDISON ALEXANDER

If you cross that line, you are irretrievably lost. You can never be saved: not in this world—obviously—nor in the world to come.

There is a sin that theologians have called the unpardonable sin. Now if there is a sin that is unpardonable, that can never be forgiven, indeed, we need to be apprised of it. We need to be warned. We need to be careful. I want you to listen, as we look into the Word of God, to find out, first of all, what the unpardonable sin is; secondly, what the results of committing this sin are; and, thirdly, what can we do that we may never ever commit the unpardonable sin.

## **I. What Is the Unpardonable Sin?**

What is the unpardonable sin? Well, let me say, first of all, what it is not.

### **A. It Is Not a Moral Sin**

It is not some moral sin. It is not, for example, adultery, or fornication, or sexual perversion, or murder, or rape, or thievery, arson, pillage—not some moral sin. All of

these sins are terrible and horrible, and, unless they're forgiven, will indeed damn the soul. But, thank God, they can be forgiven. And the Bible says, the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7). Hallelujah for that! Every stain, every blot, every blur, every blemish, that ever came across a human soul can be washed clean by the blood of Jesus Christ!

I'm told there was a soldier boy who lay dying after a horrendous battle. The chaplain came to him, picked that dying boy's head up, and looked into those languid eyes, and said, "Son, is there anything I can do for you?" And that dying boy, who'd lived a sinful life, said, "No sir, there's nothing you can do for me. I need somebody who can undo some things."

Well, Jesus is the Great Undoer. He is the One whose blood washes, and cleanses, and makes whiter than snow. "*Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow*" (Isaiah 1:18). Thank God for that. It's not a moral sin.

### **B. It Is Not an Intellectual Sin**

It's not an intellectual sin. You say, "Well, maybe the unpardonable sin is unbelief." No, unbelief can be pardoned. Failing to believe God will not condemn you, if you will repent of it and believe. Jesus prayed for those who crucified Him: "*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do*" (Luke 23:34). Some people, in ignorance, blaspheme the Lord Jesus Christ, and they say He's not the Son of God: "He is an imposter; He was a pious fraud." They don't know better. Then they learn better, and get saved. The Apostle Paul was one like that. Everybody is an unbeliever before he becomes a believer. So, unbelief—though, if you persist in that unbelief, will drag you down into hell—but unbelief is not an unpardonable sin.

### **C. It Is Not a Verbal Sin**

"Well," somebody says, "then maybe it's some verbal sin. Maybe it's some horrible oath that you might say, especially if you say something about the Holy Ghost." Some people think you can curse God the Father, and it can be forgiven; or you can curse God the Son, and it can be forgiven; but don't curse God the Spirit. Well, friend, if you have a modicum, one scintilla of an iota, of sense, don't curse God the Father, Son, or the Holy Spirit. To curse one is to curse the other, because they are one in three. The Bible says, "*The LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain*" (Exodus 20:7). And if you take the name of God the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit, and mix it in the slime and muck of the sewer, and take it upon your lips in some vile oath, you have committed a horrible and egregious sin. You'll face that sin at the judgment, unless it's forgiven. But it can be forgiven.

## D. It Is the Blasphemy Against the Holy Ghost

What is the unpardonable sin? Our Lord calls it the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. Look at it here again. He says here, in verse 31, *“Wherefore, I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven men”* (Matthew 12:31). To *blaspheme* means, “to willfully speak hurtfully against someone, to defame one’s character, reputation and his intentions.” That is *blasphemy*.

Now you can blaspheme God the Father and be forgiven. You can blaspheme God the Son and be forgiven. But you can’t blaspheme the Holy Spirit and be forgiven. Why is that? Is one more important than the other? Of course not! But it is the duty and the office work of the Holy Spirit that makes the sin different.

What does the Holy Spirit do? The Holy Spirit of God is the One who opens your understanding. The Holy Spirit of God is the One who gives light. God the Father sent the Son. The Son, the Lord Jesus, came willingly and died in agony and blood for our sins. But God the Holy Spirit is the One who helps you to understand that. That’s the reason that, when I pray as I did this morning on my knees in my office before I came out here, I said, “Oh, God, give me power, give me unction, give me the ability to make the message clear and plain; because I cannot do it by myself.”

I’ve told you so many times, *“Anything I can talk you into somebody else can talk you out of.”* You need what the Holy Spirit of God can do. You need the Holy Spirit of God to speak to you. And so my prayer is that it will be fulfilled in the Word of the Scripture: *“And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that obey him”* (Acts 5:32). My prayer is that when I preach to you, the Holy Spirit will be saying to your heart, “Amen, that’s right; what he’s saying is true.” The Holy Spirit is the One who opens the understanding. The Holy Spirit is the One who gives light. The Holy Spirit is the One who reveals truth. So, when the Holy Spirit is working, then you can no longer plead ignorance. When the Holy Spirit is working, there is light. And where there is light, there is responsibility.

Listen carefully. When the judgment comes, the judgment is not primarily sin committed; it is light rejected. It is light rejected. God will judge you, not primarily for the sin that you’ve committed—although you deserve to be judged for that—but the judgment is, first and foremost, a judgment, because you sinned against the light. John 3:19: *“And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”*

## II. The Sin of the Pharisees

I think I can illustrate it if I give you an episode that happened just before Jesus gave

this solemn warning. Look, if you will, in chapter 12, verse 22. Then you're going to get some idea of the setting that caused the Lord Jesus Christ to give this warning. *"Then was brought unto him one possessed with a demon, blind and dumb:"*—obviously, not every blind person has a demon, and not every speechless person has a demon. But this man did. He was possessed with a demon. He was blind and dumb—*"and [Jesus] healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spoke and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?"* And when they said the word or the phrase, *Son of David*, they meant, "Is this not the Messiah, David's greater Son?"—*"But when the Pharisees heard it..."*—now, who were the Pharisees? The Pharisees were the religious leaders of that day, full of pomposity and pride. The Pharisees were those religious leaders who cared for form and not substance. They had a form of godliness; they denied the power thereof (2 Timothy 3:5). And in them the milk of human kindness had curdled—*"But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out demons, but by Beelzebub, the prince of the demons. And Jesus knew their thoughts..."*—underscore that. And may I say that Jesus Christ knows your thoughts—*"And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand. And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? And if I, by Beelzebub, cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore, they shall be your judges. But if I cast out demons"*—now, watch it—*"by the Spirit of God..."*—underscore that—*"by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? And then he will spoil his house. He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."* That brings us back to our text: *"Wherefore, I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven men"* (Matthew 12:22–31).

Here's a man. He's blind. He's dumb. He's demon-possessed. They bring him to Jesus Christ. And Jesus, with the anointing of the Holy Spirit of God upon his life, performs a miracle. It was an obvious miracle. I mean, he was a blind man—and now he sees. Here is a man who cannot speak—and now he is speaking. There is no way to deny it. And so the Pharisees were there, and they saw the crowds turning to Jesus. They were listening to the Holy Spirit of God. And they said, "Is this not the son of David? Is this not the Messiah?" And they saw the crowds leaving them and beginning to follow the Lord Jesus Christ because of this miracle that had been done by the Spirit of God. They couldn't deny it, so they tried to explain it away.

So here's what they said: "Oh, yes, sure. Surely. Yes. Why, He cast the devils out of

this man, the demons out of this man. Why, surely He did that. But, ladies and gentlemen, listen to us. We'll tell you how He did it. He did it by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils." What they were saying was: Jesus Himself was demon-possessed; Jesus was full of the devil. And when they said this, when they said He cast out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils, that was the vilest thing they could possibly say.

Who was Beelzebub? Let me tell you who Beelzebub was. The Phoenicians, who gave us the alphabet, a seafaring people, a very intelligent people in many ways, had reached the very bottom of the garbage pail, so far as depravity and idolatry is concerned. The Phoenicians had a god they called Beelzebub, and he was the god of filth, the god of putrefaction, the god of decay and muck and slime and garbage. You say, "Well, why would anybody worship a god like that?" Well, the Phoenicians, a very observant people, would notice that, when there was a carcass of an animal on the ground and after a while it became bloated and began to stink and decay, then, *ipso facto*, it seemed to them, miraculously, there would be little white worms that would begin to work in that filth. Well, you know what it was: maggots, the larvae of flies. The flies had come, and would light upon that, and would lay their microscopic eggs. And those eggs would hatch, and the larvae—the maggots—would work there, and after a while, there would be flies. And the Phoenicians said, "Look at that! Out of rottenness, out of stench, out of filth, there comes life! So life comes out of filth!"

And so they began to worship the god of filth. And the name they gave him was Beelzebub, the lord of the flies. And that's what they worshiped. To a Jew—and rightly so—that was the worst thing they could think of. How stupid! How ungodly to worship filth! Now you know what they did when they said this to Jesus. I mean, they went through the lexicon of their vocabulary to get the worst thing they could possibly get. They said, "That's who He is: He casts out devils by the prince of devils, Beelzebub." And when they said that, that's when Jesus gave the warning about the unpardonable sin.

### **A. They Sinned Against Redemption**

Now, you see, what did they do? Well, in the first place, they sinned against redemption and love. I mean, what was the Lord Jesus Christ doing, anyway? Why did they hate Him? Why did they oppose Him? What was He doing? Opening blind eyes, loosing dumb tongues. What was Jesus doing? The Bible says He "*went about doing good*" (Acts 10:38). Tell me, why would anyone not love Jesus? Why? How good He is! How wonderful He is! How kind and loving is the Lord Jesus Christ! But they turned their back on such love and such redemption.

## B. They Sinned Against Reason

But not only did they sin against redemption. They sinned against reason. They said, “He cast out devils by the devil.” Jesus, knowing you don’t get to be a Pharisee by being stupid—these were people who were educated, these were the equivalent of the Ph.D.s of our day—and Jesus said, “You say that I have cast out devils by the prince of devils.” Jesus said, “A house divided against itself cannot stand” (Matthew 12:25). How can Satan cast out Satan? Nobody works for Satan by working against Satan. If Satan cast out Satan, his house comes tumbling down. He’s working against Himself. Jesus is saying, “What you are saying doesn’t make sense.” Nobody works for Satan by lifting drooping spirits and healing broken hearts, redeeming men from sin. It was so obvious Jesus was not in collusion with the devil. And they could see that, except for the fact that sin had caused them to put out their eyes. There are none so blind as those who refuse to see. But you’d have to be a Baptist preacher—or maybe not—to know that there are plenty of people just like these Pharisees who are alive today.

Some may be listening to me by radio or television, or maybe you’re here today, and you sin against reason. You know better, but yet you refuse the Lord Jesus Christ. And you give some silly reason that wouldn’t stand up in any other place. You say, “Well, I don’t want to be a Christian, because there are so many hypocrites in the church.”

Well, you know, that doesn’t make sense. You know, there are hypocrites in every area of life. Some lawyers are shysters. Some doctors are quacks. But you go to lawyers and doctors if you need one. Some money is counterfeit. But you haven’t thrown away all of yours. Some food is poison. But you still eat. I mean, you know better than that. You know that every hypocrite only proves the worth and validity of the real. A hypocrite is a counterfeit Christian. People don’t counterfeit gum wrappers. They counterfeit twenty-dollar bills. Why? Because it is the counterfeit that proves the worth and the validity of the real.

You know that, but your mind gives some silly reason: “Well, I don’t go to church, because my mama made me go when I was a little boy.” Oh? I bet you she made you take baths too. So now you’ve stopped taking baths—haven’t you?—because your mama made you take a bath when you were a little boy. What I’m trying to say is, “Pardon me, but the excuse you give is stupid”—stupid. What they said to Jesus was stupid: that He, *Satan*, cast out Satan. And Jesus pointed that out to them. A person says, “Well, I’m not going to be a Christian, because there’s so much to give up.” Oh? Well, what has God asked you to give up? Only that which will hurt you. “*For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory. No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly*” (Psalm 84:11). That would be like saying, “I’d like to get healed, but I hate giving up my cancer.” *All that God asks you to give up is*

*that which harms you and hurts you.* God loves you.

### **C. They Sinned Against Revelation**

People give silly reasons. They sinned against redemption. He was infinite love. They sinned against reason. What they did, did not make sense. You could sin against redemption, and sin against reason, and be forgiven. But here's where they made their big mistake: they sinned against revelation—they sinned against revelation. They knew better. Jesus said that, *"the kingdom of God is come unto you"* (Matthew 12:28). He was the King. He was in their midst. Not only was He performing miracles, but the Holy Spirit of God was speaking to their hearts—and they sinned against the light. *"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil"* (John 3:19). When God comes to judge Memphis, Tennessee, God is not going to judge Memphis, Tennessee, primarily because of the sins of Memphis, Tennessee, but because of the light that was rejected.

You're in Matthew 12. Go back to Matthew 11. Just look, if you will, in Matthew 11—look in verse 23: *"And thou, Capernaum..."*—have you ever been to Capernaum? Well, you may have been to the ruins of Capernaum, because Capernaum has never been rebuilt. But Capernaum was Jesus' headquarters city. Capernaum was the buckle on the Bible belt. Capernaum was the place where Jesus had done his most notable miracles. Capernaum was where Jesus began his public ministry. Capernaum was a beautifully situated city. It had a wonderful synagogue there, and Jesus speaks to Capernaum—*"And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hades; for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom..."*—you know what Sodom was? Sodom was that city down by the Dead Sea from which we get the name for one of the most terrible sins known to man: sodomy. A vile, wicked city. God destroyed Sodom with fire and brimstone. And Sodom's smoking ruins are an eternal testimony as to how He feels about that sin. But He says to Capernaum, this headquarter city, this buckle on the Bible belt where He did his miracles—*"Capernaum... if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you,"*—listen—*"that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee"* (Matthew 11:23–24).

How does God judge in the Day of Judgment? Not primarily by the sin committed, but by the light rejected. Sodom, like this city, had so much light, had heard so much truth; but they sinned against the light, they put out their own eyes; and when they did, they blasphemed the Holy Spirit who is the messenger of light, who is the One who opens eyes spiritually that people might see.

### III. The Consequences of Crossing the Deadline

Now, what happens when a person commits this sin? What are the consequences of crossing the deadline, of saying *no* to God until the Holy Spirit of God is so insulted, so wounded, that He ceases to strive and speak to a human heart?

#### A. You Are Deceived

Well, first of all, you're deceived. The unpardonable sin has great deceptive power. One of the most terrifying passages is one that is linked with this passage, 2 Thessalonians 2, verses 11 and 12. Listen to it: *"And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion..."*—"Wait a minute, pastor. Reread that. You read it wrong. It's the devil that deludes people, not God." No, I read it right. I read it right. You read it right—"for this cause God shall send them strong delusion,"—well, why would God do this?—"that they should believe [the] lie..."—"Well, wait a minute. God doesn't want people to believe a lie. That's Satan. He wants people to believe the truth. That's Jesus." But according to this scripture, there is a cause that caused God to send delusion. Why?—"that they should believe [the] lie:"—well, let's continue to read, and it gets worse—"that they all might be damned"—or judged—"who believed not the truth..."—God sends delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned. Why? Well, look—"who believed not the truth..."—it isn't that they didn't hear the truth. They refused the truth. They—"believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thessalonians 2:11–12).

Now, listen very carefully. In this passage of Scripture, the opposite of truth is not error; it is unrighteousness. You see, so many times people think that the choice is between truth and error. It is not. There are people here today who are convinced that what I say is true, but yet they will not yield their heart to Jesus Christ. Do you know why? Because of unrighteousness. It is not that they don't believe. It is that they will not yield to what they believe. They hear the truth, but they believe not the truth. And why do they believe not the truth? Because they have pleasure in unrighteousness.

So they're faced with a choice. If I receive the truth, that means that I'm going to have to change my lifestyle, because the truth has certain demands upon it. Truth is not merely interesting; it is disturbing. When you hear the truth and obey the truth, it changes your life. So a man says, "If I obey the truth, then I'm going to have to leave my unrighteousness. Here's truth; here's sin. I choose my sin." And when he does that, he sins against the light, and he does something very terrible, something very horrible: he has pleasure in unrighteousness.

Let me see if I can illustrate it for you. Here's a man who comes to church on a Sunday morning. Now the pastor probably does not preach enough on tithing, but he



knows he ought to preach tithing, because he's got to preach the whole counsel of God. And so upon a Sunday, this man, who's an unsaved man, visits church. And there's the pastor, and he preaches on tithing. That man begins to mutter and fume. And he says to himself, "Money, money, money! That's all they ever talk about down there is money! They're just trying to get your money down there at that church!" This man, he has a god. His god is gold; his creed is greed; and his motto is: "Get all you can, and can all you get; sit on the lid, and poison the rest." So when the preacher begins to talk about giving, he touches this man's god. This man begins to fume and say, "I'm not coming back"—oh, I forgot to tell you. He was there a year ago when the preacher preached on tithing. And the devil said, "Now it's time for you to come back. He's going to preach it again a year later." Now he knows better. He never stops to ask, "Is this true?" He never stops to ask, "Is the preacher preaching the Word of God?" He never stops to ask the whole thing. No. He doesn't want to know. And so he's faced with truth and unrighteousness, which is in this place, greed. So he stomps out, muttering that he will never be back again.

A few months later he's sitting at home on Sunday morning. The wife and children have gone to church. He's sitting there reading the sports page, got a six-pack of *embalming fluid* by his side, and he's sitting there when somebody comes and knocks on the door. It's two of *Jehovah's False Witnesses*. They say, "We are here to tell you there is no hell." He says, "Come in, come in." He listens, and he believes a lie.

You say, "Well, he was sincere." He was sincerely wrong, and he has delusion, that he would believe a lie, that he might be damned. Why? Because he never heard the truth? No. Because he heard the truth, and chose his rotten sin over the truth.

*"And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe [the] lie"* (2 Thessalonians 2:11). I'm convinced that many who are in New Age cults today, many people who are in all of these kind of weird, bizarre beliefs, are there because, when they heard truth, they refused truth. They had pleasure in their sin, they followed their sin; and the baggage of their sin is their delusion and the lies. But it's the sin itself that causes them to carry that baggage. They sin against the light. When a man does that, he crosses the deadline and can never ever be saved.

## Conclusion

Where is that point? Where is that point where a man crosses the deadline? I don't know. But in front of every unsaved man there is a point of no return. And if you feel any desire to come to Jesus Christ, you ought to do it. You say, "Pastor, I would think that if a person committed the unpardonable sin, they would be tormented day and night." No, you're wrong. He'll be in perfect calmness. He won't worry about it at all. If you're

worried that you've committed the unpardonable sin, thank God, you haven't. If you want to be saved, you can be saved. "Pastor, I think I've committed the unpardonable sin. Is there hope for me?" Absolutely! If you want to be saved, come. Whosoever will may come. When you commit the unpardonable sin, no longer will you will to will, because it's the Holy Spirit of God that works in you to draw you to Jesus Christ. If you have a desire to come to Jesus, come today; and I promise you, on the authority of the Word of God, that He'll save you.

# The Unpardonable Sin

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: April 9, 2000**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 12:22–32**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. What Is the Unpardonable Sin?
  - A. It Is Not Some Moral Sin
  - B. It Is Not Some Intellectual Sin
  - C. It Is Not Some Verbal Sin
  - D. It Is the Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit
    1. A Sin Against Redemption
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- II. What Are the Consequences of the Unpardonable Sin?
  - A. The Deceiving Power of This Sin
  - B. The Deadening Power of This Sin
  - C. The Damning Power of This Sin

Conclusion

## Introduction

Now as the choir is finding their place, would you open your Bibles and find your place in the Word of God, in Matthew chapter 12, and in a moment we're going to begin reading in verse 31. Wasn't that a great song? "Amazing Grace." And thank God for that amazing grace. As a man from the country said, "If that doesn't light your fire, your wood is wet." What a joy to think of God's amazing, incredible, indescribable grace and love that He's poured out on each of us! But the sad, sad, sad truth is that many in this building are not going to get into the grace of God unless they turn from their sin and receive Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior.

And many are very close to a deadline. And if they cross that deadline, they will have committed an unpardonable sin, and they will be just as bound, just as destined for hell in this life before they die, with no chance whatsoever of redemption, just as much bound for hell as if the iron gates of hell had already closed shut behind them. They will have crossed the deadline. They will have committed an unpardonable sin.

*There is a time we know not when,  
A place we know not where;  
Which marks the destiny of men  
To glory or despair.*

*There is a line, by us unseen,  
Which crosses every path;  
Which marks the boundary between  
God's mercy and His wrath.*

—JOSEPH ADDISON ALEXANDER

And if you step over that deadline, you will have committed an unpardonable sin.

## **I. What Is the Unpardonable Sin?**

Now, what is the unpardonable sin?

### **A. It Is Not Some Moral Sin**

It is not some moral sin. It is not rape. It is not murder. It is not child molestation—bad as those are; horrible, wicked, as those are. Anyone who's done that can still be saved. Do you believe that? I believe that. They can be saved by the grace of Almighty God. Every blur, every blot, every blemish, every stain that has ever come across some human soul, the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses from all sin. It's not some moral sin.

### **B. It Is Not Some Intellectual Sin**

It's not some intellectual sin. A person may be an atheist, an agnostic, a God-hater. He may have declared there is no God. He may have said that Jesus Christ is the illegitimate son of Mary born of some foreign soldier. But, no: that sin can be forgiven. Many, who have been atheists, who have been blasphemous, have repented of that sin and come to the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **C. It Is Not Some Verbal Sin**

Somebody says, "Well, it's some word that you say, then. It's a verbal sin, some blood-curdling oath, where a person curses God to His face." Don't do that if you have one modicum of intelligence. But even that sin can be forgiven. God forgives blasphemy, if you blaspheme God the Father and blaspheme God the Son. As a matter of fact, you can commit the unpardonable sin without saying a word.

Now the word *blaspheme* means, "to speak hurtfully against." But, you see, we can speak to God in prayer without saying words, and we can blaspheme God by not saying

words. *“For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh”* (Matthew 12:34). One may so live that if his life were translated into words it would be blasphemous.

#### **D. It Is the Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit**

What is the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit? That’s the unpardonable sin. And we’re going to see in a moment that it is attributing to the devil the work of the Spirit of Almighty God. Now this sin, the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, the sin that can never, never, never, never, never be forgiven, is a sin that one may commit, and will commit knowingly, willfully, with his eyes wide open, and then forever shut.

Let’s look at the background for the warning that Jesus Christ has given—Matthew chapter 12. As we look at this passage of Scripture, I believe it will become much more clear to us. Matthew chapter 12, verse 22: *“Then was brought unto him”*—now the *him* here is the Lord Jesus—*“one possessed with a devil,”*—that’s what the King James says. That may be translated, “demon”—*“blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.”* A man that could not see, and a man that could not speak, now is able to speak, and he’s able to see. *“And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?”* That is, “Jesus: is He not the son of David?” *“The son of David”* means, “Is He not the Messiah?” *“But when the Pharisees heard it…”*—now the Pharisees were the religious leaders of that day. They were very religious, but in the Pharisees the milk of human kindness had curdled. They hated Christ and His ministry—*“when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast our devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. And Jesus knew their thoughts…”*—that’s the reason I said you can blaspheme in your mind—*“And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: and if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God,”*—underscore the phrase, “Spirit of God”—*“then the kingdom of God is come unto you. Or else how can one enter into a strong man’s house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house. He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.”* Now, notice the *wherefore* in verse 31: *“Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man,”*—that’s the phrase that Jesus used for Himself—*“it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come”*

(Matthew 12:22–32)—not in this age, or in the age to come.

Now I want you to notice the story. Jesus is in His public ministry. There comes a man who is afflicted with a demon. It is a demon of blindness and a demon of dumbness. *Dumbness* means, “the inability to speak and to articulate.” Not all people who are blind are demon-possessed. Not all people who are dumb are demon-possessed. But this man was. And this was his problem. He was bound with this spirit. When Jesus saw this man, Jesus supernaturally, miraculously, wondrously healed him. His eyes were opened. He could speak. People standing around said, “Look. This is the son of David. This is the Messiah.”

Now the Pharisees saw their own power and their own influence now slipping away and going to Jesus. They could not deny the miracle, because it was obvious. Everybody knew him. Before, he couldn’t see; and now he can see. Before, the man could not speak; and now he can speak. So, since they cannot deny the miracle, they determine to explain it away. Here’s what they said: “Oh, yes, sure. Yes, He performed a miracle. But let us tell you how He did it. He did it in the power of Satan. In the power of Satan He did this—by Beelzebub.”

And when they said “Beelzebub,” that was the most diabolical, wicked, dirty, lasciviously hateful thing they could possibly have said. For who was Beelzebub? Well, he was the Phoenician god. Well, who were the Phoenicians? They were a wayfaring people, and they were very intelligent people. They were the ones who gave us the first alphabet, we believe. But they were very superstitious, and they worshiped a god of filth, a god of dirt, a god of putrefaction, the god of carrion and feces. They worshiped that god. Well, why would they worship a god like that? Because they had noticed that when on the ground there would be some rotteness, some stench, some putrefaction, before long, there’d be little white worms in it. Now you know what they were: they were maggots. And the flies had laid their microscopic eggs that nobody could see. And the Phoenicians looked at that, and they said, “Look at that! Out of filth and dirt and putrefaction and stench, there comes life. So this is some sort of a god.” And they named their god Beelzebub. You can hear kind of the sound of flies: Beelzebub—*bzzzzzz*. That was their god: the lord of the flies, the god of filth. And they had the unmitigated gall, the audacity, to say, “Yes, He’s casting out devils, but He’s doing it by the god of filth—by the god of filth.” That’s what they said about the Lord Jesus. And it was then that Jesus gave the teaching that He gave to show the great wickedness of their sin.

Now it was sort of a threefold sin, and I want you to notice it, because it builds to a climax.

## 1. A Sin Against Redemption

First of all, they sinned against redemption—they sinned against redemption. Here was Jesus working against the devil. Here was Jesus taking a man who'd been afflicted by demons and delivering him. Here was redeeming love. Here Jesus is opening blinded eyes. Here Jesus is loosing dumb tongues. His great love and His great mastery over Satan is being poured out. Redeeming love. Now the sad thing is this: that the same hands that blessed that demon-possessed man would have blessed any of those Pharisees. The same love that delivered that man would have delivered them. Jesus came *“to seek and to save that which was lost”* (Luke 19:10). And they sinned against redemption. They sinned against redeeming love. They sinned against our Redeemer. And how did they do later on? They were the ones who slap the face of Jesus Christ. They were the ones who, along with others, plucked the beard from His face. They are the ones who helped to crucify Jesus and cried out for His blood. They sinned against redemption.

Now, friend, if you don't give your heart to Jesus Christ, may I tell you, you are sinning against redemption. You're sinning against the One who loves you and wants to save you; but you're trampling beneath your feet the precious blood of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 10:29), and you are crucifying Him afresh (Hebrews 6:6).

## 2. A Sin Against Reason

But not only did they sin against redemption; secondly, I want you to notice, they sinned against reason. They knew better. Look, if you will, in verse 24: *“But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: and if Satan cast our Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?”* (Matthew 12:24–26).

Now, what is Jesus saying? Jesus is saying, “What you are saying doesn't make sense. You're saying that I, by Satan, am casting out Satan.” Jesus said, “Common sense tells you that is not true. A house divided against itself cannot stand. How does Satan cast out Satan?” Jesus is saying, “I am not in collusion with the devil; I am in collision with the devil. Nobody works for the devil by casting out demons, and opening blind eyes, and loosing dumb tongues, and giving peace and joy. The thief comes but to steal and to kill and to destroy.” Jesus said, “I have come that they might have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10).

Now the thing is this. They knew better. You don't get to be a Pharisee by being stupid. These men were intellectuals, but they crucified their reason in order to crucify Jesus Christ. They sinned not only against redemption; they sinned against reason.

Now I'm speaking to some here today—you may be a banker or lawyer; you may be a professor; you may be an entrepreneurial businessman or woman—but yet you're going to crucify your reason and say *no* to Jesus Christ. I've been a pastor too long not to understand this: that there are many who trample reason to death in order to have their own way.

For example, have you ever heard anybody say, "I'm not a Christian because there are hypocrites in the church." If you've ever heard that, let me see your hand. Hold your hand up. That's a majority—that's a majority. We've all heard that. Now that's a sin against reason. Anybody with a modicum of intelligence knows that is not reasonable. There may be some Christians who are hypocrites. Judas was a hypocrite. Sometimes people tell me, "Pastor, did you know there are hypocrites in the church?" Oh, no! Man, don't tell me that. Do you think I could be a pastor for these years and not know that? Of course there are hypocrites in the church! But be reasonable.

Some doctors are quacks. But if you get sick, you still seek a doctor. Some lawyers may be shysters. But if you need legal advice, you'll find a lawyer. Some eggs may be rotten, but you probably had some for breakfast this morning—not the rotten kind. Some money may be counterfeit. If you saw a counterfeit bill, would you burn all the rest of your money? You say, "I just don't believe in hypocrite bills." You say, "I'm going to get rid of my money." You know better than that. It is the hypocrite that proves the worthwhileness and the validity of the real. Why do men counterfeit fifty-dollar bills? Because of the worth of fifty-dollar bills. Every counterfeit is a testimony to the validity and the worthwhileness of the real. Men don't counterfeit gum wrappers. Think about it. No, you know better.

When you say that the church is full of hypocrites, I'm going to tell you, my friend, that you know better. I've been preaching long enough to know the best people on the face of God's green earth meet on Sunday morning to give Him glory and praise. And I thank God for the company I'm in today. And I'm not going to let some hypocrite keep me out of heaven, where I'll spend eternity with them in hell. They sinned against reason.

Have you ever heard anybody say something like this: "Well, I'm just not going to go down to that church. When I was a kid, my mother made me go every Sunday. I've just had enough of it. I'm not going down there"? I wonder if your mother made you take a bath when you were a little boy now you don't take a bath anymore. "My mama made me take baths when I was a little boy, and now I'm not going to take a bath anymore." You know better than that kind of stuff: the silly reasons that people give for not coming to Jesus. "Well, I don't want to be a Christian. There's just so much to give up." Oh, what is God asking you to give up? The only thing God Almighty asks you to give up is



anything that would harm you or hurt you. *“The LORD God is a sun and shield...no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly”* (Psalm 84:11). It just doesn't make sense. It would be like saying, “Well, I'd like to be healed, but I hate to give up my cancer.” Think about it.

What is God asking you to give up but that which would harm you or hurt you, and steal from you the fulfillment that He wants you to have? No, what was wrong with these people is that they sinned not only against redemption, a Lord who wanted to love them, but they were sinning against reason. Isaiah 1, verse 18, says, *“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool”* (Isaiah 1:18). But sinning against redemption, and sinning against reason, is not the unpardonable sin. It only sets the stage for it.

### **3. A Sin Against Revelation**

Now, let me tighten the focus a little bit. Not only did they sin against redemption, and not only did they sin against reason; but, friend, they sinned against revelation—they sinned against revelation. There is the problem. Look, if you will, in verse 28 of this same chapter, and see what the Lord Jesus said: *“But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God,”*—underscore that—*“then the kingdom of God is come unto you”* (Matthew 12:28). There was the king standing in their midst, Jesus Christ; and there was the Holy Spirit of God working through Him and testifying by those very works that He was indeed the Son of God. The Spirit of God was in action in that episode. And their real struggle was with the Holy Spirit. Jesus did what He did by the Spirit of God. You know, a man may blaspheme God the Father, and he could say, “There is no God.” He may blaspheme Jesus Christ, and say, “He's a false prophet or a fictitious person.” But, oh, when the Holy Spirit of God comes, He demolishes those things.

The Holy Spirit of God pulls away the veil of darkness. The Holy Spirit of God, that opened that blind man's eyes, opens the eyes of the spirit, so that people can see, so that they can understand. And here what these were doing is this: they were sinning against light. They were not sinning against ignorance; they were sinning against light. When Jesus was on the cross, He could say to those who were crucifying Him, “Father, forgive them. They don't know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34). But these men knew what they were doing.

You see, the ministry of the Father is to rule the universe. The ministry of the Son, in conjunction with the Father, is to save. But the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to open our eyes to give light, to help us to understand. That's the reason, before I preach, and even this morning before I preached, I got on my knees and said, “Oh, Holy Spirit of God, open eyes. Help people to understand. Help them to know today,” because it's the Holy

Spirit that opens understanding. And when men and women stand before God to be judged, they're not going to be judged primarily by the sin they committed—listen—but by the light they rejected. It's very important you understand this.

You're in Matthew 12. Go back to Matthew 11, and look, if you will, beginning around verse 23. Jesus is speaking about Capernaum. Capernaum was His headquarters city. That's the city where Jesus preached and taught and performed many miracles. Now, listen to what Jesus said to Capernaum: *"And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day."* Sodom was perhaps the most wicked—morally wicked—city upon the face of the earth. And then Jesus says, in verse 24, *"But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee"* (Matthew 11:23–24). Here was one city, beautifully situated—I've been to the ruins of Capernaum many times, sitting there by the beautiful Sea of Galilee where Jesus walked in their midst, talked, preached, loved, did miracles—over here is Sodom, down by the Dead Sea, living in unspeakable immorality; but Jesus said, "At the judgment it will be better for Sodom than it would be for Capernaum." Why? Because Capernaum had so much light. And at the judgment men are judged, not primarily by the sin they have committed, but by the light they have rejected. I'm telling you, if you went to hell, it would be better for you to go to hell from Sodom than from Memphis, Tennessee, because the gospel of Jesus Christ is preached in this place, and in this city, not only by this particular preacher, but by other preachers.

What is the judgment that comes into the world? John 3, verse 19: *"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil"* (John 3:19).

## **II. What Are the Consequences of the Unpardonable Sin?**

What is the unpardonable sin? It is the sin against light. It is attributing to Satan the work of the Holy Spirit when one knows better. And what are the consequences of this sin? Why did Jesus say this sin is an unpardonable sin?

### **A. The Deceiving Power of This Sin**

Well, there's the deceiving power of this sin. A person who commits this sin opens himself up to deception. One of the most terrifying verses in all of the Bible is found in 2 Thessalonians the second chapter, beginning in verse 11: *"And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion..."*—"wait a minute, Adrian. Read it right. You didn't read it right. God doesn't send people delusion; the devil does that." No, I'm reading it right—

*“For this cause God shall send them strong delusion,”*—well, why would God do that?—*“that they should believe a lie.”*—wait: it’s getting worse. God is sending delusion that people would believe a lie? That’s what it says. Well, why would God send delusion that they might believe a lie? Well, let’s continue to read—*“that they all might be damned”*—we’re sinking fast, aren’t we? God is sending people delusion, that they would believe a lie, that they all might be damned. Why? I’ll tell you why. He goes on to say—*“who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness”* (2 Thessalonians 2:11–12). They had the truth. They wouldn’t believe the truth. Why would they not believe the truth? Did they have intellectual problems? No. They believed not the truth because they “had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

Now, look up here and let me tell you something. In this passage, the opposite of truth is not error. The opposite of truth is sin. They *“believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”* They wanted their sin. And so when they say, “I don’t want the truth,” there is the light: God speaks to them; they have the truth; they believe not the truth. It’s not that they’ve never heard the truth. They *“believed not the truth.”* Why? Intellectual problems? No. Moral problems. They *“had pleasure in unrighteousness,”* and *“for this cause God shall send them strong delusion.”* They cannot have their sin and have God’s truth at the same time.

You see, when you hear truth, you don’t just say, “How interesting! I’ll put that in my pocket and spend it if I ever need it, but in the meanwhile I’m going to live it up in sin.” No, no! When you choose sin, the baggage that comes with that sin is error, and God will send you strong delusion: when you have seen, when you have known, when you understand, and you willfully sin against the light.

Let me give you an example how that works. I’m preaching here at Bellevue Baptist Church, and a man decides, for whatever reason, he’s going to come to Bellevue. Maybe his wife has begged him. Maybe he comes that one Sunday when I preach on stewardship and giving. Now my deacons and others tell me, “You don’t preach on that enough, pastor.” But suppose I’m just preaching a sermon on stewardship, that Christ is the Lord of all, that men ought to give. I hope you agree with that, that he who owns the sheep owns the wool. Isn’t that correct? And He owns us. And so I might be preaching on that. Now that man comes, and he’s sitting over there somewhere. His head is down like this, and he begins to mutter to himself, and he says, “Money, money, money! That’s all that bunch of money-grubbing Baptists and Baptist preachers preach about! I knew I shouldn’t have come here! All they want to do is just fleece me! I can hardly wait to get out of here! All they’re interested in is my money!”

Well, number one, that’s a lie. That’s not true; that’s a lie. And in his heart he really knows it—he knows it. But, you see, this man has an idol in his heart. Do you know

what his idol is? Money. His god is gold, his creed is greed, and his motto is “get all you can, can all you get, sit on the lid, and poison the rest.” I mean, this man has an idol in his heart, and so he attributes to what the preacher might do that day when he’s preaching what the Bible has to say about stewardship, he attributes that to the work of the devil. He turns around and walks out, and says, “I’ll never be back.”

So his wife and kids are down here one Sunday, and he’s sitting at home, reading the sports page. He’s got whiskers grown out. He hasn’t shaved yet. He’s got a carton of cancer on one side and a six-pack of embalming fluid on the other side, sitting there smoking and drinking, watching the sports. Somebody comes and knocks at his door. Who could that be? He goes to the door and opens it. Guess who’s there? Two of Jehovah’s false witnesses. And so after a little talk, they say to him, “We’re here to tell you there is no hell.” He says, “Come in.” And his mind is now twisted, and he begins to believe a lie. Why? Because “he received not the love of the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness”—his rotten greed. And with that comes strong delusion, and he’ll believe a lie.

And it is a part of the righteous judgment of God. When a man willingly says, “This is the way I’m going,” God says, “I’ll give you a shove.” When a man says, “I want God,” God says, “I’ll give you a shove.” What happens is this: that there are people who with eyes wide open, knowing better, sin not only against redemption, and reason, but they sin against revelation; they sin against light. And what happens is this. There is the deceiving power of that sin. And when you talk to one of these people who have committed the unpardonable sin, he’ll say, “Well, I just don’t see it.” He’s not lying: he doesn’t see it. Romans 11, verse 8: *“(According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day”* (Romans 11:8).

## **B. The Deadening Power of This Sin**

And then, not only is there the deceiving power of their sin; friend, there is the deadening power of their sin. When a person commits this sin, something dies within him. If you have rejected Jesus Christ and crossed the deadline, you may be one who’s saying, “Well, you know, preachers don’t preach like they used to when I was a boy.” Some of them do. You just don’t hear like you used to.

Have you ever been out in the woods and you’ve seen, say, a stump from a pine tree, blackened and charred, and yet there’s green all around it, but the stump is blackened and charred? Why would that be? Well, because in years past there was a forest fire. And the fire came snapping and crackling and roaring and burning and consuming, and all of the foliage on all of the bushes and trees were ablaze. And this

stump was there, fat with rosin. And it began to burn brightly. And the fire went past, and the stump burned, the outward part, but it never really caught fire, and the fire goes out, and it's blackened. Another year, the underbrush grows up. Another fire comes along, and that stump that was blackened and charred, if the fire is hot enough, intense enough, it will begin to blaze again, not as bright as the first time. And it will go out more quickly this time. But if that happens several times, when there comes a fire, and it comes to that old blackened, charred, burned-over stump, the fire that is roaring and burning and consuming everything will just jump over that stump. It won't even glow.

There will be people like that in this congregation this morning. Some will be brought under conviction, and the fire of God's Holy Spirit will touch your heart. But when He comes to you this morning in this service, He'll just jump over you. Here's the deadening power of that sin, and you don't feel the work of the Holy Spirit of God speaking to you. Hebrews chapter 3, verses 7 and 8: "*Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts*" (Hebrews 3:7–8). You can sit in a service like this with a hard heart, and while others are being blessed and saved, you won't feel a thing. You say, "Well, I'm not afraid to die." You're probably not—you're probably not. Your heart is so hard.

### **C. The Damning Power of This Sin**

There is the deceiving power. There is the deadening power. And, therefore, there is the damning power of this sin. It's the sin that puts you beyond the pale of redemption. Hebrews chapter 6 warns about this sin, beginning in verse 4. God says, "*For it is impossible...*"—well, when God says something is impossible, we ought to pay attention. Listen to it—"*For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened...*"—remember now that the sin against the Holy Spirit is a sin against light—"*who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,*"—the Greek means they have gone along with the Holy Ghost—"*and have tasted the good word of God,*"—not ingested and digested, but tasted—"*and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance;*"—shorten the sentence—"it is impossible to renew them to repentance." Why?—"*[because] they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame*" (Hebrews 6:4–6).

You can come to a place where it is impossible for you to be saved. Why? Because with eyes wide open you crucify Jesus afresh. Some who nailed Him to the cross did not know what they were doing. But you can walk out of here without Jesus, fully aware of what you're doing, and when you do, you're committing a greater sin—a greater sin, a greater sin—than those who literally nailed Him to the cross. You are crucifying the

Son of God afresh. They've tasted—they've gone along with the Holy Ghost—the Holy Ghost.

An illustration I use is like this. Suppose you're in the back of the supermarket, Seesel's, or Kroger's, or somewhere like that. Have you ever been back there where they have a little tray and a lady back there that has some cheese with little toothpicks stuck in it? She says, "Try this." You taste it. Maybe you're a cheese hound. That's gourmet cheese. Boy, that's good. "Would you like some, sir?" "Yes, give me two pounds of that." And so you wrap it, not asking the price. When you get up to the front, you see it's almost thirty dollars. "What? It's just cheese." "Well, yes, but it's gourmet cheese. It's special. Don't you like it?" "I loved it. But put it back. I'm not going to pay thirty dollars for that. Put it back."

Now here's a person with eyes wide open, saying, "I will not pay the price; I will not." That's what happens when a person who has been a partaker of the Holy Ghost has tasted the good Word of God. If they fall away, if they turn their back, it is impossible to renew them to repentance. Why? Because of the deceiving, deadening power of their sin. Nobody can be saved unless the Holy Spirit of God opens his eyes. But when you say *no* to the Holy Spirit of God, you put out your own eyes. And the Holy Spirit of God ceases to strive. Genesis chapter 6 and verse 3—in the Bible, God said, in the days of Noah, "*My spirit shall not always strive with a man*" (Genesis 6:3). You can sin against light, and that's when light goes out on the road to hell.

Now, look up here and let me tell you a story. Over here in Arkansas there was a preacher, a gifted man of God. He's in heaven now. His name was Joe Henry Hankins. He preached like Jeremiah: he wept when he preached. Joe Henry Hankins told this story, and I shall never forget; I think I shall never forget it. He said, "I was preaching in a service, and I had torn my heart out preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ." He said, "I gave an invitation, and God's Spirit was moving"—just like that fire I was talking about. He said, "I saw a young man sitting up there in the balcony, and I could tell he was under conviction. He was gripping the back of the pew with one hand and holding the hymnal with the other. And so as others were coming, I just tried to catch his eye, and I said, 'Young man, come to Jesus.'" Hankins said, "It looked like he was going to step out, but then he stepped back and started to sing again. Again, we sang another stanza, and I said, 'Young man, come to Jesus.'" He said, "The young man closed his hymnal, and turned and started moving. I said, 'Thank God! Hallelujah! He's coming to Christ!—he's coming to Christ!'" But rather than coming down the aisle, he turned and went out the back, out the door, and was gone from the service."

In just a matter of days, Hankins was called to that young man's bedside because the man had been diagnosed with a disease he did not know he had when he was in

that service. And the doctors said, “He’s dying.” Hankins went to see him. He said, “Son, have they told you the nature of your sickness?” He said, “Yes, preacher. You don’t have to be delicate about it. I know I’m dying.” “Well, son, I want to ask you a question. Were you in the services on thus-and-such a day?” “Yes, preacher, I was.” “Well, I was watching you, son, and it seemed to me that during the invitation you were under conviction that you thought you needed Jesus. Is that right?” He said, “Preacher, when you were preaching and you gave that invitation, I wanted to get down there where you were so badly I felt I could jump over the balcony rail to come down there to where you were.” “Well, son, why didn’t you come?” He said, “Every time I started out, I remembered my favorite sin, and I wrestled, and I made up my mind I wanted my sin.”

The preacher said he felt a chill go over him. And he tried to reason with the young man. He said, “But now, son, if you’re going to die, you can’t have that sin anyway. Don’t you think you’d better give your heart to Jesus Christ?” Joe Henry Hankins said, “That young man looked at me and said this—he said, ‘Preacher, you don’t understand. When I closed my hymnal and willingly and deliberately walked out of that service, something died within me. I can’t believe.’” He said, “Son, God will save you. He wants to save you.” He said, “No, I’m telling you, I can’t do it. Something died within me.” Hankins said he wept and prayed, and cried for that boy until he died without Jesus and slipped into hell.

## **Conclusion**

If you’re here today and you feel the slightest desire to come to Jesus Christ, I beg you, come to Him. Don’t be like that old stump. Don’t let God send you strong delusion. Don’t cross the deadline. Don’t sin against such light. There are millions of people in this world who would shout for joy to hear what you’re hearing today: that God loves you, that Christ died for you, that He invites you, and that the Bible says, “Whosoever will may come” (Revelation 22:17).

If you think you’ve committed the unpardonable sin, I’ll tell you this. If you want to be saved, you haven’t. Hallelujah! Anybody who wants to come, will. And Jesus said, “If any man will come unto me, I will never turn him away” (John 6:37)—never!

# The Unpardonable Sin

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: Unknown**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 12:22–32**

*“Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.”*

MATTHEW 12:31

## Outline

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## Introduction

Would you stand now for the reading of the Word of God? I’m going to read what I consider to be some of the most terrifying and awesome verses in all of the Word of God—Matthew chapter 12 and verse 30. Jesus Christ is speaking. Now, these are not my words—listen to them now; they are the words of Jesus Christ. And these words tell us of a sin—a sin so terrible, a sin so awful, a sin so horrible, if you commit that sin, you will never, never, never, never, never ever be forgiven. It is a sin that cannot be forgiven in this life. It is a sin that will not be forgiven in the world to come. It is a sin that Jesus Christ calls the unpardonable, the unforgivable, sin.

I read in Matthew chapter 12 and verse 30. Jesus said, *“He that is not with me is against me”*—and, by the way, everybody in this room tonight is either with Jesus or against Him—*“and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad”*—everybody here is either working for Christ or against Him. And then, Jesus said—*“Wherefore I say unto*



*you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.” (Matthew 12:30–32) Would you be seated, please.*

¶ In Scotland many years ago, there was a man who went walking on the beach. On one side was the ocean; the tide had gone out. On the other side were the great towering cliffs along that beachside. As that man was walking there on the beach, he came to a sign, and it said, “Warning: do not proceed further. If you do, you will not have time to return before the tide comes in.” The man saw the tide so far out and so much space there to walk on. He thought, “That’s ridiculous! The tide never comes in that swiftly,” and he continued his walk. But the tide turned. And there, in that part of Scotland—and I’ve been to this part of the world and I have seen for myself—as that tide began to come in, it began to roll in. And he thought, “Well, I’ll just turn and stroll back.” Then, as the water came and began to lap around his ankles, he began to walk briskly. And the water began to rise; and he started to run, but the water slowed his running. And then, he fell and got up and ran again. And the water now was up to waist-deep, and he could hardly make his way. He saw the cliffs. He began to try to scramble up the cliffs. But the water still was coming. Finally, he was up on a rock, and a big wave came up and reached him and pulled him down, dragged him under. And those up on the cliffs above saw that man as he struggled beneath the water and was drowned. Now, his mistake was this: there was a deadline out there; there was a warning out there. Some friend had said to him, “Don’t go any further. If you go any further, you have crossed a deadline; you will not make it back.”

I want to say this to every unsaved man, woman, boy and girl in this building tonight: there is a deadline, and God sent me here to tell you about it. And if you cross it, I want to tell you with all of the function, unction, and urgency of my soul; I want to tell you seriously and solemnly, if you cross that deadline, you are destined for hell. You are as certain for hell as if the iron gates of hell had already closed shut behind you.¶

*There is a time we know not when,  
A place we know not where;  
Which marks the destiny of men,  
To glory or despair.*

*There is a line, by us unseen,  
Which crosses every path;  
Which marks the boundary between  
God’s mercy and His wrath.*

—JOSEPH ADDISON ALEXANDER

And if you step across that deadline, that hidden line between God's mercy and God's wrath, you can commit a sin that Jesus said will never—no, never; no, never, ever, ever, ever—be forgotten.

## I. What Is the Unpardonable Sin?

Now, what is the unpardonable sin? I want to tell you what the unpardonable sin is for several reasons. First of all, there are some people here tonight who may think that they have committed the unpardonable sin who have not, and I would like to give you comfort. Secondly, there may be some people here who do not realize the danger of committing the unpardonable sin, and I want to give you warning.

### A. It Is Not Some Moral Sin

Now, what is the unpardonable sin? You say, is it murder? No. Is it rape? No. Is it incest? No. No moral sin is the unpardonable sin. I don't care what you have done. I don't care how dark, how terrible, how awful. You can write down the worst sin that your human mind can conceive, and I can write across that sin, "*The blood of Jesus Christ, [God's] Son cleanseth us from*"—what's that next little word?—"all sin." (1 John 1:7) Hallelujah! There's not a blot, not a blur, not a blemish, not a stain that the blood of Jesus Christ cannot wash whiter than snow. He cleanses the vilest sin. I said last night *there's no one so good he need not be saved; no one so bad he cannot be saved*. Isn't that wonderful? Isn't that a glorious gospel?

### B. It Is Not Some Intellectual Sin

"Well," you say, "if it's not a moral sin, it must be an intellectual sin. Maybe it's the sin of atheism. Maybe it's the sin of unbelief." No, friend. Unbelief is not the unpardonable sin. Atheism is not the unpardonable sin. If an atheist begins to be a believer, he'll be saved. If an unbeliever turns to a believer, he'll be saved, and God will forgive that atheism, and God forgives that unbelief. All of us were unbelievers before we became believers; and when we believed in the Lord Jesus and trusted the Lord Jesus, if we did, He forgave that unbelief, and we received Him into our heart as our Lord and Savior.

### C. It Is Not Some Verbal Sin

"Well," somebody says, "I'll tell you what the unpardonable sin is. It is not a moral sin, nor is it an intellectual sin, but it is a verbal sin. It's some terrible, horrible curse word. It's something that you may say. There's something that you dare not say because if you say it, then you can never ever be forgiven." I want to be very careful right here. And let me tell you something, dear friend: I believe that generally, when the unpardonable sin is committed, words are involved, but they need not be involved.

Now, Jesus said, if you blaspheme the Holy Spirit, you will never be forgiven. The word *blaspheme* means “to speak hurtfully against so as to insult, so as to defame.” So, to blaspheme the Holy Spirit is to insult the Holy Spirit. Now, listen to me. You can pray without moving your lips, and you can blaspheme without moving your lips. Generally, when we pray, we speak out loud. But you don’t have to speak out loud to pray, and you don’t have to speak out loud to blaspheme. For example, a person who is deaf and dumb may blaspheme the Holy Spirit, and a person who is deaf and dumb may pray. It is not some vile, some horrible, some terrible oath only. Words may be involved.

But what is the sin? What is the sin that can never, never, never, ever, ever, ever be forgiven? What is this terrible, horrible sin? I am convinced, ladies and gentlemen—listen to me—I am convinced that far more people have committed the unpardonable sin than we would ever even dream of. I believe that hundreds of thousands and millions of people in this day and this age have committed this unpardonable sin. And I believe that many of you in this building may be in danger of committing the unpardonable sin.

#### **D. It Is the Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit**

Now, in order to show you what the unpardonable sin is, let me give you the background for this passage of Scripture. If you have your Bibles, we’re in Matthew chapter 12, and I want you to begin reading with me in verse 22: “*Then was brought unto him*”—that is, to Jesus—“*one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?*”—that is, “Is not this man, Jesus, the Son of David?” And when they said that, they meant, “Isn’t He the Messiah?” because “the son of David” is a figure of speech for “the Messiah”—“*But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. And Jesus knew their thoughts*”—now, notice Jesus not only knew what they said, but Jesus knew their thoughts; and Jesus knows your thoughts. And it was their thoughts that Jesus spoke about, not their words—“*and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: and if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. Or else how can one enter into a strong man’s house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house. He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.*” (Matthew 12:22–30) And then, Jesus gave the warning about the unpardonable sin.

Now, here's the background. There was a man blind and dumb. Jesus saw him. Jesus had compassion on him. Jesus opened his blinded eyes. Jesus loosed his dumb tongue. He could see. He could speak. The people said, "Hallelujah! The Messiah has come! He's the Son of David!" But the Pharisees were there; and the Pharisees had places of position and power, and they didn't want to give that up. They didn't want to see people following after Jesus. They wanted the people following after them. And so, they had to find a reason to explain away what Jesus had done. But they couldn't explain it away. Everybody could see the man had been blind and now he could see; the man had been dumb and now he could speak. It was obvious that a miracle had been done. And so, since they could not deny it, they tried to explain it away. And this is what they said: they said, "Oh yes, yes, surely He did a miracle. He opened blinded eyes. Oh yes, He loosed a dumb tongue. Oh yes, He delivered this man from a demon. But," they said, "listen, everybody. We'll tell you how he did it. He did it in the power of Beelzebub, the prince of demons."

Now, when they said that, they said the vilest, most wicked, despicable thing they could have said about the Lord Jesus. Who was Beelzebub? Beelzebub was the name they had given to a Phoenician god of filth. The Phoenicians, who lived down by the seacoast, had a god, a demon god, that they worshipped. They named him Beelzebub. They thought that he had the power to create life. Why was he the god of filth? Well, they'd notice, when there was any stench on the ground, any refuse, any dung, any carrion, any garbage, if it stayed there long enough, before long, there would be maggots in it, little white worms; and they thought that life came out of rottenness, life came out filth, life came out of stench. They'd not known that the flies had come and laid their microscopic eggs. They couldn't see that. All they saw were these larvae, these maggots. And they said, "Would you look at that? Out of filth and out of stench and out of rottenness there comes life." And so, they said rottenness and filth and stench was god, and they worshipped that god; and they called that god "Beelzebub." To the Jewish mind, that was the worst, the most horrible, concept of idolatry they could think of.

Could you imagine anybody saying something like that about Jesus? What they said about Jesus was that Jesus was in collusion with the devil, that Jesus had cast out devils by the lord of the flies, the prince of filth, the god of the underworld; that He cast out devils in the power of the devil. And when they said that, Jesus warned them about committing a sin that was an unpardonable sin that could never ever, ever, ever, ever be forgiven.

### **1. It Was a Sin Against Redemption**

Now, let me tell you what they did. They really committed a threefold sin. First of all, it was a sin against redemption. Now, what I mean by that is this: that Jesus was there doing an act of love, an act of kindness. Jesus was not there hurting people. Jesus was

there helping people, loving people. Nobody works for the devil by opening blinded eyes. Nobody works for the devil by loosing dumb tongues. Nobody works for the devil by healing fevered brows. Nobody works for the devil by delivering people from the devil. This was an act of love; it was an act of redemption. And the same hands that blessed this man that was blind and dumb, those same hands would have blessed and helped and healed those Pharisees because He was indiscriminate in His love. But they refused that love. They sinned against that redemption.

You know, I hear people say, "Well, a loving God wouldn't let anybody go to hell." Dear friend, *if you go to hell, you'll have to climb over the love of God to get there.* You know that? God loves you. God loves you, and the love of God will follow you to the very brink of hell. And with great salty tears Jesus will weep over you as you go to hell. Jesus loved this man, and Jesus loved those Pharisees. But they sinned against redemption.

¶ Suppose you get sick. You call the doctor. And the doctor looks very stern and very serious. And you say, "Doctor, tell me what's wrong. Don't tell me in technical terms. Tell me what's wrong." The doctor says, "You're going to die. You have a very serious illness, and you only have days to live." And you plead, and you say, "Doctor, I don't want to die. Doctor, isn't there something you can do? Can't you somehow spare my life and save me?" The doctor says, "There's only one hope. There is a medicine, a serum, that if you take it, you will be spared, you will live. But the medicine is not available. It costs a king's ransom." You say, "Doctor, just because I'm a poor man, you can't let me die. Doctor, please, you can't just let me die." And the doctor says, "Let me see what I can do." And he goes out. And he's gone for a one day, two days, three days, and then he comes back.

When that doctor comes into your bedroom and comes to your deathbed, the doctor looks like the ghost of the man who left. His beard has grown out; his eyes have dark circles under them, and they're sunken back in his head. His hair is disheveled. His clothes have been torn, and his clothes are bloody. His hands are trembling. But the doctor comes into your bedroom and he has a vial of medicine. You look at him and say, "Doctor, doctor, what happened to you?" And the doctor says, "Do you see these clothes? Do you see this blood? I'll tell you what happened to me. I went out to get this medicine for you. And I tried to get money from every source, and I couldn't get enough money. I took my own money out of the bank. I took every cent that I had. And I purchased this medicine for you. And on my way here to bring you this medicine I had an automobile accident. I was in such a hurry that I wrecked my automobile. And with me in my car was my son, my only son. And I want to tell you that I have left my only son at the morgue. He's dead. And the blood that stains my clothes is the blood of my own dear son. But here's the medicine. Take it. You'll live. Here it is, purchased with a

terrible price. Take it. You'll live."

And suppose you took that medicine in your hand, held it up, and looked at it for a moment. And then suppose you smashed it on the floor, and the contents ran out in the rug, never to be retrieved again. And the doctor's aghast. And then suppose you pointed a finger of accusation in the face of that doctor and said, "Doctor, if I die, it will be your fault." No, no, ten thousand times no! If that man dies, whose fault is it? His! His! You will never be able to point a finger of accusation into the face of Jesus Christ, that Savior of love, and say, "Savior, if I go to hell, it's your fault."†

I tell you, He died for you. And God sent His only begotten Son. And the unpardonable sin, first of all, is a sin against redemption, against One who loved them, One who would have saved them and healed them and blessed them.

## 2. It Was a Sin Against Reason

But not only was it a sin against redemption; it was a sin against reason. These men were not fools; they knew better. What they said was foolish, unreasonable. What they said was this: "He has cast out the devil in the power of the devil." Jesus said, "That can't happen. Nobody casts out demons in the power of the devil. 'A house...divided against itself...cannot stand.' (Mark 3:25) No, I am not in collusion with the devil; I am in collision with the devil. It's easy to see that. And anybody who is being reasonable, anybody who wants to understand, can clearly, plainly see that I am not in league with the devil."

Now, let me tell you what will happen to some people who are in danger of committing the unpardonable sin. When I preach the Word of God, you will think of some silly excuse, some unreasonable thing, something that you know better, to keep you from coming to Jesus Christ. One of the favorite things that people say is, "Oh, well, there are so many hypocrites in the church. I'm not going down there to give my heart to Jesus Christ." Now, pardon me, sir, but that's unreasonable—that's unreasonable.

† If you get sick, some doctors may be quacks; but you go to the doctor, don't you? If you need legal advice, some lawyers may be shysters; but you go to a lawyer, don't you? If you eat eggs, sometimes an egg may be rotten; but you still eat eggs, don't you? Are you consistent?†

You don't want to be a Christian because of the hypocrites? Every hypocrite proves the validity of Christianity. A hypocrite is a counterfeit. Men don't counterfeit gum wrappers. They counterfeit twenty-dollar bills, fifty-dollar bills, hundred-dollar bills. Why? Because there's a value there. *Every counterfeit Christian proves the worthwhileness and the validity of the real.*

If you're consistent, and you say you don't want Christianity because there are so many hypocrite Christians, I want you also to destroy and burn all your money because

counterfeit money is out there. All right? You know better than this. You know that what you are saying is just silly. Someone has clearly said, “The only way you can hide behind a hypocrite is to be smaller than the hypocrite himself.” But there are thinking people, businessmen, men who can make a deal—doctors, lawyers, surgeons, entrepreneurs, who use that kind of reason. You don’t get to be a Pharisee by being a fool. They were smart men. They were intelligent men. They knew better.

I’ve actually talked to people who say, “I don’t go to church now because my mamma made me go when I was a little boy. And I’m not going now. I’m not going to have anything to do with it.” I bet his mamma made him take a bath when he was a little boy, and he doesn’t take baths any more? Huh? That’s the kind of reasoning; that’s the kind of logic here.

People say, “I don’t want to be a Christian: there’s so much to give up.” Oh? There’s so much to give up? All right, what does God ask you to give up? The only thing that God asks you to give up are the things that will hurt you. That’s all. *“The LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”* (Psalms 84:11) For a person to say there’s too much to give up would be like a person saying, “I’d like to be healed, but I hate to give up my cancer.” Listen. *If it will make you healthy, holy, happy, wholesome, God says, “Help yourself.” Every time God says, “Thou shalt not,” He is saying, “Don’t hurt yourself.” Every time God says, “Thou shalt,” God is saying, “Help yourself to happiness.”* I am telling you, it is totally, totally, totally unreasonable to refuse Jesus Christ.

Now, you sit out there, and your mind will begin to work; and the devil will whisper something in your ear, and the devil will tell you, “Don’t be a Christian for this reason. Don’t be a Christian for that reason.” And he will give you some silly stupid excuse. But the Bible says we are without excuse. (Romans 1:20)

### **3. It Was a Sin Against Revelation**

Now, there’s a third thing they did, and this really gets down to the crux of the matter. They didn’t sin primarily against redemption. They didn’t sin primarily against reason. They sinned primarily against revelation. Now, pay attention. Pay attention, because here is the crux of the matter. And I’m going to tell you what the unpardonable sin is now. You see, it was obvious that day that God was working—obvious! I mean, Jesus Christ said, “The kingdom of God is come unto you. I am doing this in the power of the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 12:28) The kingdom of God was there, and God was working in power. It wasn’t that they could not have known. It wasn’t that they had not heard. It was not that they had not felt the Spirit of God. In their innermost being, they knew He was right, but they wouldn’t accept it anyway. In their stubbornness, they said “no.”

Why does Jesus say that you can blaspheme the Son of Man, Jesus, and be forgiven, but you cannot blaspheme the Holy Spirit and be forgiven? Now, this man here

may not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God; and so, he might say some terrible, horrible things about Jesus. But he could be forgiven. But suppose the Holy Spirit of God shows him that Jesus is the Son of God. Suppose he knows that Jesus is the Son of God. And suppose he sins against light. Suppose, with his eyes wide open, he says in his heart, “Yes, I know it’s true, but I’m not going to accept it,” and then he sins against that revelation. That, my dear friend, is when you insult the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit is the One who convicts you of sin. He is the One that convinces the world of sin, of righteousness, of judgment (John 16:8); and when the Holy Spirit of God tells you that, and you say “no,” and you sin against that redemption, and you sin against that reason, and you sin against that revelation, the Bible teaches that you can so insult, you can so despise and misuse the Holy Spirit of God, that He will cease speaking to you.

Now, don’t get the idea that you can get saved just any time you get ready, that you can just whistle and say, “Come save me, Lord.” Listen. The Bible says, Jesus speaking: “*No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.*” (John 6:44) That’s all. Listen, you cannot be saved apart from the work of the Spirit of God in your heart. And if the Spirit of God withdraws Himself, then you will not be saved. It will be impossible for you to be saved. Listen, God says in Genesis chapter 6, verse 3: “*My spirit [will] not always strive with [a] man.*” (Genesis 6:3) Now, God’s Spirit strives with you. God’s Spirit speaks to you. But the Bible says, “*He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed*” (Proverbs 29:1)—when God withdraws Himself.

You read Romans chapter 1—it’s amazing: three times there in Romans chapter 1 we read the statement of those who knew God and believed not on Him. They knew who He was, but they would not receive Him. Three times the Bible says this: “And God gave them up” (Romans 1:24); “And God gave them up” (Romans 1:26); “And God gave them over” (Romans 1:28). God just forsook them. He turned his back on them. He ceased to speak to them. Will God do that? My dear friend, you blaspheme the Holy Spirit of God; you speak insults against the Holy Spirit of God; you know what you ought to do, you know that you ought to receive Jesus Christ, and you say “no”—you crucify the Son of God afresh. (Hebrews 6:6) But He can’t pray for you as He prayed for those who nailed Him to the tree because He prayed for them, “*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.*” (Luke 23:34) But He can’t pray for you because, dear friend, you crucify Him afresh with your eyes wide open. Therefore, the Bible says in Hebrews chapter 6, it is impossible to restore to you to repentance, seeing that you crucify to yourself afresh the Son of God. (Hebrews 6:4–6) And you can commit tonight a greater sin than those who committed a sin when they nailed His quivering flesh to that tree.

I want to tell you that the worst sin in the world is not committed in the barroom. And



the worst sin in the world is not committed at the crack house. And the worst sin in the world is not committed with a prostitute. The worst sin in the world is more often committed in a service like this, when people refuse Jesus Christ. There is no greater sin than to aim the gun of unbelief at Christ on the cross and pull the trigger.

## **II. What Are the Marks of the Unpardonable Sin?**

What are the marks? What happens when a man commits this sin? Very briefly, three things, and I'm going to be finished.

### **A. The Deadening Power of Sin**

First of all, there is a deadening influence. There is something that dies within you. The Bible says that you will have eyes, but you will see not; you'll have ears, but you won't hear. (Jeremiah 5:21; Ezekiel 12:2) I can preach this sermon tonight, and you'll get the words, but you'll never get the message and you'll stalk out of here a lost man if you have committed the unpardonable sin. You will be so spiritually dead that you'll not be able to perceive truth.

### **B. The Deceiving Power of Sin**

I'll tell you something else: not only is there a deadening result, but there is a deceiving result. Not only will you not believe the right thing, but you will believe the wrong thing. God says in 2 Thessalonians, the second chapter, *"For this [reason] God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie"*—why would God send anybody strong delusion that they should believe a lie? The Bible says—*"that they all might be damned"*—why would God see to it that someone is damned?—*"because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved."* (2 Thessalonians 2:11–12) When God comes with truth and you receive not the truth, God will send you delusion and you will believe a lie. That's one of the reasons that so many are in false religion, so many are in false cults.

Let me tell you how it happens. A man comes to church—your church, our church, some other church—and the pastor stands up, and the pastor preaches from the Bible, the Word of God. And the Spirit of God is there. That man gets under conviction, but he doesn't want to be saved. With many people it's just greed. He figures if he comes to church, they're going to want some of his money, or something else; and so, he's got to make up some reason. The pastor says something about giving; and so, he begins to grouch, and he says, "Money, money, money! All they ever talk about down there is money!" And so, he gives some silly reason for not giving his heart to Jesus Christ. And he says, "I'm never going back there any more!"

Now, in a couple of weeks, he's sitting there at home watching television. His wife and kids are in Sunday school and church. He's reading the sports. His beard has

grown out. He's got a six-pack of embalming fluid there by his side. And he's watching the sports and all of that. And somebody comes and knocks on his door. He goes to the door, and it is some of these people who go house to house, door to door, a false cult. And I'm not going to name the name, but you know who I'm talking about. They tell him there is no hell, and he says, "Come in, come in. Tell me more." And he will believe a lie because he would not believe the truth.

### **C. The Damning Power of Sin**

You say, "Oh, it's pathetic!" No! It is the righteous judgment of God. Listen to me. There is the deadening, there is the deceiving, there is the damning power of this sin. In John, John speaks of those who would not believe. And then he says, "*Therefore they could not believe.*" (John 12:39) There may be someone here tonight, you cannot believe; you cannot trust Christ. I mean, you have stepped over the deadline. God's Spirit is finished with you. The Bible says of some people in the Old Testament, "*Ephraim is joined to [his] idols: let him alone.*" (Hosea 4:17)

You say, "Pastor, have I committed the unpardonable sin?" I don't know. But I'll tell you one way you can find out. Jesus said, "*Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.*" (John 6:37) And then He said, "Whosoever will may come." (Revelation 22:17) And if you want to come to Jesus and you haven't, if you will come to Him, I promise you on the authority of the Word of God that I preach tonight He'll save you. If you will come to Him, He will save you. Don't worry about whether you've committed the unpardonable sin or not. If you want to come to Jesus, come. For the Bible says, "Whosoever will may come." (Revelation 22:17) You show me any time, any place, anywhere, where anybody ever came to Jesus in repentance and faith and He didn't save them, I'll close my Bible and never preach again. "For whosoever will may come." (Revelation 22:17)

If you're afraid that you've committed the unpardonable sin, most likely you haven't. You'd think that a person who committed the unpardonable sin would be filled with all kinds of fear. No! They can go to sleep in a service like this. They can stalk out of this place and sniff at the preaching of God's Word. It may happen to you. This may be the last time God will speak to you. Don't think you have to be an old man to commit the unpardonable sin. I'm convinced that teenagers can commit the unpardonable sin. I am convinced that children can commit the unpardonable sin—anybody who knows who Jesus Christ is; anybody who has been spoken to by the Holy Spirit of God; anybody who has been completely and thoroughly convinced and then so sins against that reason, against the redemption, against that revelation; anybody who says "no" and insults God's Holy Spirit to their eternal detriment.

## Conclusion

¶ Let me tell you a story, and I'll be finished. Over here in Arkansas there used to be a preacher named Joe Henry Hankins. Many of you perhaps heard Joe Henry preach—a great man of God, preached in Fort Smith, Arkansas. Joe Henry Hankins told a story. He said, “I was preaching in our services, and God’s Spirit was moving in a mighty way. It was one of those special services. I gave the invitation, and many people came.” He said, “I looked up in the balcony, and there stood a young man in the balcony.” And, you know, preachers sometimes can sense when someone is under conviction. “I saw on the face of that young man Holy Spirit conviction. And I stretched out my hand toward him, and I said, ‘Come to Jesus, young man; come to Jesus.’ And I prayed for him. The young man had the hymnal in his hand, and the young man looked like he was going to step out and come. Then he stepped back and began to sing again.”

Joe Henry Hankins, like every evangelist with a pastor’s heart and a pastor with an evangelist’s heart, said, “Let’s sing another stanza”—oh folks, I hope you never get tired when a preacher says, “Let’s sing another stanza” when he’s pleading for some soul—“Let’s sing another stanza.” And they sang another stanza. The young man again started to step out, and Hankins said, “Thank God, he’s coming! Thank God!” But he stepped back. Finally, Joe Henry Hankins said, “One more time; sing one more time.” And he said, “Please give your heart to Jesus.” And this young man turned and started. And Hankins said, “Thank God, he’s coming! He’s coming!” But rather than coming down the stairs and rather than coming to the front, he turned and went out, and went out into the darkness, out of the church. Hankins’s heart was broken.

In a few days, Joe Henry Hankins was called to the bedside of that same young man, who had been to the doctor and had been diagnosed with a terminal illness that would take his life in a short time. The young man, when he was in the church, did not know he had the illness, nor did Joe Henry Hankins. Joe Henry Hankins sat by his bedside and said, “Young man, aren’t you the young man that was in the services thus-and-such a night?” “Yes sir.” “Were you the one in the balcony?” “Yes sir.” “Young man, I want you to answer a question for me. It seemed to me that when I was preaching to you, God was speaking to you. It seemed to me that when I gave the invitation, you wanted to come forward and give your heart to Jesus Christ. Is that true?” He said, “As a matter of fact, when you gave that invitation, I wanted to get down there where you were so badly that I felt that I could jump over the balcony rail and get down there where you were.” “Well,” Joe Henry Hankins said, “why didn’t you come?” He said, “Because I thought of my favorite sin.” And he was living in sin, and he said, “I knew if I came down there, I would have to give up that sin. And I made up my mind I would not do it. And finally, to get rid of that feeling, I closed the book and got out of that place.”

“Well,” Hankins said, “young man, have they told you how sick you are?” “Yes sir.”

“Do you know you are going to die?” “Yes sir.” “Well, young man, you can’t have that sin anyway. Wouldn’t you like to open your heart and give your heart to Jesus?” He said, “No sir.” He said, “Young man, I don’t understand it. Before, you said you wanted to be saved, but you thought of your sin and you wanted to sin. But now, you can’t have your sin anyway. Won’t you give your heart to Jesus?” He said, “No sir.” The preacher said, “I don’t understand. Why not?” The young man looked at him, Hankins said, with a look he’ll never forget, and he said, “Preacher, there’s something you don’t understand.” He said, “When I closed that hymnal and turned and walked out of that church, something died within me—something died within me.” And Joe Henry Hankins said he wept, and cried, and pled, and begged, but so far as he knew, that young man went out into eternity without Jesus Christ.†

I’m not trying to be an alarmist, but I want to be deadly serious with you tonight. If you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, if you believe that I’m a man of God, if you believe that this is the Word of God, if you believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross for your sin, and if you can hear my heart telling you to come to Jesus, I beg you tonight, don’t walk out of here tonight without Jesus Christ, because one of these days you’re going to cross the deadline and it will be too late for you. There is a sin that can never be forgiven.†

# Crossing God's Deadline

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: May 22, 1988**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 12:31–32**

## Outline

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- I. What Is the Unpardonable Sin?
  - A. It Is Not a Moral Sin
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- II. Blaspheming the Holy Spirit: The Sin of the Pharisees
  - A. They Sinned Against Love
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Conclusion

## Introduction

Open God's precious Word to Matthew chapter 12, and we're going to look at two of the most terrifying verses in all of the Bible. I feel as a pastor and as a man of God that it is incumbent upon me from time to time to speak on these particular verses. Not that I enjoy doing so, not that I want to do so, but I feel that there are far more people in America and around the world committing the unpardonable sin than we may ever dare to dream. People who commit a sin in this life, which sin, if they commit, will so damn their soul that they will never ever be forgiven in this world or in the world to come. Jesus warned about this sin.

Look at the Scripture: *"Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come"* (Matthew 12:31–32). What is this sin that is so terrible, so awesome, that Jesus Christ, who was incarnate love, said, "It will never, never, never, never be forgiven"? It is the sin of crossing the deadline, committing a sin that the Bible calls an unpardonable sin.

I read years ago of a man in Scotland who was walking on the beach at low tide. They have tremendous, ferocious tides in Scotland. And as this man went way out from the shore, he saw a sign that was posted out there that said, “Do not go any further. If you go any further, you will not have time to return before the tide comes in.” He thought, “There’s no tide that could be so swift that I could not possibly outrun it.” And he continued to walk. The tide turned, and the waters came up to his feet and began to wash over his feet. He turned and headed toward the shore, and the waters came in much quicker than he realized. Before long, the waters were up to his shins, his knees, and his thighs. He slogged through the water, trying to make it back to the shore. When he got there, there were those massive high walls of rock. He tried to climb up on the rocks, and a big wave came and swept him away. Spectators watched the man as he perished in the waves. What happened to this man is that he did not believe the warning. He crossed the deadline, and he perished.

Now, spiritually, the same thing may happen to some who are listening to me right now.

*There is a time we know not when,  
A place we know not where;  
Which marks the destiny of men,  
To glory or despair.*

*There is a line, by unseen,  
Which crosses every path;  
Which marks the boundary between  
God’s mercy and His wrath.*

—JOSEPH ADDISON ALEXANDER

And if you cross that line, Jesus said, you’ll commit a sin that is unpardonable. It will never, never, never, never be forgiven. If there is such a sin—and there is—we need to understand it.

## **I. What Is the Unpardonable Sin?**

What is the unpardonable sin? What is this sin that the Son of God warned about right here in Matthew 12:31–32?

### **A. It Is Not a Moral Sin**

Let me say, first of all, for the sake of clarity, what the sin is not. It is not some moral sin. It is not murder. It is not rape. It is not adultery. It is not sodomy. All of those sins may be forgiven. Have you been reading about the man out on the West Coast of our

country who raped a young lady—I believe, a fourteen-year-old girl—and then cut both of her arms off? They put that man in prison, and now they want to parole him. And there's not a community that will receive him—not one! I want to tell you the grace of God will receive him if he'll repent. Do you believe that? Heaven will receive him if he'll trust in Christ. There's not a sin—I don't care how deep, how dark, how hellish, how hurtful, how hateful, how gross, how terrible. The Bible says, "*The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin*" (1 John 1:7). I hope you believe that. All sin: there is no moral sin that the blood of Jesus Christ will not cleanse us from.

### **B. It Is Not a Mental Sin**

It's not a moral sin. It's not a mental sin. You say, "Maybe it's unbelief. Atheism: maybe that's the unpardonable sin." No, a lot of atheists have gotten saved. They repented of their atheism. It's just mere unbelief. All of us were unbelievers before we became believers, weren't we? And God forgave us. So unbelief is not the unpardonable sin.

### **C. It Is Not a Verbal Sin Alone**

It's not a moral sin. It's not a mental sin. It's not a verbal sin alone. Now words are generally involved, but it is not some vile oath. You know, I've been amazed that some people will curse God the Father, and they will curse God the Son, but they will not curse God the Holy Spirit. You'll hear people take the name of Jesus, for example, and mix the name of Jesus in the muck and mire and slime of the sewer, and take the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in vain. The Bible says, "*The LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain*" (Exodus 20:7). But Jesus said, "You can speak a word against the Son of Man, and it will be forgiven." But now, wait a minute—wait a minute. Why don't men curse the Holy Ghost? Have you ever heard a man take the name of the Holy Ghost and curse the Holy Ghost? No. Very few people will do that. Don't you curse God the Father, God the Son, or God the Holy Spirit! Don't do it! Don't do it!

But it is not a mere verbal sin. Words may be involved, and most of time they frequently are. But, my dear friend, just as a person can pray without moving his lips, a person can blaspheme without moving his lips. For example, suppose a person didn't have the faculty of speech. Could a person pray without the faculty of speech? Of course! Could a person blaspheme without the faculty of speech? Of course! You see, words are but an expression of the heart. And, really, what our Lord is talking about is what is down deep in the heart. It is called blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. It will never be forgiven.

## II. Blaspheming the Holy Spirit: The Sin of the Pharisees

Now, what does the word *blaspheme* mean? It means, “to speak hurtfully against with the intention to demean and injure.” And Jesus said, “If you blaspheme the Holy Ghost, you will never ever be forgiven.”

Why the Holy Spirit? Well, you could blaspheme God in ignorance. You could blaspheme Jesus in ignorance. But you cannot blaspheme the Holy Spirit in ignorance. And that’s the key to the whole matter. You see, the Holy Spirit is God’s instrument of light. The Holy Spirit is the One who turns the light on in your soul. And the unpardonable sin is the sin against light. It is knowingly, willingly, deliberately saying *no* to God when the Holy Spirit has spoken to you and revealed to you who Jesus Christ truly is.

Let me give you the background of this passage of Scripture, and maybe it will make more sense to you. Notice here in verse 22: “*Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil,*”—and every time you see the word *devil* or *devils* in the Bible, it speaks of demons. There is but one devil and many demons. And the King James translates it “devils” or “devil,” but it could be and should be in this instance “demons.” Here was a demon-possessed man—“*blind, and dumb:*”—sometimes demon possession does bring blindness and the inability to speak. Not all blind people, or dumb people, or people who cannot speak, have a demon—“*and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw*” (Matthew 12:22).

Jesus performed a miracle and He healed this man. And all of the people were amazed and said, “*Is not this the son of David?*” Now “*the son of David*” is biblical language that means, “Is not this the Messiah? This must be the Messiah. He casts out demons. He heals the blind, and He looses dumb tongues.” “*But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils*” (Matthew 12:23–24).

Now, choir, I want to tell you that was the meanest, most wicked, hellish, hurtful thing they could possibly have said about the Lord Jesus Christ. But even that could have been forgiven. Do you know what they said about Him? They said, “He casts out demons by the god of garbage, by the lord of the flies.” That’s who Beelzebub was. Beelzebub was a Phoenician deity, a Phoenician god. The Phoenicians lived on the seacoast, and they were a very intelligent people—maritime people, sailors. But they had the grossest form of idolatry. The Phoenicians had noticed that when there was some garbage, some filth, some carrion, some stench, some manure, some filthy, horrible, vile substance that remained for awhile, after a while there would be little white worms; there would be maggots in that filth. And then, after a while, the larva would hatch, and there would be flies. And they said, “Will you look at that? Out of filth, and



out of stench, and out of rotteness, and out of garbage, and out of purification, there comes life. Life comes from filth.” And so they worshiped the god of filth.

Now they did not know that flies had laid microscopic eggs, and eggs had hatched. They didn’t know that. They couldn’t see that. To them, life came out of filth. Now they had named that god Beelzebub. And to a Jew, a Bible-believing Jew, a Jew who knew the great monotheistic God, they knew that was the grossest form of immorality. It was so gross that they said, “A demon must have inspired that immorality, and his name is Beelzebub.” And that was the name for the chief demon, the god of garbage, the lord of the flies: Beelzebub. And they called him Beelzebub, and they said, “That’s the worst, that’s the most horrible, that’s the deepest form of degradation.” And then they said about the Lord Jesus—perfect, fully pure, clean, scintillatingly lovely, and beautiful Lord Jesus—they said, “He is casting out demons by the prince of demons.”

Why did they say that? I’ll tell you why they said it. They knew better, as we’re going to see in a minute. But they didn’t want the people to follow Jesus. They wanted the people to follow them. And so they could not deny the miracle. It was obvious. The man could now see, and the man could now speak. And everybody knew he had been blind and dumb. They couldn’t deny the miracle. So, rather than denying the miracle, they just simply explained it away. They said, “Oh, yes, yes, He has performed a miracle. But let me tell you how He did it. He did it in the power of Satan.”

### **A. They Sinned Against Love**

And when they said that, first of all, they sinned against such love. Because what was the Lord Jesus Christ doing? Jesus had just opened the eyes of a blind man. Jesus had just loosed the tongue of a man who could not speak. Jesus went about doing good. And He would have blessed them, the same Pharisees who turned on Him. Jesus wanted to love them. And the same hands and the same heart that had healed this man would have healed and blessed them. How foolishly they repudiated the Lord Jesus! How foolishly they rejected Him who comes in the name of the Lord! They sinned against love.

### **B. They Sinned Against Logic**

But wait a minute. They sinned more than against love; they sinned against logic. I want you to see what Jesus said. I want you to see how Jesus rebukes their foolish thought. Notice, if you will, as we continue to read, Jesus said, in verse 25, “*And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand. And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?*” Verse 28: “*But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto*

*you*” (Matthew 12:25–28). Now, underscore that—*“If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God”*—because the Holy Spirit here is the key.

Now what they did, not only did they sin against love, but they sinned against logic. Jesus said, “What you say is not reasonable. You say that I have cast out devils by the prince of devils.” And Jesus said, “How can Satan cast out Satan? A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. That doesn’t even make sense.” And they knew it didn’t make sense. Jesus was saying, “I’m not in collusion with the devil; I am in collision with the devil.” Nobody works for the devil by casting out the devil, and they knew it—they knew it. They had thought up a silly, superfluous, inane reason for not obeying what they knew to be true and what the Spirit of God had shown.

We have the same thing today. Have you ever heard anybody say, “I’m not going to be a Christian, because of the hypocrites in the church”? Nod your head. Of course you have! If you haven’t, where have you been? Hey, folks, people who say that know better than that. They know that’s no reason for not coming to Jesus. There are hypocrites in every area of life, now, aren’t there?

Some bankers are hypocrites, because they embezzle money. Do you have any money in the bank? Some lawyers are shysters and crooks. Would you get legal advice from one? Of course! Some doctors are quacks. When you get sick, would you call upon a doctor? Of course you would! Some money is counterfeit. Have you thrown away all the rest of your money? Of course not! Some eggs are rotten. Do you still eat eggs? We bought some eggs. One of them was a hypocrite. What I’m trying to say is, you know better than that—you know better. People have the silly, silly excuses—this excuse or that excuse—for not coming to Jesus, not giving their heart to Jesus. They know better. These Pharisees—you don’t get to be a Pharisee by being stupid.

### **C. They Sinned Against Light**

They sinned against love. They sinned against logic. But now, let me tell you where their problem was. They really sinned against light. You see, Jesus said, “The Spirit of God is come upon you.” Now the Holy Spirit gives light. You see, I can preach truth, but only the Holy Spirit can impart truth. The Holy Spirit of God opens the understanding, and He gives light. And the point we can see from the background is God’s Holy Spirit was bearing witness to the miracles of Jesus Christ and to the words of Jesus Christ that Jesus was exactly who He said He was. And they knew it, but they wouldn’t admit it. And so they found some other reason. And they said, “He’s doing what He’s doing in the power of Satan.” And when they said, “They blasphemed the Holy Spirit of God who had spoken to them,” Jesus gave them this warning about committing an unpardonable sin.

What is the unpardonable sin? It is the rejection of Jesus Christ. But it is more than the mere rejection of Jesus Christ; it is the rejection of Jesus Christ with your eyes wide open; it is the rejection of Jesus Christ knowingly, willingly, deliberately. Now, you see, there may be some here today who are not convinced that Jesus is the Messiah. There may be some people here today who have doubts about whether even God exists. But most of the people who hear me preach the gospel in America know that God exists, and many of them know that Jesus is the Savior. But they're not saved, because they're not convinced. They're not saved, because they reject Jesus with their eyes wide open. And those people are in danger of crossing the deadline and being eternally, everlastingly lost—not just when they get to hell, but lost now; and not only lost now, but lost now with no hope of forgiveness—and are as destined for an eternity in hell as if the iron gates of hell had already clanked shut behind them.

### **III. The Marks of the Unpardonable Sin**

Now, what happens when a person commits the unpardonable sin? What are the marks? What are the results?

#### **A. It Deludes**

The first result is deception, delusion. Turn with me to 2 Thessalonians the second chapter here for a moment. Look in verse 11: *“For this cause...”*—now I’m going to tell you what the cause was in just a moment. Put that phrase in your mind, and just leave it hanging there. *“For this cause”* something is going to happen, something is going to cause God to act a certain way. I’m going to point out what it is that caused God to act a certain way—*“For this cause God shall send them strong delusion,”*—God sends people strong delusion? We know the devil deceives people, but I didn’t know God deceives people. But there it is: *“God shall send them strong delusion.”* Well, I thought God was the truth. Why is God, who is the truth, why does He send strong delusion? Well, let’s continue to read—*“that they should believe a lie:”*—it seems to get worse, doesn’t it? Not only is God sending strong delusion, but God is sending strong delusion that people would believe a lie. Well, why would God want people to believe a lie? Well, let’s continue to read. Verse 12—*“that they all might be damned”*—seems to get worse. If this were all the Bible you knew, you wouldn’t think highly of God, would you? God sends people delusion. He sends them delusion that they would believe a lie. And they believe a lie that they all might be damned. Why does God do this? What kind of people are these? These are people who believe not the truth. These are not people who had not heard the truth. These are people who had heard the truth but refused the truth—*“who believed not the truth,”*—and why did they not believe the truth? Continue to

read—*“but had pleasure in unrighteousness”* (2 Thessalonians 2:11–12). For them, the opposite of truth was not error, but sin. They had their own pet, private sins. And because they had their own pet private sins, they willingly, knowingly, deliberately turned their back on the truth.

Back up to verse 10. The Bible speaks of *“them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth”* (2 Thessalonians 2:10). Do you have the love of the truth? If you don’t have the love of the truth, dear friend, let me tell you the truth that is here today is not something you can just put this on ice and save it for some day, something like money you can put in your pocket and say, “I’ll save that until I need to spend it.” No, you use it, or you’ll lose it. You act on it, or it will be taken away from you. *“For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath”* (Mark 4:25).

You see, when a man comes to a church like this and he hears the truth of God, and then he thinks of his sin, he has pleasure in unrighteousness. Over here is God’s truth, and over here is his sin. And he says, “Here’s truth, and here’s sin. I want sin.” And God says, “Well then, you’ll not have my truth.” And when a man starts this way, God gives him a shove. And God says, “All right, I’m going to send you strong delusion. You are going to believe a lie. You’re going to die and go to hell, because you refused the truth.”

*Delusion. Let me show you how that works. Suppose a man comes to this church, and it’s one of those rare Sundays that I’m preaching on giving, stewardship, and I preach that a man ought to tithe. You do believe that a man ought to tithe, don’t you? Nod your head. A woman too, for that matter, ought to tithe, because the Bible says, “The tithe...is the LORD’s”* (Leviticus 27:30).

Incidentally, I read about a tribe of Indians who have a church down in Florida—or heard about them. Almost every Indian in that church tithes—almost 100 percent. Somebody went down there to investigate and find out why. They said, “Why are all of the Indians in this church tithers?” This Indian answered, he said, “Indian believe Bible. Bible teach tithing. Indian tithe.” May his tribe increase. I mean, that’s simple, isn’t it?

All right now, listen. I’m preaching that. Suppose I’m preaching that on a particular Sunday, and a guy comes in here and he sits down. His wife has been begging him to come to church for months and months and months, and he finally comes. And he sits down back there, and he says, “All right, there they go, preaching on money. That’s all they ever preach about: money, money, money!” And he begins to grouse and gripe. He never asks, “Is it in the Bible?” He never asks, am I preaching the Word of God? Am I preaching the truth out of the Bible? He doesn’t ask that, because he’s eaten up with the god of greed. And he stalks out of this church, muttering and sputtering, and saying, “I’ll never come back again.” He doesn’t want the truth. He refuses the truth. And later

on he's sitting at home. His wife and kids are in Sunday school and church. He's got a six-pack of embalming fluid by his side; his whiskers are grown out; he's reading the sports page on Sunday morning. And one of Jehovah's false witnesses comes and knocks on the door, and says, "We're here to tell you there's no hell." He says, "Come in. Come right in." And he buys it and believes it and goes to the hell he doesn't believe in. And God sends him strong delusion. You say, "But he's so sincere." But he's so sincerely wrong. *"For this cause God shall send [him] strong delusion, that [he] should believe a lie: that [he] might be damned [because he] believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness"* (2 Thessalonians 2:11–12).

What happened to these Pharisees was this, dear friend: they knew what the truth was, but they made some silly reason for not accepting the truth because of the rotten sin that was in their heart.

## **B. It Deadens**

Now, not only does this sin delude, but it deadens. I want you to take your Bible and turn with me to Romans 11:8, and look with me for a moment—Romans 11. And in this passage our Lord Jesus is talking about the Jews. I want you to see what He says about them: *"(According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber..."*—did you know there are a lot of people who will spiritually sleep through this service today? They won't wake up until the benediction comes, and they don't know what's going on here today. They won't wake up until they get to the cafeteria or wherever it is—*"God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day"* (Romans 11:8).

There are people who have, physically, 20/20 vision; spiritually, they're blind. Physically, you can hear. Spiritually, you're deaf. Physically, you're awake. Spiritually, you're asleep. And God, as a part of His judgment, has sent that upon you. You sleep spiritually through a service like this. And people all around can be being blessed. And people all around can be understanding. And people can all be saved. But not only are you deluded; you're dead. You can't understand. And that delusion that you have will never ever be removed, because you can't see.

Never scold a blind man for not seeing. He can't see. Never scold a deaf man for not hearing. He cannot hear. Never blame a man who's asleep for not knowing what went on while he was asleep. No, my dear friend. I want to tell you it is a terrible thing when a man comes to this place. He could sit in a service, and souls are being saved, and the pastor will be preaching, and the Spirit of God will be working, but when it gets to him, it just passes right over him. He's like a blackened, charred stump in a forest fire. He never even glows, because the Spirit of God has forsaken him. He cannot see. He

cannot understand.

Don't get the idea that, if a person has committed the unpardonable sin, he's going to be full of terror and fear. Oh, no! Some people have the idea that a person who has committed this unpardonable sin would just be eaten up with remorse and terror. Well, no. He'll be cool as a cucumber. He'll be fine. He'd say, "I'm not afraid to die." Every now and then, some people call me up on the phone, and they say, "Pastor, pastor, I'm so afraid I have committed the unpardonable sin." I tell them right away, "Thank God, you haven't—you haven't. Any man who is afraid he has, hasn't." I mean, anybody who is concerned about his soul can be saved. People who are not concerned about their souls are the people that concern me: people who are cool about it. They have eyes, but they don't see; they have ears, but they don't hear; they have hearts, but they don't feel. Friend, I'm going to tell you, anybody who wants to be saved can. Hallelujah! If you want to be saved, you've not committed the unpardonable sin.

### C. It Damns Forever

And I'll tell you what this sin does, dear friend. It deceives. And then, it deadens. Then I'll tell you what else it does: it damns forever. Turn to John 12:35: *"Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you."* Do you see that? For a little while the light is with you. *"Walk while ye have the light,"*—oh, my friend, listen—*"lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth."* Jesus is light. The Holy Spirit is light. Now, notice in verse 37, the lament, though. *"But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him"* (John 12:37). It is not, dear friend, that He had not revealed Himself to them. He had done these miracles, yet they believed not on Him. Now, skip down, if you will, to verse 39: *"Therefore they could not believe"* (John 12:39). Do you see it? Do you see it? Verse 37: they would not believe. Verse 39: *"Therefore they could not believe."* Jesus said, *"While ye have light"* (John 12:36)—*"While ye have light."*

Let me show you one other passage. Turn to Hebrews 6 with me for a moment. Begin with me, please, in verse 4: *"For it is impossible..."*—do you see that phrase, *"For it is impossible"*? Do you see it? Something is impossible. Now that's an attention-getter—*"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened..."*—there's our word again—*"those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift,"*—not ingested, but tasted—*"and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,"*—that means they had gone along with the Holy Ghost. The Holy Spirit is involved here—*"and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame"* (Hebrews 6:4–6).

The Bible says it is impossible for these kinds of people ever to be saved. What kind of people? People who have been enlightened, people who have tasted the truth, people who know the truth, but people who knowingly, deliberately refuse the truth. The Bible says, “It is impossible to renew them to repentance—impossible!” They will never ever be saved. Why? The Bible says, “They crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh.” They commit a worse sin than those who nailed Him to the cross the first time.

You say, “How could it be a worse sin?” I’ll tell how it’s a worse sin. Do you remember what Jesus prayed for those who nailed Him up on that cross? Do you remember reading about it in the Bible? Do you remember what He prayed? I’ll tell you what He prayed. He prayed this: *“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do”* (Luke 23:34). Isn’t that right? Friend, a person who commits the unpardonable sin, He could never pray that prayer for them. He couldn’t say, “Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they’re doing.” “They crucify the Son of God afresh” with their eyes wide open. The Holy Spirit of God has spoken to them. They’ve tasted the good Word of God. They’ve tasted the power of the world to come. And the writer of Hebrews said, “It is impossible to renew them to repentance.” They’re going to die and go to hell. What does this sin do? It deludes. It deadens. It damns.

## Conclusion

Now, what does this mean to you today? Several things. One: If you have the slightest desire to come to Jesus, come. You may be very, very close to the deadline. I beg you, I warn you, do not go away without the Lord Jesus Christ. You say, “Are you trying to frighten me?” Absolutely! Absolutely! *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom”* (Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 9:10). I don’t believe in a religion built on fear; I believe in one built on love. But I’m telling you, dear friend, without Christ there’s plenty to be afraid of. And if you find the slightest desire to come to Jesus, I want you to do it.

The second thing, my dear friend, is this: that if you’re afraid that you’ve committed the unpardonable sin, let me just tell you this. If you want to come to Jesus, you may come. Jesus said, *“He that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out”* (John 6:37). And then He said, “Whosoever will may come” (Revelation 22:17). Anybody who wants to come to Jesus Christ today in this service may come. And I beg you to do so.

And I want to tell you a third thing. After death, all sin is unpardonable. And not only may you be near crossing the deadline, but you may be near death. And if you don’t know Jesus, you may come. *“He that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.”*

# The Sign of Jonah

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** April 7, 1985

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 12:38–41

*“For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”*

MATTHEW 12:40

## Outline

Introduction

- I. A Story of Substitutionary Death
- II. A Story of Supernatural Deliverance
- III. A Story of Serious Dimensions

Conclusion

## Introduction

*“Fear not... He is not here...he is risen.”* (Matthew 28:5–6) Take your Bibles now this morning, and open, if you will, to the Gospel according to Matthew—the Gospel according to Matthew—and we will begin reading in verse 38. How important it is that you use your Bibles! And, by the way, when you find the Gospel of Matthew 12:38, as soon as you find that, you might also begin looking for the book of Jonah, because you’re going to need it in just a little bit. The book of Jonah is not hard to find—it’s to the left of Matthew and about an eighth of an inch. All right now: *“Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of [Jonah]; and, behold, a greater than [Jonah] is here.”* (Matthew 12:38–41)

So many times when I’ve had the privilege of visiting the city of Rome—I’m talking about Rome, Italy; not Rome, Georgia, but Rome, Italy—I have visited the catacombs. The catacombs are those subterranean cemeteries. Underneath the city of Rome there is a great labyrinthine passageway tunneled out through the soft and porous rock: the catacombs. And, actually, there are hundreds of miles of these catacombs: long, dark, narrow tunnels. Because of persecutions, the Christians met there to worship, to serve



the Lord's Supper. And, also, it was there that they buried their dead. And they would make a niche in the wall, and there they would put the body of their departed loved one. And so you can see on the walls of those catacombs various Christian symbols. You can see where early believers would make a cross on the walls. And, many times, they would put the sign of a fish, because the sign of a fish was a symbol of early Christianity. But, also, so many times you would find drawn on the walls of the catacombs—and I've seen them—a picture of a whale—not a fish, as such; but a whale with a flat tail, and the spout, and so forth.

Now, why would they draw a whale there in the catacombs? and what does that have to do with Christianity? Well, to these early Christians, a whale was a reminder of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, because Jonah, who was swallowed by a whale, is a type, a picture, a prophecy of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. There were some wicked men who came to Jesus and said, "If you're the Messiah, give us a sign." Jesus said, "No sign will be given to this sinful and adulterous generation but the sign of the prophet Jonah." And then He said, "As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, the Son of man"—Jesus—"will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

Now you can understand why the liberals and the critics pick so much at the book of Jonah. Why does the devil hate the book of Jonah so much? Because nowhere in all of the Bible are you going to find a clearer picture in the Old Testament—that is, of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ—than in the book of Jonah. What a remarkable story this is! Folks, it's a whale of a story, if you'll think about it; it's a remarkable story. It's not much of a story if a dog bites a man; but it's a real story if a man bites a dog. It's not much of a story if a man catches a fish; but it's a real story when a fish catches a man. And here was Jonah, he was swallowed up by a whale, or a fish, or some kind of a sea monster.

Now you remember the story that Jonah was commissioned by the Lord to preach to Nineveh. Nineveh was a great city: great in enormity, great in antiquity, great in iniquity. It was an old and ancient city. And the way they were living was in such a way as to cause God to bring judgment. And He said to Jonah, "Go preach to them that I am going to destroy them," (Jonah 1:2) and Jonah didn't want to go. He was recalcitrant and obtuse and rebellious, and he went the other way. And you remember he got on a ship to flee from the presence of the Lord, and God sent a storm. And when the sailors tossed Jonah overboard, God had prepared this fish or this sea monster to swallow up Jonah. And there he was with a whale house for a jailhouse for three days and three nights until he repented and got right with God. And God said, "All right, Jonah's ready for departure. Over, up and out." And out he came, and was vomited up, the Bible says, by that whale onto dry ground. (Jonah 2:10) Then he went and preached to Nineveh,

and there was a great citywide—nationwide—revival, and that entire population repented in sackcloth and ashes.

Now Jesus said that this story is a story that pictures His own death, burial, and resurrection. Now, was this a whale that swallowed Jonah? The King James Version of the Bible calls it a whale; but that's only a translation of a word. That could be translated "sea monster." It may have been a whale; it could have been a shark; or it could have been something else that was not a whale or a shark. We don't know. The word just simply means a "sea monster."

Now it might have been a whale. You know, whales are mighty big. Sometimes people have the idea that the great African elephant is the largest animal. But not at all—not at all! Friend, the whale's tongue can weigh as much as a full-grown elephant—did you know that?—just the tongue of a whale. I was reading *The Great Story of Whales*, by Georges Blond, and he said that a full-grown whale—a big blue whale—could weigh as much as 286,000 pounds. Now, if you were to put a great blue whale full-grown on one side of the scale, you'd have to put thirty-six full-grown elephants on the other side just to balance it. Or if it were people, it would take a town of 2,500 standing on one side of the scales to balance the weight of a great blue whale. And a baby blue whale—oh, listen to this—they have been measured to gain weight at the rate of ten pounds an hour! A baby blue whale can gain as much as 240 pounds a day! That ought to make some of us feel better: 240 pounds a day!

Now people have difficulty, you know, believing the story of Jonah and the whale—if it was a whale. I was reading after Dr. Sidlow Baxter in his beautiful volume called *Explore the Book* as to what he had to say about the book of Jonah, and he told a remarkable story. Here's what Dr. Baxter said. In February 1899, a whale ship named "Star of the East" sighted a great whale, and that whale was about three miles off. They set out to harpoon the whale one boat ahead of the other. It harpooned the whale. When the other boat came to try to help, the whale flashed around with its tail and upset the second boat. Two men fell out. One man drowned. The other man disappeared. They succeeded in killing the whale, towed it back to the ship, latched it to the side of the ship, got on the back of the whale with their shovels and spades and picks, and began to take the blubber from that whale so that they could get the whale oil and so forth. They had worked all day and into the night, and finally they got down to the stomach of that whale, and they put a crane on that, a hoist on it, and hoisted the stomach of this whale on board that whaler, "The Star of the East." And when they did, they noticed that on the inside of the stomach there was some movement and there were spasmodic signs of life. And they slit the stomach open and found that man that had been swallowed. He was doubled up inside the stomach of that whale. He was unconscious. They laid him out on the deck. They poured sea water on him. After a

while, he revived; but he was out of his mind. I can understand it. And for two weeks, according to Dr. Baxter, he was a raving lunatic. He was kept in the captain's quarters; but after two weeks, he regained his senses and went back to work on the deck of that whaler. But during his sojourn in the whale's stomach, the gastric juices had so bleached his skin that his skin—every place where it was exposed—was white—a ghastly look, almost like parchment. And that's the way he stayed the rest of his life. He said that "I passed out not from lack of air"—there was plenty of air to breathe—"but," he said, "I passed out from sheer panic and fear."

I was reading after another man whose name is Dr. Harry Rimmer. I always enjoy reading Dr. Harry Rimmer. He lived in yesteryear also, but he was a great preacher. But he also had a scientific mind and was a great historian. And Dr. Harry Rimmer told of some fishermen who saw a giant monstrous shark. They had a boat, and they tried to harpoon the shark. When they did, one of the men fell overboard in the confusion and was swallowed alive—swallowed whole by that shark—and the shark disappeared. He said that forty-eight hours later they saw the same shark. They shot him, harpooned him from the deck of that ship, killed the shark, towed him to land, hoping to retrieve the body of their shipmate so that they could give him a Christian funeral. And when they slit the shark open, this man was still alive in the stomach of that shark, having been swallowed whole. Dr. Rimmer, who is a very reliable historian, and a very godly man, said that this man came to be known as the Jonah of the twentieth century. They even put him in a London museum and people had to pay money to come in and see him. Also, this man had things that happened to him by the gastric juices of the shark. For example, no hair would grow on his head, or on his arms or legs, any place that was exposed. And there were great yellow-brownish and whitish spots everywhere that his body had been exposed to the gastric juices. But he lived after having been swallowed by that great shark.

Now, was it a whale that swallowed Jonah? was it a shark that swallowed Jonah? or, was it some other creature that swallowed Jonah? Well, I really do not know, so I'm just going to say whale, probably, for the rest of the message, just to make it fit in with the King James translation here of that particular word. But I want to tell you and remind you that when I told you those first two stories, I'm not telling you those stories to make the story of Jonah plausible to you. I'm not trying to make it plausible to you. I'm not trying to prove to you that this could happen. I don't have to prove to you that it could happen. Friend, I'm here to announce to you that it happened. I'm like M. R. DeHaan. He said, "It wouldn't prove the Bible to be any more true if you were to find a whale's skeleton on a beach somewhere with Jonah's initials carved on its ribs." Amen? Listen. You see, the Bible says that God "*prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah.*" (Jonah 1:17)

Now, if God could make a whale to begin with, and if God could make a man to begin with, God could make a whale, or a fish, or a sea monster that could swallow a man and keep him alive three days and three nights—if God wanted to. He could make one with five rooms of furniture and a refrigerator in it if He wanted to, right? Now what I'm trying to say is that if you have difficulty believing the story of Jonah and the whale, the reason that you have difficulty believing it is you just simply have difficulty believing in God—that's all. I mean, when you admit the fact of God, the God that created the universe, you don't have any difficulty with the story of Jonah, nor are you going to have any difficulty with the greater story of the death, burial, and resurrection of our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

And, by the way, why should it be so hard for a whale to swallow Jonah? After all, he was a minor prophet. Think about it, all right? I heard where Clarence Darrow, the brilliant lawyer who argued with William Jennings Bryan at the Scopes Trial, was arguing about evolution, and it actually got into a law court here in Tennessee as to whether or not evolution was to be taught in schools or whether creationism was to be taught in school. And that trial, later on, came to be called the Monkey Trial. And William Jennings Bryan was a great Christian, and Clarence Darrow was a great lawyer and very brilliant; and he tried to confuse William Jennings Bryan and make him look silly on the witness stand. So he said something like this: "Well, you believe the Bible?" "Yes sir, I do." "You believe all the Bible?" "Yes sir, I do." "You believe the stories of the Bible?" "Yes sir, I do." "Do you believe the story of Jonah?" "Yes sir, I do." "Do you believe that Jonah swallowed the whale?" He said, "No sir, I don't." He said, "I believe the whale swallowed Jonah as the Bible says; but I want you to know, sir, had the Bible said that Jonah swallowed the whale, I would have believed it." All right? I like that kind of faith in God.

Now what I'm trying to say is this, folks: I'm not trying to make this story plausible to you; I'm just trying to tell you that there is a great sign, a great lesson, here, and Jesus said it is the chief sign that He has given to prove His deity, to prove His messiahship—it is the sign of the prophet Jonah.

Now, having said that—and I hope by now you've found the book of Jonah—would you turn to the book of Jonah? And I want you to notice three things about this story of Jonah that we're going to learn on this Easter morning.

## **I. A Story of Substitutionary Death**

All right, the very first thing I want you to learn is that the story of Jonah was a story of a substitutionary death—the story of a substitutionary death. Begin reading here in chapter 1:11: *"Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous. And he said unto them,*

*Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.*" (Jonah 1:11–12)

Now, here's what happened that day. Jonah got on board that ship; and not only did God prepare a fish, but God prepared a great wind and God sent a storm. And that storm began to buffet and lash that ship, and beat upon that ship, and it looked like the ship was going down. And Jonah said, "The only way that this ship can be saved is if you throw me overboard. If I am sacrificed, the rest of you are going to be saved."

Now, what is that a picture of? That is a picture of the vicarious, substitutionary, sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ. That vessel buffeted by those storms pictures lost humanity enduring the wrath of God—the storms of God's wrath—headed for certain wreck and certain doom upon the reefs of judgment. Jonah, we know, is a picture, in this instance, of the Lord Jesus Christ; and it was necessary that Jonah be sacrificed in order that the others might live.

Now, notice Jonah could not jump overboard. That would have destroyed the picture. Jonah said, "You're going to have to take me and throw me overboard." It was a picture that the Lord Jesus Christ has been crucified by our hands. Were you there when they crucified my Lord? Yes, you were there; I was there. And it was for our sins that He suffered, bled, and died. And so Jonah had to be thrown overboard. He had to be sacrificed by them.

Now they didn't want to do this. They wanted to try some other ways. For example, look, if you will, in verse 5: "*Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god*"—but false religion could not deliver them—"and [they] cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them." (Jonah 1:5) Now, not only did false religion not help them, but the self-effort of getting rid of things that were onboard the ship didn't help them, either. Now so many people will turn to false religion and find no salvation. Many people will try to lighten the ship, as it were, by getting rid of the things in their lives: that lust, and that pride, and that anger, and debauchery, and all of these things. That pictures reformation; but it's still no good. Look, if you will, in verse 13: "*Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not.*" (Jonah 1:13) That represents effort, sweat, toil, and tears—but no good.

Now, you see, dear friend, in this congregation today, there will be those who will try some religion other than the Christian religion, some way other than the Lord Jesus Christ, to still the storm within their bosom and the storms of God's wrath. They cannot do it. False religion can't do it. There are others of you who think, "Well, somehow, if I can just turn over a new leaf, if I can just reform, if I can just lighten the ship, if I can get these things out of my life, that will be all right. Others of you say, "Well, I'm going to do good things, good deeds. I'm going to row the boat ashore." You can't do it. Salvation, Jonah found out, is of the Lord. And one of the great sentences in the book of Jonah is

this: *“Salvation is of the LORD.”* (Jonah 2:9) It is *“not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.”* (Titus 3:5) The Bible says, *“To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”* (Romans 4:5) How glad I am that God has given us back here in the Old Testament a clear and a plain picture, number one, of a substitutionary death. One died for all.

Now, when they cast Jonah overboard, I want you to see what happened when they cast him overboard. Read verses 14 and 15: *“Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man’s life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee...”*—that is, what happened here was something that God had ordained and God had guided—*“for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee. So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea:”*—now, watch this—*“and the sea ceased from her raging.”* (Jonah 1:14–15) What false worship could not do; what reformation and lightening the ship could not do; what human effort, toil, and tears, and sweat could not do, a substitutionary sacrifice did. Immediately—immediately—the sea ceased. There was calm, there was peace, because, dear friend, God is teaching us right back here in this book of Jonah that there is no way to peace with God except through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. That’s a good place for an *amen*.

## **II. A Story of Supernatural Deliverance**

Now, listen—listen. Not only was it a picture of a substitutionary death, but it was also a picture of a supernatural deliverance—a supernatural deliverance. Look in Jonah 1:17: *“Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.”* (Jonah 1:17) And, by the way, Jesus said, *“As Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights, so the Son of man is going to be in the heart of the earth”*—how long?—*“three days and three nights.”* (Matthew 12:40)

I don’t want to disturb you very much, folks; but I want to get you thinking. Jesus was not crucified on a Friday. There’s no way that Jesus could have been crucified on Friday and raised on Sunday and be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights—no way possible. I don’t care how you figure it. You can figure a part of a day is a whole day. You can do mathematics all day long, all night long. You can’t make Jesus be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights and be crucified on Friday and raised on the Lord’s Day, the first day of the week. It did not happen. Jesus was crucified, most likely, on Wednesday; maybe on a Thursday, but not on Friday. People say, “Well, what about Good Friday?” Well, that’s the invention of man; it did not come from the Bible. Somebody says, “Oh, but wait a minute. They took Him down from the cross because

the next day was a Sabbath.” Yes, a Sabbath, not *the* Sabbath. There was more than a Sabbath day of a Saturday Sabbath day. There were weeks of Sabbaths. And that Sabbath was the Passover Sabbath. And if you read it carefully, you’ll find out that it was. And it did not necessarily fall on Saturday, which some people, carelessly reading, will say that Jesus, therefore, was put to death on Friday and raised on Sunday. No, He was three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Now, the point being that, when Jonah came out of the mouth of that fish, or whale, or whatever it was, it was because God had supernaturally delivered him.

Some scholars believe that Jonah actually died when he was in that fish. He may have, and God may have given him life, resuscitated Jonah; because look, if you will, in chapter 2: *“Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish’s belly,”*—now, watch what he said—*“and said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice.”* (Jonah 2:1–2)

*Father Time met pale King Death  
Sittin’ by a tomb.  
“Hello, old friend, I guess you’re here  
To seal somebody’s doom.”  
“You might say that,” sly Death replied.  
A smile slid up his face.  
“Inside reposes that Jesus man  
Who said He’s save the race?  
“And you, Time, why you stoppin’ here?  
Don’t you have things to do?”  
“I come each day to draw the veil  
And let the mornin’ through.  
“Say, why you watchin’ jus’ one grave,  
With all your vast domain?  
Looks like you’d be out ramblin’ ’round  
And smitin’ folks with pain.”  
“Well, this one’s somethin’ special.  
He challenged me, they say.  
Said He’s rest here just three days  
Then stir and walk away.  
“Now I’m the conqueror you know,  
They don’t talk up to me.  
When I steps in to cut ’em down*

*It's for eternity."*  
*"I sure can testify to that,"*  
*Responded Father Time.*  
*"I ain't seen one shake off the dust*  
*Since you been in your prime.*  
*"Well, I got other things to do,*  
*I must be on my way.*  
*I'll see you when I come back by*  
*To make another day."*  
*So whiskered Time went up the hill*  
*To bid the sun to rise.*  
*He left Death standin' by the tomb*  
*Lookin' strong an' wise.*  
*Next day, Time ambled by again,*  
*"And how are things?" he queried.*  
*"Kinda quiet," Death replied.*  
*"I'm startin' to be wearied.*  
*"I won't be here when you come by*  
*About this time tomorrow.*  
*I'm anxious to be on my way,*  
*An' spread some grief and sorrow."*  
*Now Father Time was quite surprised*  
*When he came back to see*  
*Death a quiverin' on the ground*  
*In frightful agony!*  
*His eyes were set, his throat was marked,*  
*His clothes in disarray.*  
*It wasn't difficult to see*  
*That Death had had his day.*  
*"What happened, Death?" asked Father Time,*  
*"What makes you look so bad?*  
*I've never see you shake this way*  
*Or seem so scared and sad."*  
*Death pulled himself up on a rock*  
*A-lookin' sick an' humble.*  
*Hung his head an' wrung his hands*



*And Time could hear him mumble.  
“Was sittin’ here before the dawn  
About to take my stroll  
When all at once this whole wide world  
Began to reel and roll.  
“That rollin’ stone jumped off the door  
An’ skipped on down the hill.  
Then everything grew dark and quiet,  
Seemed like the earth stood still.  
“I saw Him standin’ in the door,  
He didn’t move or speak,  
Just looked at me an’ all at once  
I felt so tired and weak.  
“He came and got a hold on me,  
And threw me to the grou’  
Put His foot here on my neck  
Then took my keys an’ crown.  
“Two angels came to talk with Him,  
They glistened like the sun.  
He said, ‘The plan’s all finished now,  
Redemption’s work is done.’  
“As they passed the garden gate  
I heard Him say, just then,  
He’s settin’ free my captives  
And givin’ gifts to men.”  
Time and Death met once again  
Off yonder by the gate.  
“It’s good to see you,” said Old Time,  
“I’ve wondered ’bout your fate.”  
“I’m just a lowly servant now,  
There’s little time to roam,  
I just push open this old gate  
And help the saints get home!”*

*—ELWOOD MCQUAID*

I like that. Praise the Lord! A story of supernatural deliverance.

### III. A Story of Serious Dimensions

There's a third and final thing I want you to notice. Go back, if you will, to the book of Matthew chapter 12 with me, and look at the story again, where Jesus said—verse 39—*“But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment...”*—just underscore that phrase—*“rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it...”*—underscore that—*“condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.”* (Matthew 12:39–41)

Now I want you, as they say on a CB radio, to put on your ears right now, okay? This is a story of a substitutionary death. It was the story of a supernatural deliverance. But it is also a story of serious dimensions—serious dimensions. Now, here were these smart alecks, as it were, saying to Jesus Christ, “Prove yourself. Give us a sign.” But Jesus said, “You've already had a sign. It was the sign of the prophet Jonah. And Jonah spoke to Nineveh. Nineveh repented in sackcloth and ashes, and they were delivered.” Now Jesus said that “the men of Nineveh shall rise in the judgment and condemn this generation, because a greater than Jonah is here.” Jesus is greater than Jonah.

Now, what was Jesus saying? Jesus is saying that when God comes to judge us, God is not going to judge us primarily by the sin we've committed, but by the light we've rejected. Now there was hardly a more wicked city than Nineveh. As a matter of fact, they were ripe for judgment, and God said He was going to destroy it. But God said that “the men of Nineveh will rise in the judgment to condemn this generation.”

Now, to whom was He speaking? He was speaking there to a religious people who were lost, but people who had great light. As a matter of fact, the Son of God was in their midst. A greater than Jonah was in their midst. They had come face to face with Truth. Friend, listen to me. People are foolish to come to church on Easter morning to celebrate Easter if they don't intend to get saved. The more light you have, the greater the judgment. Don't you understand that? Don't you understand it would be better for you to go to hell from Nineveh than it would be from Memphis? Don't you understand that *“unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required”*? (Luke 12:48) Don't you realize that we who live in this generation don't only have the sign of Jonah, but we have the resurrection of Jesus Christ, where He has shown Himself alive by many infallible proofs? (Acts 1:3)

I've always been amazed how people will dress up to celebrate Easter, who are not Christians. What they do is celebrate their doom. Paul said in Acts 17:31 that God *“hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness”*—he's talking now about judgment, the same judgment that Jesus is talking about in verse 41—*“[God]*

*hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained;”—who is the man that God ordained to be the judge?—“whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”* (Acts 17:31) Who did God raise from the dead? Jesus. Who is going to be the judge? Jesus. You see, the same Jesus who wants to be your Savior will be your judge if He doesn't become your Savior. He's going to judge you. And, you see, God has given assurance of the judgment, in that He raised Jesus from the dead.

Now, listen to Paul's logic. You cannot hold court if the judge is dead. But the judge is Jesus, and God has assured us of the judgment in that He raised Jesus from the dead. Now you cannot hold court if the defendant is dead. But what Paul is saying is this: that the same God who raised up Jesus Christ from the dead is the God who is going to raise up the unsaved from the dead. If men do not rise to eternal life, they're going to rise in judgment, but rise they will—rise they will!

Friend, I want to tell you that if you could bore down deeper into the molten core of this earth than ever a man has been, the Spirit of God would be there to bring you to judgment. If you could ascend up higher into the heavens than a space shuttle has ever gone, the Spirit of God would be there to bring you to judgment. Could you have your body burned and scattered by the four winds of the earth to the four quarters of the earth, the Spirit of God would bring together those ashes and reincarnate those ashes; that spirit and you would rise in the judgment. You see, listen to me. Easter guarantees eternal life for those of us who are saved. It guarantees eternal death—resurrection death, not resurrection life—in the judgment. A person without Christ will be raised from the dead and cast into hell. Easter guarantees it. That's a solemn thought.

## **Conclusion**

The story of Jonah, my friend, is a story of a substitutionary death. It is a story of a supernatural deliverance. But it is a story with solemn and serious dimensions. *“Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.”* (Luke 12:48)

# A Greater Than Solomon Is Here

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: November 19, 1989**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 12:42**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Wisdom of Jesus Is Greater Than the Wisdom of Solomon
- II. The Works of Jesus Are Greater Than the Works of Solomon
- III. The Worship of Jesus Is Greater Than the Worship of Solomon
- IV. The Wealth of Jesus Is Greater Than the Wealth of Solomon
- V. The Workers of Jesus Are Greater Than the Workers of Solomon
- VI. The Worth of Jesus Is Greater Than the Worth of Solomon

Conclusion

## Introduction

**T**ake your Bibles and turn with me to Matthew chapter 12, and look with me at verse 42. I want to continue in the theme of what we have been doing, and that is to give honor to our dear Savior, whose glory and in whose name this house has been built. Now the Lord Jesus was facing on a certain day some enemies. They were scribes and Pharisees. They had questioned Him. They had castigated Him. They had interrogated Him. They had picked at Him. They were saying, "Give us a sign and prove yourself to us." And the Lord said a remarkable thing to them, in Matthew chapter 12 and verse 42. Look at it. The Lord said, *"The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here"* (Matthew 12:42).

Now Solomon was the greatest builder Israel had ever known. And he dwelt with more wealth, power, affluence, and prestige than any other ruler. Now here was the Lord Jesus, a peasant prophet. And the Lord Jesus was saying to them, "If you only knew, a greater than Solomon is right here in your midst." And why did the Queen of Sheba come all the way from the uttermost part of the earth? Bible scholars believe that was somewhere around Ethiopia. She came all the way to Jerusalem to learn the wisdom of Solomon. And Jesus said, "If you don't get right with me, she's going to rise up in the judgment and condemn you, because a greater than Solomon is here."

Now, can you imagine what must have gone through their minds when he said that? They said, "Why, Solomon was a king's son. You're but a peasant's son, a carpenter's

son. Solomon was born in a palace. You were born in a stable. Solomon was born in mighty, magnificent Jerusalem. You were born in little Bethlehem. Why, Solomon had thousands of servants. You don't have any. Solomon wore his kingly robe. You have just a seamless garment. Why, Solomon drank from vessels of gold. You have to get a drink from a harlot woman. You didn't even have anything to draw water out of the well with. Solomon was rich. You are a peasant and a pauper. Solomon had armies. You have a few stragglers following you around. Solomon built great cities. You're a carpenter. You build plows and chairs. Solomon lived in a palace. You don't have anywhere to lay your head. Why, Solomon had 1,400 chariots, 1,200 horsemen, 40,000 stalls of horses; and when Solomon rode forth, he rode in comfort. You ride a donkey, if you're not walking. Why, Solomon ate with the Queen of Sheba. And you eat with publicans and sinners. And you have the nerve, the audacity, to say a greater than Solomon is here?"

Friend, I want to tell you six ways, very quickly, that Jesus is greater than Solomon. Now if you want to find the story of the visit of the Queen of Sheba, turn with me to 1 Kings chapter 10 in the Bible. I want you to see what the Queen of Sheba saw when she came to meet Solomon.

## **I. The Wisdom of Jesus Is Greater Than the Wisdom of Solomon**

The very first thing she saw was the wisdom of Solomon. But the wisdom of Jesus is greater. Now, watch this—1 Kings 10:1: *"And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to prove him with hard questions."* She said, "I'll bring every conundrum, every enigma, every question, and every riddle. I'll find out just how intelligent he is." First Kings 10:2–4 says, *"And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart. And Solomon told her all her questions: there was not any thing hid from the king, which he told her not. And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom..."* and so forth (1 Kings 10:2–4). She saw his wisdom. Why, the Bible tells us, in 1 Kings 4:31, that Solomon *"was wiser than all men."*

He had incredible wisdom. To know how much wisdom Solomon had, all you have to do is read the Book of Proverbs. Proverbs is one of my favorite books in the Bible, which was written primarily by Solomon. Did you know it is said that Solomon had memorized 3,000 Proverbs? And, choir, he had memorized 1,500 songs. This man had an incredible mind.

For example, he knew all about creation. First Kings 4:33 says, *"And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of*

*the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes”* (1 Kings 4:33). I mean, here was a man who knew biology. He knew all of these things. He knew botany. But, oh, my dear friend, everything that he knew about creation, Jesus in His wisdom had created. John 1:3 says, *“All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.”* Solomon knew about all of the ways of the fish, that verse tells us. He knew about fishing. But the Lord Jesus on a certain day caused some fish to swim in a net. There were so many fish in that net that He almost had two boats. Why, Solomon knew all about hydrology and the wind cycles. But the Lord Jesus Christ spoke to the winds, calmed the storms, and made that raging sea like a moonlit pond on a millpond in a spring evening.

Listen. The Lord Jesus is so much greater than Solomon in wisdom. You know what Solomon said about all of his wisdom after a while? Solomon looked back on all that he knew, and he said, in Ecclesiastes 1:17, *“And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit.”* It’s all just splendid nothingness. Solomon said it could not satisfy. Solomon knew, dear friend, that you can have a full head and still have an empty heart. He said, *“It’s just vexation; it’s just vanity, all of this that I know,”* because, let me tell you something, friend. The man that really knows, knows that he doesn’t know. Did you know that? The man that really knows, knows that he doesn’t know! The more a man learns, the more he discovers what he doesn’t know.

Who was the most brilliant man of all time? Well, you’d say Einstein. In 1955, before he died, he said, *“I feel like a man chained. If I could only be free from the shackles of my intellectual smallness, then I could understand the universe in which I live.”* Mr. Einstein, the answer to the universe in which you live is the One who made it, the Lord Jesus Christ. And the Bible says the wisdom of God is in Christ (1 Corinthians 1:24). And the Bible says, in 1 Corinthians 1:30, *“But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom.”* And Ephesians 1:8 says, *“He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom.”*

Now we’ve got some learned people here today. We have some doctors, philosophers, and scientists. Thank God for your wisdom and knowledge. But I want to tell you that a greater than you is here! His name is Jesus! And if you know all about biology and the study of life, and you don’t know Jesus, the giver of life, you’re still ignorant. If you all know about botany and the study of flowers, and you don’t know Jesus, Sharon’s sweetest rose, my dear friend, you’re still ignorant. If you know all about geology and the ages of stones, and you don’t know Jesus, the Rock of Ages, my dear friend, I want to tell you, you still have so much to learn. Solomon knew all of that and he said, *“All of this is just vanity to me.”* There is One whose mind is greater than

all, and His name is Jesus. He says to you with the wisdom that really counts, *“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally”* (James 1:5).

## **II. The Works of Jesus Are Greater Than the Works of Solomon**

Oh, my dear friend, Jesus is greater than Solomon in wisdom. But I'll tell you something else she saw. Not only did she see the wisdom of Solomon; she saw the works of Solomon. She saw his workmanship. Continue to read. Look, if you will, in verse 4: *“And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built...”* (1 Kings 10:4). You see that in verse 4? He built a house. Now this speaks of his palace. It was an incredible building. If you want to read about that house, put this in your margin right by that verse: 1 Kings 7:2–12. Read about it, and it defies description. I want all you architects to read that. Solomon built a home. He prepared a house.

But I want to tell you, my dear Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, has prepared a better house. You read there in the Gospel of John, and Jesus said, *“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also”* (John 14:1–3)—*“In my Father's house.”*

Dear friend, there is glory and there is joy. Not only had Solomon built a house, but Solomon had also set a table. Look, if you will, in verse 5: *“And the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers...”* (1 Kings 10:5). Oh, she saw this! Not only did she see the palace that he lived in, but she saw him set a table. He set it so magnificent, so scrumptious, and so delectable. But Jesus said, *“A greater than Solomon is here”* (Matthew 12:42).

My dear friend, Solomon could set that table, but I tell you something Solomon couldn't do. Solomon couldn't feed 5,000 with two fish and five loaves. I'll tell you something else Solomon couldn't do. Solomon could not turn plain water into sparkling wine. And I'll tell you something else that he couldn't do. Even if he could have, dear friend, he could never have satisfied the hunger in this heart. Only Jesus could do that with the bread of life and the water of life. *“A greater than Solomon is here.”*

And not only, dear friend, did she see the palace that he built; not only did she see that table that he set; but she saw the temple that he had erected. Look, if you will again, in verse 5. Look at it! And the Bible says, *“He went up unto the house of the LORD”* (1 Kings 10:5).

Now Solomon built a temple that was beyond compare. Now, you think, you men—some of the men that worked on the building are here today, and thank you, gentlemen—but I want to tell you, when Solomon's temple was built, it took 183,600

workers. They labored for seven and a half years. King David had gathered gold, silver, brass, and precious stones. And God Himself was the architect. First Chronicles 28 and verse 12 says that God Himself gave the plans for that temple (1 Chronicles 28:12). The temple faced the east. It sat there on Mount Moriah. When the sun would come up over the Mount of Olives, the entire face of that temple was plated with gold. Josephus said it stood there on the Temple Mount; it stood there like a mountain of snow, that glorious and beautiful temple. Do you know, when they dedicated that temple, dear friend, they had a seven-day feast? Four thousand ushers served. There were 4,000 in the orchestra, and a great choir of Levites were singing. And the Bible says the glory of God filled the temple (2 Chronicles 7:1).

But are you listening to me? *“A greater than Solomon is here.”* The Bible says, *“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God...?”* (1 Corinthians 6:19). Solomon built a temple for the people, but Jesus has a people for His temple. Jesus lives in us. What Solomon built is gone. And this building, it’s only a matter of time, and it will be rubble. But I’ll tell you what Jesus Christ has done in me will be leaping and dancing and praising God for all eternity. We are the temple of God, the temple that Jesus has built. I’ll tell you, friend, *“a greater than Solomon is here.”* I thank God for it.

### **III. The Worship of Jesus Is Greater Than the Worship of Solomon**

I’ll tell you a third thing that she saw. Not only did she see the wisdom of Solomon; not only did she see the workmanship of Solomon; but she saw the worship of Solomon. Look, if you will, in the last part of 1 Kings 10:5. The Bible says she saw *“his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the LORD.”* Now the word *ascent* here may be translated as “burnt offering,” because, when Solomon went to worship God, he dared not come into the presence of God without an offering in his hand. Let me tell you the kind of an offering that he made when he dedicated the temple. It says, in 2 Chronicles 7:5, *“And king Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty and two thousand oxen,”*—think of it: 22,000 oxen! That would be like burning 22,000 Cadillacs today—*“and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep: so the king and all the people dedicated the house of God.”*

But, my dear friend, all of that blood on Jewish altars slain can never wash away sin. Listen to Hebrews 10:4: *“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.”* Then listen to Hebrews 10:12: *“But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.”* Solomon may have made a great sacrifice, but, my dear friend, he never made a sacrifice that would compare with that one great day on dark Calvary when the Lord Jesus laid out His precious blood for you and for me. And I tell you that, *“a greater than Solomon is here”* in worship.



Thank you, Lord Jesus, for what you've done.

*Not all the blood of beasts  
On Jewish altars slain  
Could give the guilty conscience peace  
Or wash away that stain.*

—ISAAC WATTS

But, thank God, the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us (1 John 1:7). Hallelujah! He cleanseth us from all sin, every stain, every blur, and every blemish. We are whiter than snow in the blood of Jesus.

#### **IV. The Wealth of Jesus Is Greater Than the Wealth of Solomon**

I'll tell you a fourth thing that she saw. Not only did she see his wisdom; not only did she see his work; not only did she see his worship; but I'll tell you what else she saw. She saw his wealth. Look, if you will, in verse 7—she said, "When I heard of all of this..."—but then, in verse 7, she says, "*Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard*" (1 Kings 10:7).

Now she saw his wealth and his prosperity. There was probably never ever a king as wealthy as King Solomon. Oh, King Tut, I've seen what King Tut did. But I want to tell you, dear friend, that old King Tut and what he did would shrivel in comparison to what Solomon did. And yet, Jesus, speaking of all of the wealth of Solomon said—listen—"a *greater than Solomon is here.*" And do you know why? Why, Solomon had gold and silver, but the Bible says, in Psalm 24, "*The earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof*" (Psalm 24:1). All of the cattle on a thousand hills, all the gold and silver, all the rubies, all the diamonds, and every star belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. Incredibly wealthy! Now 1 Kings 10:10 tells us that the Queen of Sheba just came and she began to unload gifts on Solomon. And she gave him silver, gold, and spices. She gave him this and that. Incredible gifts!

But let me tell you about the Lord Jesus Christ. Dear friend, while the Queen of Sheba gave gifts to Solomon, Jesus has people who give Him their lives. I mean, I have given my life to Jesus. I want to tell you, dear friend, that Jesus is more than all this world to me. I have given my life and my all to Jesus. I want to give more and more day by day to the Lord Jesus Christ. And I want to say with the hymnist,

*Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.*

—ISAAC WATTS

Jesus is worth it. When Solomon died, he didn't leave me anything. But I'm an heir of

God, and a joint heir with the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 8:17).

## **V. The Workers of Jesus Are Greater Than the Workers of Solomon**

I want to mention a fifth thing that the Queen of Sheba saw when she came. Not only did she see the wealth of Solomon, but she saw his workers. Look, if you will, in verse 8 of this chapter. She gets around and she sees everybody that day, and they look so happy. There are smiles on every face, and everybody is up. And this is what she says: *“Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom”* (1 Kings 10:8). “Why,” she said, “Solomon, these people that work for you, they’re so happy.” And that must have been true. How would you like to serve in the court of the wealthiest and the wisest king that ever lived?

But, my dear friend, *“a greater than Solomon is here.”* Because of the workers of the Lord Jesus Christ—the workers who built this building, the workers who win souls, the workers in the choir, the workers in the orchestra—not only are there people who would live for Jesus, but, dear friend, this building is for the people who would die for the Lord Jesus Christ. They have given Him all. And you talk about joy: the workers of Solomon may have found happiness, but Jesus gives *“joy unspeakable and full of glory”* (1 Peter 1:8). I thank God I know the Lord Jesus Christ! I thank God I’ve been saved! I thank God I can serve Him! I thank God that I have a purpose in life that is steadfast and sure! Thank you, Lord Jesus! Jesus’ workers are greater in number. There are millions around the world. Greater in joy. Greater in sacrifice. Thank God for it!

## **VI. The Worth of Jesus Is Greater Than the Worth of Solomon**

Now, let me just tell you the last thing that makes Jesus greater than Solomon. Not only are His workers greater, but, my dear friend, His worth is greater. His worthiness is greater. Look, if you will, in chapter 10, verse 9. The queen of Sheba looked and she saw everything. She says, “There’s only way to explain it: God is upon you.” And she said, *“Blessed be the LORD thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the LORD loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice”* (1 Kings 10:9). What a throne it was that he sat upon! You want to see a description of that throne? Just go on to verse 18. Look at it: *“Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with the best gold. The throne had six steps, and the top of the throne was round behind: and there were stays on either side on the place of the seat, and two lions stood beside the stays. And twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other upon the six steps: there was not the like made in any kingdom”* (1 Kings 10:18–20). Nobody had ever seen a throne like the throne that Solomon sat on.

My friend, one more time I want to tell you that Jesus is greater. If God said that Solomon was worthy to sit upon such a throne, have you thought about the throne that our Lord Jesus sits upon? My dear friend, Jesus is enthroned in the glory right now. Hebrews 1:8 speaks of the Lord Jesus, and it says, *“Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.”* Who is Jesus? He’s not another man, dear friend! He is God! He sits upon the throne of Godhood. But not only does He sit upon the throne of Godhood; He sits upon the throne of grace. Hebrews chapter 4 says, *“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy”* (Hebrews 4:16). Oh, thank God, the throne room is a throne of grace. And you’d better be grateful that it is. And, by the way, I’ve been in that throne room this morning. It’s wonderful to be in that throne room, because we come boldly right to the throne of grace. I could not walk up to Solomon’s throne, for one of those lions would get me. I want you to know that I have come into the throne room, because it’s a throne of grace with arms wide open. Not only a throne of Godhood, and a throne of grace; friend, it’s a throne of glory. Didn’t your heart thrill when the choir sang “The King Is Coming?”

Oh, listen! Take your Bibles and turn with me to Revelation 5. I want you to see what that throne is like. Look with me in verse 11: *“And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne...”*—now, friend, this is the throne that’s greater than Solomon’s throne—*“the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever”* (Revelation 5:11–13). Solomon had a great throne, but may I tell you that the throne of Jesus is greater. Amen! Hallelujah! *“A greater than Solomon is here.”*

## Conclusion

Listen to me. Not only is a greater than Solomon here; a greater than anybody is here! And not only is a greater than anybody here; a greater than everybody put together is here! His name is Jesus. There’s never been another like the Lord Jesus. None can compare with Him among the sons of men. Hallelujah! Praise God! What a Savior we have today! What a glorious Jesus we have to worship today!

*I’ll tell you this story and I’ll be finished. Dr. Lee, the former, great pastor of this church, said that near Camden, South Carolina, there was a fire in a schoolhouse.*

Seventy precious little children died in that fire. It just broke out and burned all over that schoolhouse. The parents and firemen gathered to try to put out the fire. But it was a raging inferno. There was one man who saw his son there in the flames. That little boy behind a barrier of flames saw his daddy's face. The daddy saw the boy. The boy stretched out his hand in those flames and said, "Daddy! Daddy! Get me out of here! Daddy! Daddy, can't you save me? Daddy!" The father started to go into the flames, but strong arms held him back. It was impossible. It was a raging inferno. He said, "Daddy, can't you save me? Daddy, can't you save me?" But they held him back. It was impossible. And he watched that little child wither like that flower would wither if you put an acetylene torch on it. That night when he tried to sleep, all he could see was the face of his son in those flames, saying, "Daddy, can't you save me?" All he could hear was the voice of that little boy, "Daddy, can't you save me?" And his Daddy had to say, "Son, Daddy can't save you!"

Now we live in a sin-cursed, hell-bent world. We live in a world that's in deep trouble. And our world reaches out its arms to science and says, "Science, can't you save me?" And if science would be honest, science would say, "I am getting you into deeper trouble, because the more learned we are, the deeper we sink, and we're afraid of our own inventions today." Science would say, "I can tell you how far it is to the sun, but I can't tell you how far God can remove our sins from us." We stretch out our hands to education, and we say, "Education, can't you save us?" And education would have to say, "I'm sorry. I can improve your mind, but I have no power to for your soul. I have no answer to the sin problem." We might look at sociology and culture. We say to sociology and culture, "Can't you save us? Can't you save us?" And sociology and culture could say, "All I can do is to try to make this world a better place to go to hell from. That's all I can do."

Oh, my dear friend, you can look every place you want to look, but I'm going to tell you something, and you listen to this preacher this morning. There's only One who can save us. And His name is Jesus. Say His name with me: Jesus! Say it again. Jesus! Say it again. Jesus! Friend, as long as I live, as long as God gives me a breath, as long as there's a pulpit there, as long as this house is here, we're going to preach Jesus! Jesus! "A *greater than Solomon is here.*" He's what it's all about. He's what it's for. And, friend, whatever else you may know, if you don't know Jesus, you've missed it all. Jesus saves! Jesus saves! We welcome you, Jesus, and "a *greater than Solomon is here.*"

# Our Great Savior

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: October 5, 1997**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 12:42**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Jesus Is Greater Than Solomon in Wisdom
- II. Jesus Is Greater in Works Than Solomon
  - A. Solomon Built a House, and Jesus Is Building a House for Us
  - B. Solomon Set a Table, and Jesus Is the Bread of Life
  - C. Solomon Built a Temple, and Jesus Is Building a Temple
- III. Jesus Is Greater in Workers Than Solomon
- IV. Jesus Is Greater in Wealth Than Solomon
- V. Jesus Is Greater in Worth Than Solomon
- VI. Jesus Is Greater in Worship
- VII. Jesus Is Greater in Wonder

Conclusion

## Introduction

**W**ould you turn to Matthew chapter 12, and we're going to look in just a moment at verse 42. And while you're turning, let me tell you this. Criticism is one of the easiest things there is to do. It doesn't take much size to criticize. But if you were to criticize the Lord Jesus, how pitiful would be your criticism!

Now the text that I'm about to read to you was a text that was given to the Pharisees, who were masters of criticism. They criticized Jesus. They castigated Jesus. They interrogated Jesus. But they were so blind. They were oblivious to the obvious. There was the Lord Jesus right in their midst, the King of kings, the Lord of lords. Never another like Jesus, amen? But notice what He had to say to these—Matthew chapter 12 and verse 42. He said to them, to these Pharisees, *"The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here"* (Matthew 12:42).

Now these Pharisees were taken with bigness. They were taken with religion, pomp, circumstance, glory, and power. And therefore they had read about King Solomon in all of his glory, and they were impressed by that. But the Lord Jesus said, "Now, wait a minute." The queen of the south—that is, the Queen of Sheba—had come from the

uttermost parts of the ends of the earth. Most likely, that was Ethiopia. And she made a long visit, a trek, dangerous, arduous, to see Solomon in all of his glory. And Jesus said, “There’s one much greater than Solomon that is right here with you.” And in their blindness and in their arrogance they missed Him. I wonder what they thought when Jesus said to them, when this peasant prophet said to them, “a greater than Solomon is right here with you.”

The past pastor of this church, Dr. Lee, imagines what they might have said. They thought, “Well, Solomon was a king’s son. You are a carpenter’s son. Solomon was born in a palace. You were born in a stable. Solomon was born in beautiful Jerusalem. You were born in little Bethlehem. Solomon had many servants. You don’t have any servants. Solomon wore kingly robes. You’re dressed in a peasant’s garb. Solomon drank from vessels of gold. You had to ask a fallen woman, a Samaritan harlot, for a drink of water. Solomon was rich. You’re poor. Solomon had armies. And you just have a few followers. Solomon built great cities. You’re a carpenter’s son. You build plowshares and chairs. Solomon lived in a palace. You’re homeless. Solomon had 1,400 chariots. You have to walk wherever you go. Solomon ate with the Queen of Sheba. You eat with publicans and sinners. How can you say that you’re greater than Solomon?”

Today, I want to mention seven ways that Jesus was greater than Solomon. And I hope that God the Holy Spirit will burn this into your heart and etch it upon your consciousness, and you’ll come away saying, “Hallelujah, what a Savior! Our great Savior!”

Now you find the story of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba back in the Old Testament in 1 Kings chapter 10. So I’d like for you to go backward in your Bible, if you will, to 1 Kings chapter 10, and lay your Bible open there, and continue to look with me as we’re going to find these seven ways that the Lord Jesus, our great Savior, is greater than Solomon.

## **I. Jesus Is Greater Than Solomon in Wisdom**

Number one: Jesus is greater in wisdom. Now, let’s think a little bit about the wisdom of Solomon. In 1 Kings chapter 10, the first three verses, we learn about the wisdom of Solomon. And here’s what it says: *“And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to prove him with hard questions. And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart. And Solomon told her all her questions: there was not any thing hid from the king, which he told her not”* (1 Kings

10:1–3). That is, she could not stump him. She could not ask him a question that he could not answer. You know why? God had given to Solomon the supernatural gift of wisdom. And chapter 10, verse 24, says, *“And all the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart”* (1 Kings 10:24). And Solomon was a wise man.

For example, Solomon wrote the Book of Proverbs. I read regularly from the Book of Proverbs. What an incredible compendium of wisdom that is! And that was written primarily by Solomon. And as you read the Book of Proverbs, you realize that Solomon knew theology. Solomon knew philosophy. Solomon knew biology. Solomon knew sociology. What an incredible gathering of wisdom that Solomon wrote in the Book of Proverbs! And, by the way, it is said in the Bible that he knew 3,000 proverbs and 1, 500 psalms by memory, by heart. What a prodigious mind he had! And what great wisdom he had! He knew all about creation.

For example, he studied all of the trees of the field and the creatures. And the Bible says, in 1 Kings chapter 4 and verse 33, *“And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes”* (1 Kings 4:33). This man had incredible wisdom. He knew about fish.

But I want to tell you, Jesus is greater than wisdom. Jesus made the fish that Solomon knew about, isn't that right? The Bible says, in John chapter 1 and verse 3, *“All things were made by him;”—that is, by Jesus—“and without him was not any thing made that was made”* (John 1:3). Solomon may have studied fish, but Jesus loaded a fisherman's net with fish so much that it sank two boats. Solomon knew about all of the winds and the circulation of the winds, but the Lord Jesus, greater than Solomon, stilled the winds and made the waves lay down at His feet like whipped puppies. Solomon might have known about navigation—and indeed he did, because he sent out his ships—but the Lord Jesus was the One who walked on water. *“A greater than Solomon is here.”*

Now, here's the interesting thing. All of Solomon's wisdom, all of his knowledge—listen—it didn't satisfy him. Do you know what he wrote in Ecclesiastes chapter 1 and verse 17? He said, *“I gave my heart to know wisdom, and...I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit”* (Ecclesiastes 1:17). Do you know what? Wisdom is not the answer—this world's wisdom. The more a man knows, the more he knows that he does not know, isn't that true?

And you take a man like Einstein. Now Einstein died in 1955, but here's what Einstein said. He said, *“I feel like a man chained. If I could only be freed from the shackles of my intellectual smallness, then I could understand the universe in which I*

live.” He said, “I feel bound. Oh,” he said, “if I could only understand.” Folks, that was Einstein who said that.

Solomon said, “All of my wisdom, all of my learning, it was vexation of spirit.” But you see, Jesus has greater wisdom. You can know facts. You can have a full head and an empty heart. But, oh, Jesus gives wisdom that satisfies the wellsprings, wisdom that a little child can know. The Bible says, in 1 Corinthians 1, verse 30, that Jesus Christ is “*made unto us wisdom*” (1 Corinthians 1:30). Ephesians 1, verse 8, says, “*Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom*” (Ephesians 1:8).

Folks, I want to tell those of you in the university, I want to tell our college students, study all you want, learn as much as you want, but that wisdom will never satisfy the longing of your heart. It didn’t satisfy Solomon, and it will not satisfy you. And how sad for you to study biology and the study of life, and not know Jesus, who is the life! How sad to study geology and the ages of the rocks, and not know Jesus, the rock of ages! How sad for you, my precious friend, to study philosophy, and not know the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the way and the truth (John 14:6). No, Jesus—Jesus—is greater than Solomon in wisdom.

## **II. Jesus Is Greater in Works Than Solomon**

Here’s a second way that Jesus is greater than Solomon: not only greater than Solomon in wisdom, but greater than Solomon in works. Now Solomon was a man who achieved a lot of wonderful things.

### **A. Solomon Built a House, and Jesus Is Building a House for Us**

For example, Solomon built a house. You’re in 1 Kings chapter 10. Look in verse 4. And it says, “*And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon’s wisdom, and the house that he built*” (1 Kings 10:4). Now Solomon built for himself a house. It took him thirteen years to complete it. It defies description. I don’t have time to try to describe it to you this morning, but just put in your margin 1 Kings chapter 7, and you can read about the house that Solomon built for himself. And, ladies, maybe your husband will build one like that for you.

But I want to say that, while Solomon built a great house, Jesus has built a greater one. Do you know what the Bible says in John chapter 14, verse 2? “*In my Father’s house are many mansions,*” and “*I go and prepare a place for you*” (John 14:2). If you think that little shack that Solomon lived in was something, you wait till you see what God has prepared for us—the Lord Jesus Christ. He has prepared a place for us. What a house our Lord is building!



## **B. Solomon Set a Table, and Jesus Is the Bread of Life**

And you know also, not only did Solomon build a house, but Solomon set a table. Look in chapter 10, verse 5: *“And the meat”—that is, the food—“of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent,”* and so forth (1 Kings 10:5). She saw the gracious, sumptuous feast that old King Solomon had set. It was delicacy beyond compare.

But I want to tell you, Jesus is greater. Solomon could set a feast, but Solomon couldn't take a little boy's lunch—five loaves and a few fishes—and feed 5,000. He couldn't do that. I'll tell you what else Solomon couldn't do. Solomon could not change pure water into sparkling wine. And even if Solomon could, Solomon could not serve the bread of life, the water of life, that will satisfy the deepest longing of your heart.

Come up here. Let me tell you something. I don't care how much you know, and I care not how much you acquire: if you don't know Jesus and have Jesus, you are ignorant and poor. Jesus is greater than Solomon. She saw the table that Solomon set, but God brought me here to tell you, my children, “Come and dine! Come and feed on the Lord Jesus, who is the bread of life; the Lord Jesus, who is the water of life.” He and He alone can satisfy the deep longing of your heart. Solomon ate, and he was hungry again. Jesus is the bread of life. He is the water of life.

## **C. Solomon Built a Temple, and Jesus Is Building a Temple**

Think of the temple that Solomon built. We're talking about his works. In 1 Kings 10, verse 5, the Bible says she also saw *“his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the LORD”* (1 Kings 10:5). What *“house of the LORD”* is he talking about? That incredible temple that Solomon built. Historians tell us it was probably the most magnificent building the world has ever seen, or ever will see. It took 183,600 workers to build that temple. They worked on it, labored for seven and a half years. Solomon's father, David, had been gathering gold and silver and precious stones to build that temple. God Almighty was the architect of that temple. It faced east. The sun rose on the covering of that temple, gold-plated. Josephus said it stood there on the mountain like a mountain of snow.

But I want to tell you, Jesus has built a greater temple. Do you want to know where His temple is? Not this building that we worship in. You—you—are the temple that Jesus has built. First Corinthians chapter 6, verse 19, says, *“What? know ye not that [you] are the temple of [God]?”* (1 Corinthians 6:19). You are His temple!

Where is the temple that Solomon built? It is gone! You can't find a shred of it. The temple that Jesus has built will live forever. I mean, this temple, inhabited by the Holy Ghost, will live forever. We are temples of God. We have to understand that's what

salvation is all about. Salvation *is not primarily getting* man *out of* earth *into* heaven; *it is getting* God *out of heaven into* man. And we are now temples of Almighty God.

### **III. Jesus Is Greater in Workers Than Solomon**

Jesus is greater than Solomon in wisdom. Jesus is greater than Solomon in works. I'll tell you a third way that Jesus is greater than Solomon: in workers, those who serve Him who do those works. Look, if you will, in 1 Kings now, chapter 10 and verse 8. The Queen of Sheba is there, and she sees the retinue of servants that Solomon has. She sees those coming and going, and she notices something about their countenance. They all seem to be smiling. And here's what she said: *"Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom"* (1 Kings 10:8). What she said is, "What a wonderful place to work! And what a wonderful man to work for!" She said, "I believe these must be the happiest people I've ever seen." Can you imagine serving in the court of such a wise and wealthy king as Solomon?

I want to tell you something, friend. Listen to me. A greater than Solomon is here, and His servants are more blessed than Solomon's servants ever could be blessed. Is that not true? Listen. The servants of Jesus have far more happiness, and far more than happiness, than Solomon's servants ever had. Not only do we have happiness; we have joy. And Jesus says to us, in John chapter 15 and verse 11, *"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full"* (John 15:11). A child of God walking by the Spirit has continual, conspicuous, and contagious joy. And we are to serve the Lord with gladness. Now Solomon is gone. His palace is gone. His sumptuous table is gone and all of those who served him. So what?

But, friend, you can't give a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple and lose your reward (Matthew 10:42). These servants who are working this morning in the nursery, changing diapers and wiping little noses, the Lord makes a note of all of that. Happy are His servants. The service of Jesus is wonderful. Jesus' servants are greater in joy. I'll tell you what else they're greater in. They're greater in dedication. Those of you who are servants of the Lord Jesus know what I'm talking about. In this world today there are literally millions and millions of people who not only serve Jesus, but if necessary would die for the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is greater in wisdom. Jesus is greater in works. Jesus is greater in workers. If I had a thousand lives, I'd want to give every one to Jesus, serving the Lord Jesus. Happy are His servants.

### **IV. Jesus Is Greater in Wealth Than Solomon**

I'll tell you another way that Jesus is greater than Solomon. Jesus is greater than Solomon in wealth. Now, think about the wealth that old Solomon had. First Kings

chapter 10, beginning in verse 14—listen to it: “*Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred threescore and six talents of gold, beside that he had of the merchantmen, and of the traffick of the spice merchants, and of all the kings of Arabia, and of all the governors of the country. And king Solomon made two hundred targets of beaten gold: six hundred shekels of gold went to one target. And he made three hundred shields of beaten gold; three pound of gold went to one shield: and the king put them in the house of the forest of Lebanon. Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with the best gold*” (1 Kings 10:14–18). You’re catching the idea. I don’t have time to read all of this. Fast-forward down to verse 23. Here’s what it says: “*So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom*” (1 Kings 10:23). Mr. Gates, Aristotle Onassis, Donald Trump, they were paupers compared to Solomon—compared to Solomon. Probably no individual who has ever lived, or ever will live, had the wealth that Solomon had. The Queen of Sheba, who herself knew wealth, when she came and saw the wealth of Solomon, she said, “The breath has gone out of me.” She said, “The half has never yet been told.”

Wealthy, yes; but come up here and let me tell you something. Jesus is greater in wealth. How wealthy is Jesus? Psalm 24, verse 1: “*The earth is the LORD’S...*”—that’s pretty wealthy—“*The earth is the LORD’S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein*” (Psalm 24:1). In another place the Bible tells us that the cattle on a thousand hills belong to Jesus (Psalm 50:10). All of the minerals in this earth belong to Jesus. Every star is His. Friend, it was all made by Him, and for Him, and it’s all coming back to Him. People ask, “What is this world coming to?” Have you ever said that? “What is the world coming to?” It’s coming to Jesus! It is coming to Jesus! And it belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. Solomon was wealthy, but he left me nothing.

I am an heir of God and a joint heir with Jesus Christ (Romans 8:17). You know what that means to be a joint heir? The lawyers here will tell you what a joint heir is, friend. That’s *share and share alike*. I mean, that is *share and share alike*. We enter in to His riches. What a blessing!

I was talking this week with Gene McCombs, and we discussed something that happened to him. He’s a member of our church. He’s a dear man of God. Many of you have heard him preach. Gene was getting off of an airplane one day, and he reached up in the rack over above where they put the luggage up there, and his hand fell on a stack of paper. Everybody else had gotten off the plane. He reached and pulled it down. It was a stack of 100-dollar bills *that* high. So he put his hand up there again: another stack of bills; over 20,000 dollars in cold cash—no identification, just a rubber band; two stacks of 100-dollar bills. He was the last one off the plane. He’s got this money. He goes to the pilot, and he says to the pilot, “I have found a substantial amount of money

on this airplane. What should I do?" The pilot directs him to the proper office. He's there in the office filling out the forms, and a man comes into the office, straggly, unkempt, rude, looking for the money. He describes the money. It's obviously his. Gene, being an honest man, said, "Well, give it to him." That man took that more than 20,000 dollars, turned and walked out without even saying *thank you*.

Gene said that he went and got in a cab, and the devil got in the cab with him, and the devil said, "You, sir, are a fool. Don't you know, in the first place, that's probably drug money? That man didn't even say *thank you*. Think of all you could do with that money for good. You're a fool." And Gene said, "I got to thinking about real wealth, real riches, who Jesus is, and how He has saved me, and how He keeps me, and what I'm looking forward to, and," he said, "I spoke out loud to the devil, he was so real. I said to the devil, 'But look what I've got!'" And the cabbie heard him say that. The cabbie thought he had a gun, turned around and said, "What did you say?" "Oh," he said, "Pardon me. I was just talking to the devil." The cab driver never took his eye off the rearview mirror from that time on.

Friend, I want to tell you, it's about time we talked to that dirty devil and said, "Look what I've got!" Amen? I mean, this world has so much to offer, but nothing compared to Jesus. Oh, the wealth of our great King who owns it all! And He didn't make it for the devil's crowd. He made it for His children. Jesus is greater in wealth than Solomon.

## **V. Jesus Is Greater in Worth Than Solomon**

I want to mention the fifth way He's greater than Solomon. Jesus is greater in worth. I didn't say wealth; I said worth. Wealth is what a man has. Worth is what a man is. The Queen of Sheba came. She looked at Solomon and saw the blessings of God, and realized he was a worthy man. First Kings chapter 10, verse 9—Here's what the Queen of Sheba said when she saw how God had blessed Solomon. She said, "*Blessed be the LORD thy God, which delighteth in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the LORD loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice*" (1 Kings 10:9). What she's saying is, "Solomon, God has crowned you. God has blessed you. God has seen in you worth. And therefore," according to verse 18, "*the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with the best gold*" (1 Kings 10:18). And he sits up on that throne with twelve lions out in front of that throne. There were steps going up to that throne. Can you just imagine what that throne must have been like? When the Queen of Sheba saw it, the Bible says, the breath went out of her (1 Kings 10:5).

But I want to tell you, Jesus is greater in worth. Let me tell you about another throne. Revelation chapter 5—I love this passage—Revelation chapter 5, verses 11 through 13. The Apostle John is transported, he's taken up into heaven, and this is what he saw. He

says, *“And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever”* (Revelation 5:11–13)—amen?

Oh, friend, what a great Savior, greater in worth than Solomon! Solomon’s throne is gone. There’s a throne established in the heavens. John saw it. It was occupied. There is One sitting upon it. We sang it: “Our God Reigns!” And the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ (Revelation 11:15). Friend, I’m glad that God honored Solomon—and I pay respect to him—but I would never worship him. I worship Jesus—I worship Jesus.

One king came into a room, and a bunch of diplomats and dignitaries were there. And when the king walked in, they all stood up. He, in feigned modesty, said, “Sirs, be seated. After all, I’m not the Lord.” One said to him, “Sir, I mean you no disrespect. I stand to give you honor. But if you were the Lord, I would fall on my face—I would fall on my face.”

Have you been on your face before Him? Do you join that group in Revelation? Do you have someone, somebody, that you love, a greater than Solomon, greater in worth, somebody that you say “is worth all that I have and am; I give Him honor and glory and power and majesty forever”?

## **VI. Jesus Is Greater in Worship**

I’ll tell you another way that Jesus is greater than Solomon. He’s greater in worship. Now in chapter 10, verse 5, the Bible says that the Queen of Sheba, as she’s there watching all of this, she sees the ascent by which he went up to the temple (1 Kings 10:5). I’ve studied this word *ascent*, and what it literally means. The word *ascent* may be translated, “burnt offering.” One translation that I studied this week said, “holocaust.” And what it means is this: that she saw Solomon as he brought his offerings in worship to the Lord. When Solomon dedicated that temple, the Bible describes it, in 2 Chronicles chapter 7 and verse 5: *“And king Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty and two thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep”* (2 Chronicles 7:5).

This is one offering when he dedicated the temple. All of those offerings could not atone for one sin—all of them. All they did was to typify and illustrate the offering that would be made. Hebrews chapter 10 and verse 4 says, *“For it is not possible that the*

*blood of bulls and goats can take away sin*” (Hebrews 10:4). But Hebrews chapter 10, verse 12, speaks of our great Savior, and it says, *“But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God”* (Hebrews 10:12). Friend, He is our great Savior. He’s greater in worship. Solomon, in worship, offered the blood of bulls and of goats. The Lord Jesus offered up Himself.

I mentioned Dr. Lee a while back. He told a story. It happened in South Carolina. There was a fire in a schoolhouse. By the time the people got there, seventy children had been trapped in those flames—a fiery inferno. There was no way to get in to rescue those children. They stood there and watched the schoolhouse burn. One man who was in the crowd saw the face of his little boy in the crowd. And the little boy saw his father’s face. And the little boy cried out to his father, “Father, can’t you save me?” And the father lunged, but strong men held him back. There was no way. The father would perish also. And the father had to stand there and watch his little son wither like a flower. And over and over again, the little boy was crying out, “Daddy, can’t you save me? Daddy, can’t you save me?” Dr. Lee said, “That father went home and tried to sleep, but he saw the face of that little boy in the flames. He heard the voice of that little boy over and over again: ‘Daddy, can’t you save me? Daddy, can’t you save me?’” The man lived for only two years after that. He could never get it out of his heart and out of his mind.

Our old, sin-sick world looks to science and says, “Science, can’t you save me?” And science says, “I can tell you how far it is from the earth to the sun, but I cannot tell you how far God can remove sin from the human heart.” The world looks at education, and says, “Education, can’t you save me?” And education says, “I can talk to you about facts, but I cannot impart saving truth to you.” The world looks at government, and the world says, “Government, can’t you save me?” And government, if it would be honest, would have to say, “No, we can regulate things and run things, but government has no power to deal with sin. Government has no power to make people good.” “Sociology, can’t you save me?” Sociology would have to say, “All I can do, and all culture can do, is to make the world a better place to go to hell from. I cannot save you.” Listen to me. Jesus is great, because He is the only Savior of the world. And I ask, “Jesus, Jesus, can’t you save me?” And Jesus says, “Yes, I can, and I will.”

*Sing above the battle strife: Jesus saves! Jesus saves!  
By His death and endless life Jesus saves! Jesus saves!*

—PRISCILLA J. OWENS

He’s greater than Solomon in worship.

## VII. Jesus Is Greater in Wonder

Final thing: Jesus is greater than Solomon in wonder. When the Queen of Sheba saw everything that Solomon had done, she was filled with awe, filled with amazement. She said, in chapter 10 of 1 Kings, verse 7, “the half has never yet been told” (1 Kings 10:7). But I want to say, as wonderful as Solomon was, Jesus is more wonderful—our great Savior. I feel tongue-tied. I cannot articulate, my emotions cannot describe, my brain cannot comprehend, the wonders that belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, King of kings, Lord of lords. And when you see Him in glory, you’ll say, “The pastor preached about this, but he didn’t tell us half of it—he didn’t tell us half of it.” Why? Because I can’t—because I can’t.

Years and years ago, I heard a story of a little girl who was blind. A doctor was able to perform a very delicate operation, hoping to restore the sight to that little girl. The operation took place. The time for healing took place, and then the time when they were going to take off the bandages. Can you imagine what a moment that must have been? So there they are in the doctor’s office. He begins to unwrap that gauze from around her precious little head, her beautiful little face. The nurses are there looking. Then he takes those gauze pads from off of her eyes and says, “Now, keep your eyes closed until I tell you to open them, and open very slowly.” And already the light is beginning to come in. She opens her eyes and focuses, and the first thing she saw was the face of that doctor. The next thing she saw was the face of her mother. The next thing she saw were her mother’s tears. And she could see! She saw that doctor’s office. She jumped up, wanting to see everything that she’d only touched. She went to the window and opened the window. And then she saw not the grass; she saw the green grass. Not the sky; she saw the blue sky. She saw God’s wonderful world. Her mother was dancing in ecstasy. She came back to her mother and said, “Mother, why didn’t you tell me it was so beautiful?” And the mother said, “Darling, I tried to tell you, but you had to see it for yourself.”

Friend, I want to tell you that I’m trying to tell you, “But wait till we get to heaven”—“wait till we get to heaven.” Wait till by His grace we look upon His face. When you see Jesus, you will say, “Yes, it is worth it all!” He is greater in wonder. The breath went out of the Queen of Sheba when she saw Solomon and all of his glory. But one day I’m going to see Jesus in all of His glory. Isn’t that wonderful?

## Conclusion

Now, folks, here’s what it’s all about. You listen to me today. Listen. Jesus is greater than Solomon. And He’s greater than everybody else. And He’s greater than everybody else put together. There’s only one dear, wonderful, glorious Savior. And did you know

what? He wants to save you today. And He will save you, I promise you, on the authority of the Word of God, if you'll trust Him.



# Our Great Savior

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: November 21, 1999**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 12:42**

*“The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.”*

MATTHEW 12:42

## Outline

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  - C. In the Temple That He Erected
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## Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn to Matthew chapter 12, and I'm going to read one verse; but I want to give you the background of this verse. Israel had many kings. Never did they have a king like Solomon. Solomon was opulent in wealth, great in wisdom, glorious in his pomp and circumstance. And when people wanted to compare greatness, they always thought of Solomon in all of his glory. Now, Jesus is standing in the midst of the Pharisees, and the Pharisees examine Jesus; they criticize Jesus. They interrogated Jesus. They castigated Jesus. They despised Jesus. They looked down upon the Lord Jesus Christ. But oh, how they honored Solomon!

Now, that's the background for the verse of Scripture. And this is what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 12 and verse 42: *“The queen of the south shall rise up in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.”* (Matthew 12:42) Now, Jesus was referring to Himself, and Jesus was there in their

midst; but because of their blindness and because of their arrogance, they missed Him.

Now, the Queen of Sheba came on a dangerous and difficult journey. She came from afar, probably Ethiopia, and she came with her entourage and with her royal trappings. She came to sit at the feet of Solomon and listen to his wisdom. And yet, Jesus said, “I want to tell you something: a greater than Solomon is here.”

The former pastor of this church, Dr. Lee, says, “I wonder what they thought when He said to them, ‘A greater than Solomon is here,’ and they realized that Jesus was speaking of Himself. They must have thought, ‘What are you talking about? Solomon was a king’s son; you’re nothing but a carpenter’s son. Solomon was born in a palace; you were born in a stable. Solomon was born in Jerusalem, the Holy City; you were born in little Bethlehem. Solomon was surrounded by servants; you don’t have any servants. Solomon wore his kingly robes; you’re dressed in a peasant’s garb and sandaled feet. Solomon drank from golden vessels; you had to ask a Samaritan harlot for a drink of water from an old pail. Solomon had his armies; you’re greater than Solomon? You’ve got just a few followers. Solomon built great cities; you’re a carpenter. All you build is plows and tables. Solomon had 1,400 chariots, stables full of horses; you have to walk everywhere that you go. Solomon built mansions to live in; you’re homeless—you don’t even have a place to lay your head. Solomon was rich; you’re a pauper. Solomon ate with the Queen of Sheba; you eat with publicans and sinners. And you say that you are greater than Solomon?”

I want to mention today seven ways that Jesus is greater than Solomon. That’s the reason I’ve entitled the message “Our Great Savior.”

## **I. Jesus Is Greater in Wisdom Than Solomon**

Number one: Jesus is greater in wisdom. Go back in your Bibles now and turn to 1 Kings chapter 10. Just go left and turn to 1 Kings chapter 10. You can find it, if you will, because you will get more out of the message if you trace the Scriptures with me—1 Kings chapter 10, and read in verses 1 through 4. We’re going to talk about the wisdom of Solomon and then the wisdom of Jesus. Now, here’s what Jesus was talking about in 1 Kings chapter 10: *“And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to prove him with hard questions”*—she said, “Well, if he’s so wise, I’ll check him out. I’ll ask him some hard questions”—*“And she came to Jerusalem”*—now, this is a very famous queen—*“and she came...with a very great train, with camels that bear spices, and very much gold, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was [within] her heart”*—she just unburdened herself to him and said, “If you’ve got all this wisdom, then I want to know.” Now, notice verse 3—*“And Solomon told her all her questions”*—that is, she did not pose one question to Solomon that he could not answer—*“there was*

*not any thing hid from the king, which he told her not.*” (1 Kings 10:1–3) And then skip on down to chapter 10 and verse 24: *“And all the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart.”* (1 Kings 10:24)

Solomon had incredible wisdom. Solomon wrote most of the book of Proverbs. When my grandchildren are at home with me, when they are spending the night or have breakfast, we always open the book of Proverbs and study the book of Proverbs because of the wisdom that is in the book of Proverbs. And when you read the book of Proverbs, you understand how much wisdom Solomon had. Solomon knew all about theology. Solomon knew all about biology. Solomon knew all about psychology. And he had such a prodigious mind. He knew three thousand proverbs and 1,500 psalms by heart, by memory. This is the mind that this man had. Solomon knew all about God’s work in creation. Look in chapter 4, verse 33, speaking of Solomon: *“And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and fishes.”* (1 Kings 4:33) He knew botany. He knew zoology. He knew ichthyology. He knew all of these things.

But Jesus had greater wisdom than Solomon. Listen, folks, Solomon knew fishing and about fish, but Jesus, with a miracle, filled a net with fish that sank two boats. Jesus could guide the fish through the water to a particular hook, and Jesus saw to it that the fish had a coin in his mouth. Solomon knew about the winds, but Jesus had the power to speak to the winds and, on a stormy night, turned the Sea of Galilee as quiet as a millpond on a moonlit night. Solomon knew about navigation, and he had his ships; but Jesus’ wisdom is so much greater. Jesus literally walked on the water. And Solomon’s wisdom did not satisfy him. Over in the book of Ecclesiastes, after Solomon talked about all of the wisdom that he had, he said it was all vanity. Why is that? Because the more any earthly man knows, the more he knows he does not know.

We think of Einstein as being brilliant. Einstein died in 1955, and here’s what Einstein said. Now, this is Einstein: “I feel like a man chained. If I can only be freed from the shackles of my intellectual smallness”—that’s Einstein; he’s talking about his intellectual smallness—“then I could understand the universe in which I live.” But even Einstein, in all of his wisdom, could not begin to compare to the wisdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, a person can have a full head and still have an empty heart. But Jesus alone has the wisdom that satisfies, and it’s the wisdom that little children can understand.

I love to go through the halls of this church and meet our bright-eyed little children. And the Bible says that God *“[has hidden] these things from the wise and [the] prudent, and [has] revealed them unto babes.”* (Matthew 11:25; Luke 10:21) First Corinthians chapter 1, verse 30, speaks of Jesus Christ, who is our wisdom, and says, *“But of him*

*are ye in Christ Jesus, who...is made unto us wisdom.*" (1 Corinthians 1:30) Ephesians 1:8: *"He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence."* (Ephesians 1:8)

I'm so grateful to know the Lord Jesus Christ and the wisdom that Jesus gives. I've had an education, I've been to college, and I've been to seminary, and I don't look down upon educators; I thank God for them. But I want to tell you, I'd rather be in heaven singing "Jesus Loves Me" than be in hell spouting philosophy. I really would. How sad if someone knows biology and the study of life but doesn't know Jesus, the Giver of life! How sad if somebody knows geology and the ages of rocks and doesn't know Jesus, the Rock of Ages! How sad if someone knows astronomy and how the heavens go and doesn't know Jesus and how to go to heaven! You see, Jesus is greater than Solomon in this wisdom.

Sometime ago I was in Moscow, Russia, and I was speaking in a great hall there, and the hall was filled with some of the higher-ups of Russian society. And when I'd finished speaking about the Lord Jesus, I had some people who came to see me. The first man who lined up and queued up to see me was a space scientist. He worked for the space administration and industry in Russia. And I still have his card with the rocket on it, and so forth. And he said, "I want to ask you a question." He said, "You know, we've been an atheistic country. But," he said, "I've come to see, and many of my colleagues have come to see, that the heavens run with such precision that there must be some power behind that that regulates it all. Would you agree?" I said, "Oh yes, I would agree, sir. And that power behind this universe, that wisdom, that mind, is a person called Jesus, God in human flesh." I gave that space scientist a big Bible like that. He said, "Can I have another one for my friends?" I said, "Yes, sir." And I gave him another Bible. And I can still see him walking off, that scientist hugging those Bibles to him.

The next man I spoke with said, "Sir, I am a philosopher. I belong to the philosophical society of Moscow. Would you come and lecture to us?" I said, "No. My schedule won't allow it." And I was glad. I said, "My schedule won't allow it." But he said, "Well," he said, "would you answer a philosophical question for me?" He said, "We've been studying in philosophy, and it seems like there is a higher ecology and a lower ecology, that there is something good that is working and there is something bad that is working, and these seem to be in conflict with one another. Would you agree with that?" I said, "Oh yes." I said, "That higher ecology is the kingdom of our God, and that lower ecology is the kingdom of Satan. But," I said, "the Son of God is Jesus Christ, who came to earth, and He has died on the cross to redeem us, and ascended to high hills of glory, and sent His Holy Spirit to live in us. And because He lives in us, *'greater is [he that's] in [us], than he [that's] in the world.'*" (1 John 4:4) Jesus is greater than Satan." He said, "Let me get that down right." Listen, it's like talking to a child because they've

come from absolute blank so far as knowledge. And he wrote this down. I said, “Let me give you a Bible that tells all about it.” He went off hugging his Bible.

The next person—and it sounds like almost a set-up—but the next person said, “I am a lawyer. I’m a lawyer for the department store here across from Red Square.” And this was a female lawyer, and she said, “Can you tell me about this person named Jesus?” There was the scientist. There was the philosopher. There was the lawyer. And I’m telling you, dear friends, that Jesus Christ is greater than Solomon. He is the only one that has an answer for the space scientist. He’s the only one that has the answer to a philosopher. He’s the only one that has the answer for a lawyer. He’s the only one that has the answer for anybody. Solomon doesn’t have the answer. Jesus has the answer. He is greater. Jesus is greater in wisdom.

## **II. Jesus Is Greater in Works Than Solomon**

But secondly, not only is Jesus greater in wisdom; Jesus is greater in works. When the Queen of Sheba came, she thought she had seen some big things. She thought she’d some impressive things. But notice in chapter 10—1 Kings chapter 10, verse 4: *“And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon’s wisdom, and the house that he had built...”* (1 Kings 10:4)

### **A. In the House That He Built**

Now, I just want to pause right there and say that Solomon built for himself a house, and it took him thirteen years to complete the house that he had built. And if you want to read about it, you can go back to 1 Kings chapter 7. Time will not allow us to describe the mansion that he built for himself. But Jesus said, “Look, a greater than Solomon is here.” (Matthew 12:42; Luke 11:31) Not only is Jesus greater than Solomon in wisdom, but in works. You see, Jesus is building a house also. John chapter 14, verses 1 through 3: Jesus said, *“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions”—*that is, many houses—*“if it were not so, I would have told you. I go and prepare a place for you.”* (John 14:1–2) Now, think of the mansion that Jesus Christ is building. And I’m going to tell you something, folks—and this is not exaggeration: the mansion that Jesus Christ is building for you is going to make Solomon’s house look like a tarpaper shack. That is true—that is true.

### **B. In the Table That He Set**

And think, not only of the house that Solomon built; think of the table that Solomon set. How would you like to feast with Solomon? First Kings chapter 10 and verse 5: *“And the meat of his table”—*she saw this—*“and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his...”* (1 Kings 10:5) Well, let’s just stop there. She went in to a royal banquet.

I've had a privilege—I don't deserve it, but I've had a privilege—to be at a state dinner in the White House, and that's pretty impressive—when Ronald Reagan was the president of the United States. But that would have been like eating in a fast food joint compared to eating in Solomon's palace. But friend, I want to tell you something: a greater than Solomon is here today. Jesus could take five loaves and a few fishes and feed the multitude. Jesus could change plain water into sparkling wine. The food that Solomon fed to his people that day could never satisfy. But I want you to know that I've feasted with Jesus, and I say this from my heart: I am satisfied in the Lord Jesus. Jesus has meat to eat that people of this world don't know. Jesus gives water that satisfies. And the wonderful thing about the One who's greater than Solomon is He is saying to you today, "Come and dine. Come to me and dine. And I alone can satisfy the deepest longing of your heart."

### **C. In the Temple That He Erected**

All I am saying is Jesus is greater than Solomon in his works, in the house that he built, in the table that he set, and in the temple that he erected. Go to 1 Kings 10 and verse 5, and look at this. And she speaks of *"the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the LORD; there was no more spirit in her."* (1 Kings 10:5) I mean, the breath went out of her when she saw the temple, the house of the Lord. Solomon built that temple. It was probably the most magnificent building that has ever been built. It took 183,600 workers to work for seven-and-a-half years to build that temple. David, who was Solomon's father, had gathered silver, and gold, and brass, and precious stones, and fabrics for this temple. God Himself was the architect of this temple. The temple sat on the Temple Mount, and it faced east. It had slabs of gold on the front, and marble on the front. And when the sun would come up and shine on the face of that temple, Josephus, a historian speaking of a latter temple, said, "It sat there like a mountain of snow." It was an incredible thing.

But I want to tell you, Jesus is greater than Solomon. He has built a greater temple. What temple has Jesus built? First Corinthians 6:19: *"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost...which ye have of God...?"* (1 Corinthians 6:19) Jesus has built a temple. And *this* is His temple. I'm looking at it. Not these buildings that we have, but you. You're a temple of God. That temple has been built out of all tribes and tongues and peoples upon the face of the earth. Solomon's temple, you can't find a shred of it. But I'm telling you, the temple that Jesus has built will go on timeless, endless, dateless, for all eternity. We are a temple of God. Solomon built a temple for his people. Jesus has a people for His temple.

### III. Jesus Is Greater in Workers Than Solomon

What am I saying? Jesus is greater in wisdom. Jesus is greater in works. And Jesus is greater in workers. Look in 1 Kings chapter 10, verses 6 and following: *“And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in my own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came”*—now, here’s what convinced her—*“and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and thy prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard”*—she said, “Everything that I heard I thought was an exaggeration. And when I got here, the half had not been told me.” And then, here’s what she says in verse 8—*“Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom.”* (1 Kings 10:6–8) Now, when she saw the people who were waiting on Solomon, she said, “These are the happiest people I’ve ever seen.” And no wonder! Can you imagine the happiness of serving in the court of a king like Solomon, such a wise and gracious king as Solomon was? She said, “Look! I’ve never seen so many happy people!”

But now, you listen to me: Jesus is greater in workers. The workers who serve the Lord Jesus serve Jesus with far more joy than those who served Solomon so long ago. Jesus gives not just happiness, but joy—joy that is continual and joy that is conspicuous. The Bible says we’re to *“serve the LORD with gladness”* (Psalms 100:2) and that His joy is our strength. (Nehemiah 8:10)

I thank God for the joy that I have in the Lord Jesus. And friend, it is joy that Solomon could not give. The joy of Jesus is full, and it is complete. And Jesus’ servants are greater in joy. And Jesus’ servants are greater in number. And Jesus’ servants are greater in dedication. I don’t want to say boastfully, but I’m like many of you: I would lay down my life for Jesus. I don’t know how many people would lay down their life for Solomon. In this very building, in this choir, on this platform are servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, workers who serve Him because they love Him with all of their heart.

### IV. Jesus Is Greater in Wealth Than Solomon

Jesus is greater than Solomon in wisdom. Jesus is greater in than Solomon in His works. Jesus is greater than Solomon with His workers. And Jesus is greater than Solomon in His wealth. Now, the famous thing about Solomon was his wealth. You may not believe this, but Solomon was much wealthier than Bill Gates. Donald Trump couldn’t even get in the door compared to the wealth of Solomon. Solomon was an Oriental king. He ruled a vast empire. First Kings 10, verses 14 and 15—this is just an illustration of the wealth of Solomon: *“Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred threescore and six talents of gold”*—friend, they are bringing wagonloads full of gold to him—*“besides that he had of the merchantmen, and of the traffick of the spice merchants, and of all of the kings of Arabia, and of the governors of*

*the country.*” (1 Kings 10:14–15) That is, they are just bringing the wealth to Solomon. And the Queen of Sheba said, “Look, I thought you were exaggerating. The half of it has not been told.” Look in 1 Kings chapter 10, verse 23: “*So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom.*” (1 Kings 10:23)

But I want to tell you that while Solomon was wealthy, Jesus is greater than Solomon in His wealth. How can He be greater than Solomon? Well, I’ll tell you how. Psalms 24, verse 1: “*The earth is the LORD’s, and the fulness thereof.*” (Psalms 24:1) The cattle on a thousand hills belong to Jesus. All of the diamonds in the deep recesses of the earth belong to the Lord Jesus. Every star in the sky belongs to the Lord Jesus. Jesus owns it all. He is the Owner of the universe. It was made by Him, for Him. It is coming to Him. Solomon left me no legacy, but Jesus has made me a joint heir with Him. Jesus is greater in wealth. If you’re a child of Jesus, you are wealthy. You are a child of the King. You’re an heir of God, and one of these days you are coming to your full legacy, your inheritance.

## **V. Jesus Is Greater in Worth Than Solomon**

Let me mention another way that Jesus is greater than Solomon: not only is Jesus greater than Solomon in His wisdom, and in His works, and in His workers, and in His wealth; but Jesus is greater than Solomon in His worth. Now, what’s the difference between worth and wealth? Wealth is what you have. Worth is what you are. And Jesus is worthy.

Now, when the Queen of Sheba saw Solomon, here’s what she said—in 1 Kings chapter 10 and verse 9: “*Blessed be the LORD thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the LORD loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice.*” (1 Kings 10:9) She said, “Solomon, you’re worthy. Look at you! God has put you upon His throne.” You know, Solomon had a throne made of solid ivory overlaid with gold. And he sat upon that throne to rule and to reign, and they thought this was the zenith, the apex, of anything.

Jesus said, “[No,] a greater than Solomon is here.” (Matthew 12:42; Luke 11:31) God exalted Solomon, but God has highly exalted the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice in Revelation chapter 5—don’t turn to it, but just listen to it—Revelation chapter 5, verses 11 and following. We’re talking about the throne of Jesus, and John the revelator said, “*And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and*



*honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.”* (Revelation 5:11–13) The Apostle John saw a throne. Sitting on that throne he saw the Lord Jesus Christ. Solomon’s throne is gone. Jesus’ throne is for all eternity. There’s a throne in the glory, folks. Don’t think it’s unoccupied. It’s occupied. It’s not up for grabs. Our God reigns. And one of the days *“the [kingdom] of this world [will] become the [kingdom] of our Lord, and his Christ.”* (Revelation 11:15) Jesus Christ alone is worthy of all honor and all glory.

† Some men were in a room when a dignitary came in. And when he came in, they all stood. He said, “Gentlemen, be seated. After all, I’m not the Lord.” One of the men in that room said, “I mean you no disrespect, sir, but if you had been the Lord, we would not have risen; we would have fallen on our faces.”†

And so it is with the Lord Jesus Christ. I am here to glorify Him. He is greater in worth. Worthy, worthy, worthy is the Lamb!

## **VI. Jesus Is Greater in Worship**

I want to say something else about the Lord Jesus Christ: Jesus is greater in worship—mean the way that He worships, because the Lord Jesus Christ worships God the Father as the Father honors the Son. Now, she saw him—in 1 Kings chapter 10, verse 5: *“And the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent”*—and the word *ascent* literally means “burnt offering”—*“by which he went up unto the house of the LORD; there was no more spirit in her.”* (1 Kings 10:5) She watched him worship the Lord. When Solomon dedicated the temple, he made a great offering to the Lord. You read about it in 2 Chronicles chapter 7 and verse 5: *“And king Solomon offered a sacrifice”*—now, listen to this—*“of twenty and two thousand oxen”*—twenty and two thousand oxen—*“and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep: so the king and all the people dedicated the house of God.”* (2 Chronicles 7:5) Can you imagine such a sacrifice? But all of this offering could never really take away sin because, the Bible says in Hebrews 10, verse 4, it is impossible: *“It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.”* (Hebrews 10:4)

Now, Jesus is greater in His worship because He made a greater offering. Hebrews chapter 10 and verse 12: *“But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.”* (Hebrews 10:12) Solomon could offer, if he wanted, twenty and two thousand oxen, but Jesus offered His precious blood. *“A greater than Solomon is here.”* (Matthew 12:42; Luke 11:31) Thank God that Jesus is greater in His worship, in His offering, to God the Father on our behalf.

† I mentioned Dr. Lee before. He told a story that I can never forget. Dr. Lee said

there was a tragedy that took place in a schoolhouse in South Carolina: seventy children were caught in a burning schoolhouse and could not escape. And there were heroic efforts made to get the children out of the schoolhouse, but they were trapped in the flames. A father was there, and he saw his little boy, that little boy inside the building. And as the roof was caving in, that little boy stretched out his hands to his father, recognized his father, and cried out to his father, and said, “Daddy, can’t you save me?” And the father made an effort to go into the fire, but strong men held him back because it would be sheer suicide for him to go into the fire. And the little boy cried out again to his daddy and said, “Daddy, can’t you save me?” And that father had to stand here, Dr. Lee said, and watch his son wither like a flower with an unsettling torch turned about it. And he heard the little boy cry out until he finally died: “Daddy, can’t you save me?”

Dr. Lee said in the days that that followed that that father could never get out of his mind the voice of his son, the face of his son, and that little boy crying out, “Daddy, cannot you save me?” The little boy died. The father died shortly after of a broken heart, with that boy’s face ever in his mind. Then Dr. Lee said, “You know, this ol’ sin-sick world is crying out, “Somebody save me! Somebody help me!” This world cries out to science and says, “Science, can’t you save me?” And science says, “I can tell you how far it is from the Earth to the sun. I can tell you about the molecules in an atom. But I cannot save you.” And this world looks to education and says, “Education, can’t you save me?” And education has to shake its head and say, “No. I can give you facts, but I cannot transform your nature. I cannot save you.” And this world looks to philosophy and says, “Philosophy, can you save me?” And philosophy, if it is honest, must say, “I have no answer. I cannot save you.” And this world looks to medicine and says, “Medicine, can you save me?” And medicine says, “I may heal your body, but I have nothing to cure the disease of the soul.” And the world looks again to culture and says, “Culture, can you save me? Can’t you save me?” And culture says, “No. I can teach you etiquette. I can teach you manners. But all I can do is make the world a better place to go to hell from. I can’t save you.” The world looks to government: “Government, can’t you save me?” And government says, “I’m only here to restrict evil, but I cannot make you good.”†

Listen to me today. If you’re here without Jesus Christ, there is only one who can save you, and His name is Jesus. *“And thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.”* (Matthew 1:21)

*Sing above the battle strife: Jesus saves! Jesus saves!  
By His death and endless life Jesus saves! Jesus saves!*

—PRISCILLA J. OWENS

## VII. Jesus Is Greater in Wonders

One last word: not only is Jesus greater in His worship, but Jesus is greater in His wonders. First Kings chapter 10, verse 7: *“Howbeit I believed not the words”—this is what she said—“until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard.”* (1 Kings 10:7) If you don’t know the Lord Jesus Christ, may I tell you the wonder of it all? The human mind cannot comprehend and the human tongue cannot describe what we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. And when I go to heaven—and I’m going there—when I go to heaven and see Jesus, the Jesus that I’ve preached about today, when I look upon His face, the One who saved me by His grace, you know what I’m going to say? I’m going to say the same thing you’re going to say when you see Jesus: “I heard about you, Savior, but the half has never yet been told.” Isn’t that what we’re going to say when we see Jesus? “I heard about you. Adrian preached about you. I read books about you. But oh, my dear Savior, the half has never yet been told.” There’s nobody like our great Savior. There’s no one like the Lord Jesus. None but Him can compare among the sons of men. A greater than Solomon is here this morning. For He said, *“Where two or three are gathered...in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”* (Matthew 18:20)

## Conclusion

You can take Confucius out of Confucianism and still have Confucianism. You can take Buddha out of Buddhism and still have Buddhism. You can take Mohammed out of Islam and still have Islam. But you cannot take Jesus out of Christianity and still have Christianity. That’s like taking the blue out of the sky. That’s like taking numbers out of mathematics. That’s like taking water out of the ocean and still claiming to have an ocean. Give your heart to Jesus. Give your heart to Jesus. Trust in the Lord Jesus. And when you trust Him, when you receive Him, He’ll do for you what He did for me. First of all, He will forgive every sin. Hallelujah! Your sin will be buried in the grave of God’s forgetfulness. Secondly, He will cleanse you. It’s one thing to be forgiven; it’s another thing to be clean. And He says, *“Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”* (Isaiah 1:18)

Not only will He cleanse you, but then, where that sin was, He will send His Holy Spirit into you to live in you. God’s Spirit lives in me today. Now, that’s not an emotional feeling. It’s better than an emotional feeling. I’ve said often: *your emotions are the shallowest part of your nature; salvation is the deepest work of God. He doesn’t do the deepest work in the shallowest part.* But He sends His Spirit into you to live in you, to give you peace and power and purpose. He forgives. He cleanses. He occupies. And then, day by day, He walks with you to guide you. I’m never alone. The darkest night, the most lonely road, Jesus is there. I talk to Him just before I go to sleep. I greet Him in

the morning when I wake up. He's real to me now. And one of these days soon, the One who is greater than Solomon is going to step down from His lofty throne in the glory *"with a shout, [and] the voice of the archangel...the dead in Christ [will] rise first: [and] we which [remain and] are alive shall be [called up] to meet the Lord in the air."* (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17)

There is only one who can save this sin-sick world. Say His name: Jesus. If you love Him, say His name again. If you don't know Jesus, you can know Him today. There is nothing to earn. You just receive Him by faith. Salvation is a gift. And He says, *"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him."* (Revelation 3:20) Jesus Christ today will come into you to abide in you. He will never leave you, He will never forsake you, if you'll trust Him.†

# Our Great Savior

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: February 27, 2005**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 12:42**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Jesus Is Greater Than Solomon in the Wisdom That He Proclaims
- II. Jesus Is Greater Than Solomon in the Works He Performs
- III. Jesus Is Greater Than Solomon in the Workers That He Pleases
- IV. Jesus Is Greater Than Solomon in the Wealth That He Possesses
- V. Jesus Is Greater Than Solomon in the Worship That He Provides

Conclusion

## Introduction

**T**ake God's precious Word and open, if you will, to Matthew chapter 12. And when you've found it, look up here and let me tell you that we entered these new buildings in November of '89, and we wanted God to bless in a very special way. And I thought, what would I preach about? what would be my text as we came into these new buildings?—wondering if God would fill it even once; and God filled it twice on that glorious morning. And the Lord laid on my heart to preach about how great the Lord Jesus Christ is—how great He is. And so I turned to this passage of Scripture. And I want you to look at it, because we're going to revisit it again this morning to remember that day and to remember this very special day.

Matthew chapter 12 and verse 42: *"The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here"* (Matthew 12:42). We're going to talk about our great Savior, because I've been talking about the kind of a church I want us to have, and I've tried to lead us to be, and I hope we will be in the future. And we have talked about a Bible-believing church. We have talked about a Spirit-filled church. We've talked about a caring church, and many things. But I saved this morning and tonight to talk about our dear Savior. And tonight I'm going to borrow a phrase that I heard Jim Whitmire use just a few moments ago for the title of our message. I have the same message; but, Jim, because of you, I changed the title. And tonight I'm going to be preaching on this subject: "It's All About Jesus." It is all about Jesus. And I hope God

the Holy Spirit will write that upon your heart, because I've saved this focus on the Lord Jesus Christ to the very last. And today we're going to be talking about our great Savior.

Now Solomon had a visit from a woman who was the Queen of Sheba. And she came and saw all of the wisdom, the wealth, the works of Solomon. And she said, "The breath has gone out of me," when she saw the glories of Solomon's kingdom (1 Kings 10:4-5). And Jesus said to the Pharisees, "Look, a greater than Solomon is here."

Now, what caused Jesus to say that? Well, the Pharisees were criticizing Jesus. They were castigating Jesus. They were questioning Jesus. They were judging Jesus. And Jesus said, "Now, you listen. The Queen of Sheba came from the uttermost parts of the earth"—probably, at that time, Ethiopia—"and when she saw all that Solomon had said and did, she said, 'It is glorious.'" And then Jesus said, "Look, you are oblivious to the obvious. A greater than Solomon is here."

Now, what do you think they thought when He said that—I mean, this peasant, this carpenter's son? What do you think they thought when Jesus had what they thought was the unmitigated audacity to say, "a greater than Solomon is here"? Because Solomon was the apex of all greatness, all wealth, all wonder—and yet here's a man in His sandaled feet looking them straight in the face and saying, "A greater than Solomon is here."

Dr. Robert G. Lee, the former pastor of this church, said this—and I want to share with you. He said, "They must have thought, 'Well, Solomon was a king's son. Jesus is a carpenter's son. How can He be greater? Solomon was born in a palace. Jesus was born in a stable. How can He be greater? Solomon was born in Jerusalem. Jesus was born in little Bethlehem. How can He be greater? Solomon had many servants to wait upon him hand and foot. Jesus had none. How can Jesus be greater than Solomon? Solomon wore his kingly robes so much that Jesus compared them to the flowers of the field. But Jesus wore His peasant's garb, a seamless garment. How could Jesus be greater than Solomon? Solomon drank from vessels of gold. Jesus had to get a drink from a Samaritan harlot. How can Jesus be greater than Solomon? Solomon was rich beyond compare. Jesus was a pauper. How could Jesus be greater than Solomon? Solomon had great armies. Jesus only had a few stragglers following Him. How could Jesus be greater than Solomon? Solomon lived in mansions. Jesus was homeless, and sometimes didn't have a place to put His head down. How could Jesus be greater than Solomon? Solomon had 1,400 chariots, 1,200 horsemen, 40,000 stalls of horses, and he rode in splendor. And Jesus walked. How could Jesus be greater than Solomon?'"

Well, for our study this morning, as we think about Jesus, and we think about this being a Jesus church, I want to tell you some ways that Jesus is greater.

## I. Jesus Is Greater Than Solomon in the Wisdom That He Proclaims

First of all, Jesus is greater than Solomon in the wisdom that He proclaims. Now I want you to go backward in your Bible and let's look at Solomon. Go back, if you will, to 1 Kings chapter 10, and just open your Bibles there. And if you want to jot these Scriptures down, you may do it, but we're going to be going in a hurry this morning. But I want you to think about Jesus, who is greater than Solomon in the wisdom that He proclaims. First Kings 10, verses 1 through 4: *"And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to prove him with hard questions."* That is, she's going to examine him to see just how intelligent he is. *"And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train,"*—that is, an entourage with her—*"with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart."* She said, "Now this is my big chance. Solomon is supposed to be so wise. I'm going to find out just how wise he is. *"And Solomon told her all her questions: there was not any thing hid from the king, which he told her not. And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built,"* she just, the breath went out of her (1 Kings 10:1–5). And then, notice, if you'll skip on down to 1 Kings 10:24: *"And all the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart"* (1 Kings 10:24).

Now, folks, you talk about a wise man: Solomon was a wise man. Who wrote the Book of Proverbs? Solomon wrote the Book of Proverbs. When you read the Book of Proverbs, you see that Solomon knew all about biology. You know that he knew all about psychology. You know that he knew all about theology. Listen. Solomon knew 3,000 proverbs. He had memorized 1,500 songs.

What a mind he had! Solomon knew all about creation. Look, if you will, in 1 Kings 4, verse 33—or just jot it down: *"And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes"* (1 Kings 4:33). Solomon knew all about the created universe. Friend, he'd do good on a biology test. He knew all about that.

But now, wait a minute. Jesus had greater wisdom. You see, Jesus made all of the things that Solomon knew about. John 1, verse 3: *"All things were made by him;"—by Jesus—*"and without him was not any thing made that was made"** (John 1:3). Now we read in the Bible about Solomon, and he studied ichthyology. He knew all about fishing, and he knew all about fish. But listen. Jesus knew more. Jesus put enough fish in two empty nets to sink two boats (Luke 5:1–7).

Solomon knew all about the wind, and the cycle of the wind. But Jesus knew more. Jesus knew how to rebuke the wind and cause the Sea of Galilee that was whipping its frenzied waves up to lie still like a whipped puppy, when He said, "Hush, be still" (Mark 4:39).

Solomon knew all about navigation and how ships go when he sent ships out to all over the sea to bring back riches. Well, he did. But Jesus knew more. Jesus knew how to walk on water, amen? Jesus knew more than Solomon.

And Solomon found out that all of his wisdom didn't satisfy him. Maybe you're a Ph.D., and you think that's going to satisfy you. But you may end up a Phenomenal Dud. That's what it will stand for. Let me tell you what Solomon said about his wisdom there in Ecclesiastes chapter 1, verse 17: *"And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and...I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit"* (Ecclesiastes 1:17).

Folks, listen. The more a man knows, the more he knows he doesn't know. And if a man has any sense, he knows that he doesn't know. We think of Einstein as kind of being the Solomon of our age because of his brilliance. Einstein died in 1955, and he said, "I feel like a man chained. If I could only be free from the shackles of my intellectual smallness, then I could understand the universe in which I live." Now that's Einstein: "the shackles of my intellectual smallness."

Yes, Solomon was wise, but he wasn't as wise as our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. You want wisdom? I believe God has given me wisdom. You say, "You're boasting." No, I'm bragging in Jesus. Listen to what the Bible says here in 1 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 30: *"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom"* (1 Corinthians 1:30). If you have Jesus, you have wisdom. And James says, "If any of you lack wisdom, ask of God; it will be given to you" (James 1:5). Ephesians 1, verse 8: *"Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence"* (Ephesians 1:8).

You say, "Pastor, are you putting down education?" No, but I'm going to tell you something else. I'd rather be in heaven singing, "Jesus loves me, this I know," than to be in hell spouting philosophy. I'm just so glad that Jesus is greater than Solomon in wisdom.

## **II. Jesus Is Greater Than Solomon in the Works He Performs**

And then Jesus is greater than Solomon in His works. Now Solomon did some mighty things—and we're going to see them right here. Look, if you will, in 1 Kings chapter 10, verse 4: *"And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built..."* (1 Kings 10:4). So, not only did she see his wisdom; she saw his works. Solomon built a palace for himself. It took thirteen years to complete his palace. His palace defies description. It was lavishly provided. You can read all about it in 1 Kings chapter 7, if you want to go home and read about it later on. But, friend, Jesus is building a greater house. Look, if you will, in John 14, verses 1 through 3. Jesus said, *"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you"* (John 14:1-2).



I was visiting with a preacher one time, Brother Mark, and I was preaching a revival in his church. And so we were driving around talking. He said, "Let me take you to the upscale section of the city." And so he took me out to where all the mansions are, and I said, "Well, that's nice, but you ought to see my brother's place." And we kept on talking. I kept on bragging on my brother. He said, "Good night! Who is your brother?" I said, "Jesus." Jesus is my brother. He's not ashamed to call me His brother.

Now Solomon built a great house, a great palace. But, oh, thank God for what Jesus has done. He's greater than Solomon.

Solomon set a table. He invited people in for great feasts. Look, if you will, in verse 5: "*And the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers*" (1 Kings 10:5). She saw all this. She went to a banquet. She saw the cups of gold. She saw the servants the way they were dressed so lavishly. It would go far beyond anything any state dinner that the White House might have. The feasting was sumptuous. The food was beyond compare.

But Jesus said, "*A greater than Solomon is here*" (Matthew 12:42). Jesus could take five loaves and two fishes and feed 5,000, amen? Jesus could turn plain water into sparkling wine. All that Solomon did could never satisfy. But Jesus said, "If you drink of the water that I give you, you will never thirst again" (John 4:14). And you know what Jesus is saying to you today, this one who is greater than Solomon? He's saying to you, "Come and dine." I'm telling you that only Jesus can set a table that will satisfy your heart.

*Friends all around me are trying to find  
What the hearts yearns for, by sin undermined;  
I have the secret, I know where 'tis found:  
Only true pleasures in Jesus abound.*

—HARRY D. LOES

Solomon built a temple. A temple that they built was beyond compare and description. First Kings chapter 10, verse 5, speaks of the house of the Lord. And when she saw the house of the Lord, she said, "There's no more spirit in me" (1 Kings 10:5). What she meant by that is, "That's it! I'm about to faint. I never expected to see so much. It's far more than I expected to see."

Now, what was Solomon's temple like? They tell us it was the most glorious, gorgeous building, the most magnificent building, that has ever been built. One hundred eighty-three thousand six hundred workers worked for seven and a half years to build that temple. Solomon's father, David, had been collecting gold and silver and brass and jewels and cedar wood to build that temple. God Himself designed the temple. God was the architect of the temple. God anointed the workmen to build the temple. The temple faced east. And as the

sun would come up over the Mount of Olives and shine on that temple overlaid with ivory and gold, Josephus, the Jewish historian, said, “It stood there upon Mount Zion like a mountain of snow.”

But Jesus has built a greater temple. Where is Jesus’ temple? Right here in this building. This building is not the temple; you are the temple. Listen. First Corinthians chapter 6, verse 19: “*What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you...?*” (1 Corinthians 6:19). You want to see a temple of God more wonderful than Solomon’s temple? Right *here*. Right *there*. Right up *there*. You are the temple of God. In the Old Testament God had a temple for His people. In the New Testament He has a people for His temple.

Now Solomon’s temple is gone. It’s been destroyed. What you’re looking at now will never be destroyed. *You say, “Well, Adrian, you’re going to die, and they’re going to put you in the grave.” Well, even when I’m in the grave, my spirit will be kicking up gold dust on the streets of glory.* But one of these days, this temple is coming up out of the grave. It will never, never, never be destroyed. You see, I’m a temple of God. You’re a temple of God. Learn that. A greater temple than Solomon ever built. You see, look. Salvation—and I’ve told you this many times; I’ll tell you one more time—salvation *is not getting man out of earth into heaven; it is getting God out of heaven into man.* We are now a temple of God.

### **III. Jesus Is Greater Than Solomon in the Workers That He Pleases**

Now, thirdly, not only is Jesus greater in wisdom and greater in works, but Jesus is greater in the workers that He pleases. Solomon had some happy workers. Look in 1 Kings chapter 10, verses 6 through 8: “*And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts*”—that’s his works—“*and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard. Happy are thy men...*”—that is, his workers—“*happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom*” (1 Kings 10:6–8). She said, “Look, I’ve never seen people so happy. These people who work in your courts, they’re the happiest people that I have ever seen.” And can you imagine serving Almighty God by serving in the court of Israel’s King Solomon in all of this lavish wealth—the way he fed his servants, the way he dressed his servants, the way he paid his servants? They were servants of such a wise and a healthy king.

But listen. Listen, precious friend. Jesus is greater than Solomon in the workers that He pleases. I’m so happy in Jesus. I am. It may sound corny, but I love Him with all of my heart, and I want to love Him more. You see, I am His worker. You’re His worker. Solomon’s

workers were happy. But Jesus gives more. Jesus gives “*joy unspeakable and full of glory*” (2 Peter 1:8). Jesus gives joy that is conspicuous, continuous, contagious. Solomon’s workers had to give up all of those things that brought them happiness. They’re all gone and they’re done for. The palace is gone, the tables gone. The robes are gone. Solomon is gone. But the source of my joy has not diminished, because my joy does not depend upon what happens; it depends upon the Lord Jesus Christ. And I thank God for the joy of serving Jesus. I am incredibly blessed that God has let me serve Him these years and to be the pastor of this dear church. And I want to tell you, this world and this very building are filled with people who are happy in Jesus. Jesus pleases His workers, and Jesus rewards His workers. And Jesus is far greater than Solomon in the workmen that He pleases.

#### **IV. Jesus Is Greater Than Solomon in the Wealth That He Possesses**

But now I want you to notice that Jesus is far greater than Solomon in the wealth that He possesses. Solomon was wealthy. Friend, I want to tell you old King Tut, Bill Gates, and Donald Trump—whatever his name is—will have to stand aside when you think of the wealth that Solomon had. Look in 1 Kings chapter 10, verses 14 and 15: “*Now the weight of the gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred threescore and six talents of gold, beside that he had the merchantmen, and of the traffick of the spice merchants, and of all the kings of Arabia, and of the governors of the country*” (1 Kings 10:14–15). They were just pouring the wealth into Solomon’s coffers. Probably no man ever in the history of the world has had wealth like this man Solomon had. It’s summed up in 1 Kings 10, verse 23: “*So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom*” (1 Kings 10:23). It was not an exaggeration. They were pouring pounds and tons of gold on him, ivory and spices. And he had ships going out, and they were bringing the wealth to Solomon. And he was wealthy.

But you listen to me. Jesus is greater in wealth, amen? Listen. Psalm 24, verse 1: “*The earth is the LORD’S, and the fulness thereof*” (Psalm 24:1). The cattle on a thousand hills belong to Jesus (Psalm 50:10), and all of the diamonds and the rubies in those hills. Every star in the sky belongs to Jesus.

This past Christmas season I heard some people had a pretty good scheme. They were selling stars. You know, if you’d send them some money, they would name a star after you. I thought, “Big deal!” It’s too late for that. The Bible says He calls them all by name, every one of them in the vast stellar universe. You know, Solomon was rich, but he left me no legacy. Jesus has made me rich beyond compare, and I would not—listen—I would not sell what I have in Jesus—I would not! I would not! God bears me witness, if you were to fill this

building with rubies, gold, silver, diamonds, and stocks and bonds, I wouldn't have to think a New York minute about whether I would trade it all for Jesus.

I spoke on this subject one time, and Phil Weatherwax handed me this. It says,

*He owns the cattle on a thousand hills,  
The wealth in every mine;  
He owns the rivers and the rocks and the rills,  
The sun and stars that shine.  
Wonderful riches, more than tongue can tell,  
He is my Father so they're mine as well.*

—JOHN W. PETERSON

And that's true. But, friend, the greater spiritual riches are what we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is greater in the riches that He possesses.

## **V. Jesus Is Greater Than Solomon in the Worship That He Provides**

But let me come to the final thing. Jesus is greater than Solomon in the worship that He provides. You see, Solomon led in worship. In 1 Kings chapter 10, verse 9, the Bible speaks of Solomon, and the Queen of Sheba said, *"Blessed be the LORD thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the LORD loved Israel forever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice"* (1 Kings 10:9). Now Solomon was there to lead the people in worship. That's why he built the temple. And God gave him a throne. Look in 1 Kings chapter 10, verse 18: *"Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with the best gold"* (1 Kings 10:18). No wonder the breath went out of the Queen of Sheba when she saw that shimmering throne!

But, hey, church, listen to me. There's another throne—and Jesus sits upon it. I want you to listen to this verse—Revelation chapter 5, verses 11 through 13: *"And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever"* (Revelation 5:11–13).

Friend, Solomon no longer sits upon his throne. Jesus sits on His! And that throne is not up for grabs. He will never ever be dispossessed. And that's why, church, Bellevue Church, we must worship the One, the Lord Jesus, who is greater than Solomon.

## Conclusion

Dr. Lee, that I referenced here a few moments ago, Dr. Lee told a story I think I shall never forget. Dr. Lee told a story of a fire that was in a schoolhouse in South Carolina. The children were trapped inside that schoolhouse. The bells rang. The alarms went off. The strong men of that community came to try to rescue those children from the fire, but they were trapped inside. It was an inferno. And they tried to get the children out, but it was too late. Mortal flesh could not do it. One father was there. And he looked through the flames and he saw the face of his little boy. And his little boy saw that father. And his little boy said, "Daddy, can't you save me? Can't you save me?" They had to hold the man back. It would have been suicide for him to go into those flames. And Dr. Lee said that man stood there and watched his precious son wither like a flower when an acetylene torch would be held upon it. The father's hair turned white almost overnight. All he could see for two years was the face of that boy in the flames. The father only lived for two years, because of a broken heart. And over and over again he heard that little boy saying, "Father, can't you save me?"

This old hell-bound, sin-soaked, careening, sick, drunken world, it needs saving. This world looks to science and says, "Science, can't you save me?" Solomon knew all about science. But science says, "I can tell you how far it is from the earth to the sun. But I can't save you." And this dying world looks to culture and says, "Culture, can't you save me?" Culture says, "I can teach you etiquette. I can teach you how to make the world a better place to go to hell from. But I can't save you." And this world looks to education and says, "Education, can't you save me?" And education says, "I can teach you how to work at your computer. I can teach you the history of the world. But I have no ability to save you." This world looks to government and says, "Government, please save us." Are you counting on Washington to save you? Are you counting on the Pentagon to save you? Government, in honesty, says, "I cannot save this world." We all know it. But, friend, there's one greater than Solomon, and we need to sing it with all of our hearts: "Jesus Saves! Jesus Saves!" Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, our great Savior, Jesus: a greater than Solomon, a greater than anyone else, a greater than all else, is the Lord Jesus Christ.

What makes our faith different? You can be a Confucianist without knowing Confucius. You can be a Buddhist without knowing Buddha. You can be an Islamist without knowing Mohammed. But you can't be a Christian without knowing Jesus. Christianity is a vital relationship with the Son of God. Now, congregation, that Jesus that is greater than Solomon is here today in this building; for He says, "*For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*" (Matthew 18:20). Congregation, a greater than Solomon is here today! Understand that. Greater in wisdom. Greater in wealth. Greater in works. Greater in worship. Solomon slew thousands and thousands of animals

when he dedicated his temple. But the Bible says, “The blood of bulls and goats can’t take away sin” (Hebrews 10:4). But there is One, Calvary’s Lamb, who took your sin, my sin, to the cross, and with that rich, red, royal blood paid our sin price, our debt.

# Our Great Savior

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: February 27, 2005**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 12:42**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Jesus Is Greater Than Solomon in the Wisdom That He Proclaims
- II. Jesus Is Greater in His Works That He Performs
- III. Jesus Is Greater Than Solomon in the Workers That He Pleases
- IV. Jesus Is Greater Than Solomon in the Wealth That He Possesses
- V. Jesus Is Greater Than Solomon in the Worship That He Provides

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take God's precious Word and turn, please, to Matthew chapter 12. In just a moment we're going to look at a very significant verse, verse 42. When we moved into this worship center back in 1989 in November, I wondered, "Lord, what will be my text? What will I preach? What will be the inaugural emphasis of our worship here?" and I came to this text, as you're going to see in just a moment, that deals with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And, by the way, I have entitled the message this morning, "Our Great Savior."

You know, we've been talking about what kind of a church we want our church to be. I've been talking about what kind of a church I've endeavored to make us. And we've talked about a loving church. We've talked about a unified church. We've talked about a Spirit-filled church. We've talked about a steadfast church. We've talked about a Bible-believing church, and all of these things. But today is the apex, the climax, of what I've been trying to tell you now for thirty-two years: that our church is to be a Jesus church. It's to be a Christ-filled church. And that is to be the emphasis and the focus of our ministry.

Now, look, if you will, in verse 42. Jesus said—and, by the way, He was talking to the Pharisees—*"The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here"* (Matthew 12:42). Now the greater than Solomon was Jesus Christ Himself. You have to get the background of this passage of Scripture.

The Pharisees were there—and what were they impressed with? Well, they were impressed with religion. They were impressed with buildings and temples and miracles and money and what the world calls wisdom. These were the things that really captured their attention. But now there was Jesus right in the midst; and they criticized Jesus, they interrogated Jesus, they castigated Jesus. And there He was, the very Son of God. But they were oblivious to the obvious. And so Jesus tells them a story about a queen, a glorious, wonderful queen, who came from the ends of the earth, probably Ethiopia. She came. She made this dangerous and difficult journey. She came all of this way to see Solomon. And Jesus said, “Listen, she’s going to rise up in the judgment and condemn you, because a greater than Solomon is here.”

Now, what do you think they thought when Jesus said of Himself that He was greater than Solomon? Dr. Lee has reminded us of some thoughts that they might have had. They said, “Well, how can you be greater than Solomon? Solomon was a king’s son. You are a carpenter’s son. Solomon was born in a palace. You were born in a stable. Solomon was born in Jerusalem. You were born in little Bethlehem. Solomon had an entourage of servants to wait upon him. You don’t have any like that. Solomon wore his kingly robes. You’re dressed in the peasant’s garb. You’re greater than Solomon? Solomon, he drank from vessels of gold. You had to get a drink of water from a Samaritan harlot. Solomon was rich beyond compare. You had to borrow money to pay your taxes. Solomon had armies to protect him. You have a few fishermen following you around. Solomon built great cities. And you made chairs and tables. Solomon lived in mansions. And you said you didn’t have a place to lay your head. And you have the audacity to say that you are greater than Israel’s greatest king in all of his opulence and splendor and glory? You are greater than Solomon?

Well, friend, He is our great Savior. And I want to tell you some ways that Jesus is greater than Solomon.

## **I. Jesus Is Greater Than Solomon in the Wisdom That He Proclaims**

First of all, Jesus is greater than Solomon in the wisdom that He proclaims. Now you know what Solomon was noted for? Above all else, more so than his wealth, was his wisdom. And that’s one of the reasons that the Queen of Sheba came. Go back to 1 Kings, if you will, and we’ll stay there mostly now. We’ll leave Matthew. Go to 1 Kings chapter 10, and look in verse 1, and you’re going to find out why the Queen of Sheba came in the first place to see Solomon: *“And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to prove him with hard questions”* (1 Kings 10:1). She said, “I just want to know, is he really as smart as people say he is?” And so she comes testing him, proving him, with hard questions. And the Bible says, in verse 3, *“And Solomon told her all*



*her questions: there was not any thing hid from the king, which he told her not*" (1 Kings 10:3). She had a question. He had an answer. She had a question. He had an answer. And then the Bible sums his wisdom up, Solomon's wisdom, in 1 Kings chapter 10, verse 24: *"And all the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart"* (1 Kings 10:24).

Now it's not just that Solomon was a wise guy; he was wise. And God had given him wisdom as a gift. It was Solomon who wrote the Book of Proverbs. He knew 3,000 proverbs. He knew 1,500 songs by heart. As you read what Solomon wrote, you know, he knew all about biology. He knew all about philosophy. He knew all about theology. And you look at all of the things that Solomon knew, and they said, "You're telling us that you're greater than Solomon?" Indeed! You see, Solomon knew all about the trees and the study of biology. But Jesus made every one of those trees. *"All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made"* (John 1:3). Solomon knew all about ichthyology and the study of fish. But, friend, Jesus filled empty nets with enough fish to sink two boats. And Solomon knew all about navigation. But Jesus walked on water, amen? You know, Solomon knew all about the circulation of the winds. But Jesus was able to still a storm on the Sea of Galilee and make that sea smooth and calm as a millpond on a moonlit night. Jesus was wiser than Solomon in all of these things.

Now, friend, they needed to understand that a greater than Solomon was there. You know, Solomon's wisdom never really satisfied him. You read the Book of Ecclesiastes, and look, if you will, in chapter 1 and verse 17. And he said that, "I gave my heart to know wisdom," and he said, "all of it was vanity of spirit" (Ecclesiastes 1:17). I'm going to tell you something. You can learn and learn and learn and learn, and the more you learn, you'll understand the less you know. Einstein, before he died in the fifties, said, "Oh, that my mind could be unshackled that I might understand the universe in which we live!" None of us know an ounce about anything. Even Solomon, he was shackled in his wisdom. But Jesus is made unto us wisdom, with a special wisdom; wisdom so great that a little child, like these children that sang here this morning, can know the heart and the mind of God, that God is hidden from the wise people of this world and He's revealed it unto babes (Matthew 11:25; Luke 10:21). The Bible says, in 1 Corinthians, that Jesus is *"made unto us wisdom"* (1 Corinthians 1:30).

Would you like to see a man wiser than Solomon? Look up here and see the man with one hand on the pulpit. You say, "Ha, you braggart! You braggart!" No. Jesus is made unto me wisdom. I have the wisdom of God in me because I have Jesus in me. He is made unto me wisdom. And I don't have to go around wondering about things. I have a book. I have a Savior. I have a Holy Spirit to lead me, to guide me. I'm not putting down learning. You may

have a Ph.D., but it may turn out to be Phenomenal Dud if you don't know Jesus. I'm not against learning. I'm going to tell you something, friend. I had rather be in heaven saying my ABC's than be in hell spouting philosophy—to know the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is greater than Solomon in wisdom.

## II. Jesus Is Greater in His Works That He Performs

And also, Jesus is greater in Solomon in the works that He performs. Now Solomon did some mighty works. For example, Solomon built himself a house. Look in 1 Kings chapter 10, verse 4. It speaks of the house that he had built (1 Kings 10:4). It took him thirteen years to build his palace, and he had everything at his fingertips that he needed to build it with. It was an incredible palace; opulent, glorious was the house of Solomon. But, friend, Jesus is building a greater house. He said, in John 14, *“I go and prepare a place for you...if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also”* (John 14:3).

I was preaching in a revival meeting one time, and the pastor took me out to see where the upper crust in the community lived; you know, “where the elite meet to cheat.” And he was showing me this house, and that mansion, and this house, and that mansion; and every time he would show me something, I would say, “Well, that’s nice, but you ought to see my brother’s place.” “Yeah, oh, yeah, that’s nice, but you ought to see my brother’s place.” I kept on one-upping him, until finally he said, “Who is your brother?” I said, “Jesus”—“Jesus.”

Now I'm not being facetious. Jesus is not ashamed to call us His brethren. That's what the Bible says. We have to understand that we are next of kin to the Holy Trinity. And our Lord is building us a house greater than Solomon ever even dreamed about.

And so, think of the table that Solomon set. You know, when you came to Solomon, Solomon would put on a feast for you. And he put on a feast for the Queen of Sheba. And look in chapter 10, verse 5: *“And the meat of his table,”*—that is, the food of his table, the cuisine—*“and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers...”* (1 Kings 10:5). She went in there. She said, “Look at this feast! Look at these delicacies! Look at the way these waiters wait upon us! Notice their grace, their charm, their manners! Look at how even the waiters are dressed, their apparel! What a table King Solomon sets!”

Jesus sets a better one, friend—Jesus sets a better one. You know, Solomon could serve meals like that, but Jesus could feed 5,000 with a little boy's lunch, amen? Solomon may have had his special libations, but Jesus could turn sparkling water into pure wine. But the greater thing is this: that Jesus feeds us with food that satisfies. And Jesus said, “My body is your bread. My blood is your wine. My water is the Word of God for you.” You know, if you

eat what Solomon set down, I don't care how much you ate: in twenty-four hours you'd be hungry again. Jesus will feed you with bread from heaven, and you will never, no never, no never, no never ever hunger or thirst again, as long as you feed on Jesus. I don't know whether you believe that or not; but, friend, it is true. I'm satisfied with Jesus. Jesus sets a better table than Solomon ever set.

And do you know what He says to us, boys and girls, men and women? He says, "*Come and dine*" (John 21:12). "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me*" (Revelation 3:20). Jesus sets a better table than Solomon ever began to think about setting.

*Friends all around me are trying to find  
What the hearts yearns for, by sin undermined;  
I have the secret, I know where 'tis found:  
Only true pleasures in Jesus abound.*

—HARRY D. LOES

Now, not only is Jesus greater in His works; but, friend, Jesus is greater in the temple. And that's a part of His works that He built. Solomon built a temple, perhaps the most magnificent, opulent building that has ever been built in the history of the world. His father, David, had been storing up gold and silver and brass and cedar to build this temple. God Himself designed it. God was the architect of the building. The building was a colossal, magnificent, beautiful building, the most that anybody had ever seen before that time or after that time. Solomon's temple sat there on Mount Zion. It faced to the east. The sun would come up over the Mount of Olives and shine on the face of that building overlaid with ivory and gold. Josephus, who was a historian, tells us that, "It sat there like a mountain of snow." And even Herod's temple, which was puny compared to Solomon's temple, was so great that the disciples said to Jesus, "Come, behold the stones of this temple" (Mark 13:1).

But Jesus has built a greater temple. You say, "What is His temple?" Listen. I said, you want to see wisdom? Look up here. You want to see a temple? Look up here. First Corinthians chapter 6, verse 19: "*What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost...which ye have of God...?*" (1 Corinthians 6:19). Solomon never built anything like this. Solomon could not inhabit human beings with His presence and make a temple out of them. *In the Old Testament, God had a temple for His people. In the New Testament, He has a people for His temple.* He lives in us. He dwells in us. We are living temples of God made up of people from every kindred, tribe, nation of all of the earth; one mighty temple, the temple of God.

If you were to go to Jerusalem and say, “Show me some of Solomon’s temple,” they could not show you with authenticity one stone of Solomon’s temple. It’s gone! But I’m telling you the temple that Jesus Christ has built, and is building, will endure forever and ever and ever and ever. He said, “I’ll build my church, and the very gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18). Isn’t Jesus greater than Solomon in the temple He’s built?

### **III. Jesus Is Greater Than Solomon in the Workers That He Pleases**

Now, listen. I’m just showing you how Jesus is greater than Solomon: in His wisdom, in His works, and then, in the workers that He pleases. You see, Solomon had people who loved him, and he pleased those people that followed him. Look, if you will, here in 1 Kings chapter 10—I’m going to skip down to verse 8, and the Queen of Sheba said, “*Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom*” (1 Kings 10:8). She said, “You’re a great man to work for. You please your servants. You please your workers. They enjoy serving you. Why, they get to sit here, and while they’re in the palace, they hear of your wisdom, they live in the midst of this splendor. You dress them so well. You pay them so well.” And the Queen of Sheba said, “I’ve never seen a man that had such willing followers as you, Solomon.”

Well, I’ll tell you, Jesus is greater than Solomon in the workers and the workmen that He pleases. Jesus has an army around this world, a people who not only would wait upon Him but who would die for Him. I believe I would. I don’t want to boast about it. The time may come when I may demonstrate it and see if I really mean it. And, by the way, the word *witness* and the word *martyr* are the same word. Death does not make a martyr; it just reveals one. But there are people who serve the Lord Jesus with gladness and joy, because, while Solomon gave happiness, Jesus gives “*joy unspeakable and full of glory*” (1 Peter 1:8).

I’ve been serving Him for a long time. Look up here. You’re looking at a man who is happy in Jesus. I’ve never regretted anything I’ve ever done for Jesus. I’m satisfied with Jesus; and Jesus has been so lavishly good to this His servant. Young people, I want to tell you—listen—it pays to serve Jesus. It pays every day. It pays every step of the way. You see, Jesus is greater in the servants that He pleases. Now Solomon’s joy and happiness, all that’s gone; but Jesus gives joy that remains. Aren’t you glad to be a servant of Jesus? I am! I am!

People talk about fighting the call to preach. Now, don’t you tell the Finance Committee, but I’d pay for the privilege. I’m serious. I was preaching when I didn’t have a church. I was preaching on street corners and bus benches, trailer parks, rescue missions. What a joy to serve Jesus! Jesus is greater than Solomon in the workmen that He pleases.

#### **IV. Jesus Is Greater Than Solomon in the Wealth That He Possesses**

Then I want to say another thing about Jesus, how He's greater than Solomon. Jesus is greater than Solomon in the wealth that He possesses. Now Solomon was wealthy. Look in 1 Kings chapter 10, verses 14: *"Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred threescore and six talents of gold"* (1 Kings 10:14). Man, tons of gold coming to Solomon! They were bringing spices and animals and exotic trees and perfumes, and they were just pouring in—pouring in—from all over the world. Bill Gates, step aside! Donald Trump, step aside! Old King Tut, you don't even compare to the wealth that Solomon had. I want to tell you something about Jesus. He's greater than Solomon in wealth.

Psalm 24 says, *"The earth is the LORD'S, and the fullness thereof"* (Psalm 24:1). The Bible says the cattle on a thousand hills are His (Psalm 50:10). The Bible says He created the universe: "All things were made by Him and for Him" (Colossians 1:16). The world is coming to Jesus. It is His possession.

*Jesus shall reign where'er the sun  
Does his successive journeys run;  
His kingdoms stretch from shore to shore,  
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.*

—ISAAC WATTS

Solomon was King of Jerusalem. Jesus is the King of the Universes. Exceedingly, abundantly, indescribably wealthy is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

But the wealth that Jesus has is not just material wealth. And, by the way, this past Christmas, I heard them advertising that, if you would send them a certain amount of money, they would name a star after you. I thought, "Boy, they're slick. They name a star after you. Send up a flare!" Friend, you're too late for that. He, God, has already named them every one. The Bible says, "He calleth them by name" (Psalm 147:4). And they all belong to Jesus.

Now I'm going to tell you something, friend. Not one tenth of your income belongs to Jesus; it all belongs to Jesus, too. The tithe is only a symbol that it all belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is wealthy beyond compare. And the beautiful thing is that we are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ (Romans 8:17). And God has laid up for us in heaven an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that will not fade away (1 Peter 1:4). The gnawing tooth of time, the foul breath of decay, shyster lawyers, cannot take it away. Solomon didn't leave me anything. Jesus has left me everything. *"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth"* (Matthew 5:5). I don't know whether you believe that or not, but, folks, our Savior is exceedingly, abundantly wealthy; and Solomon was a pauper compared to the Lord Jesus Christ. He's greater than Solomon in His wealth.

## V. Jesus Is Greater Than Solomon in the Worship That He Provides

Now, finally, Jesus is greater than Solomon in the worship He provides. Solomon provided worship for his people. You know, Solomon had a throne. His throne was something to look on. Solomon's throne was overlaid with gold. It was carved out of ivory and overlaid with gold. Look in 1 Kings chapter 10, verse 9. She said—that is, the Queen of Sheba—*“Blessed be the LORD thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel”* (1 Kings 10:9). And this throne was an incredibly beautiful throne. You might find 1 Kings 10, verse 18: *“Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with the best gold”* (1 Kings 10:18). Just in your mind get an idea of an opulent ivory throne overlaid with gold. And there's old Solomon. The lilies of the field were not dressed up like he is (Matthew 6:28–29; Luke 12:27). He's sitting there upon the throne. She sees this.

And what is the job of the man upon the throne? Well, it was to cause the people to worship. When Solomon dedicated the temple, the Bible teaches that he slew all of these animals. There were so many of them that were put to death. The Bible says, in 2 Chronicles chapter 7, verse 5, *“And king Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty and two thousand oxen...”*—now an ox in that day was like a Mercedes Benz—*“twenty and two thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep”* (2 Chronicles 7:5). Imagine that! Solomon is saying, “Look, I'm on the throne, and I'm going to provide worship for you.” And so he slays all of these animals.

But Jesus is greater in the worship that He provides, for it's not possible that the blood of bulls and goats can take away sin (Hebrews 10:4), amen? That's what the Book of Hebrews says. But Jesus is a Lamb without spot and without blemish (1 Peter 1:19), and with His own blood He died upon that cross and provides a greater way of worship and a greater throne. Put in your margin Revelation chapter 5, beginning in verse 11: *“And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne...”*—now this is not Solomon's throne this time—*“round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever”* (Revelation 5:11–14). Only Jesus is worthy of such honor.

## Conclusion

Now I'd like to meet King Solomon. And I believe he went to heaven, and one of these days I'll meet him, I'll give him a hug, shake hands with him, and say, "Solomon, teach me a few things." But I'm going to see Jesus. I'm not going to shake hands with Him; I'm going to fall at His feet and worship Him. I wouldn't worship Solomon. I wouldn't worship any two-legged man that lives, except the God-man, the Lord Jesus. Thank God, thank God, thank God for the worship He provides. I'm so glad I can worship Jesus. I'm so glad that He is a bright, living reality to me. And, friend, Jesus is the only hope of this sin-cursed, judgment-deserving, hell-bound confused world in which we live.

Dr. Lee told another story. He told a story about a schoolhouse fire in South Carolina. Before the men of the community could get there, that schoolhouse had turned into a blazing inferno. And the exits were blocked. The children were inside crying and screaming. The strong men of the community came to see if they could rescue those children. But the blaze was too intense. No mortal could go into those flames and survive. One man was standing there, and he saw the face of his boy, his little boy. And the boy caught his father's face. And the boy cried out through the flames, "Father, can't you save me? Daddy, can't you save me?" The strong men held the father back, because to go in would be suicide. And that father stood there and watched his son wither in those flames like a flower if you turn an acetylene torch on it. His hair turned white almost overnight. Day after day, week after week, he heard his voice saying, "Daddy, can't you save me? Daddy, can't you save me?" That man only lived for two years after that, because his heart was broken and his spirit was crushed.

Well, let me change the idiom a little bit. Our world is on fire. We have a generation of people who don't know where they're going. They're looking for something, someone to deliver them. And they turn to science and say, "Science, are you going to save us?" Science says, "I can tell you how far the sun is from the earth—ninety-three million miles. But I cannot tell you how to have your sin removed from your heart." "Philosophy, can't you save us?" Philosophy says, "I can tell you more and more about less and less until you know everything about nothing. But I can't save you." "Education, can't you save us? We have our cyclotrons; we have our lasers; we have our spaceships; we have our computers. Are you going to save us?" The more man knows, the deeper he sinks. And we live in a generation today that is afraid of what it knows—afraid of it. We're afraid we're going to be consumed in some holocaust by what we've created with our own hands. "Well, culture, can you save me? Can you teach us how to be nicer people, more polite, to enjoy the arts?" And culture says, "All I can do is make the world a better place to go to hell from. I cannot save you."

Let's try something else. "Jesus, can you save us?" Oh, my friend, Jesus saves! Jesus saves! Jesus saves! Do you understand that? The only hope of the world is Jesus.

Now, let's narrow it down just a little bit. The only hope you have is Jesus. You may be like the Pharisees now. You may think you know it all, that you have it all. You may be depending upon education and government and money and finance and culture. But you're going to perish like that boy perished in the flames without Jesus. The wisest thing that anybody could do, ever will do, is give his or her heart to Jesus. And if I had a thousand lives, I would give every one of them to Jesus, our great Savior. May this church forever lift up the name of Jesus, who is greater, far greater, than anyone who has ever lived and all who have ever lived. His name is Jesus!



# The Parable of the Sower

*By Adrian Rogers*

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**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 13

*“And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow.”*

MATTHEW 13:3

## Outline

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### Conclusion

## Introduction

I want you to turn to the Gospel of Matthew chapter 13. Tonight, we're going to be thinking on this subject: "The Parable of the Sower"—"The Parable of the Sower." Matthew chapter 13—and let's begin, if we may, together, in verse 1. And we've often heard about the Sermon on the Mount—this is the "Sermon by the Sea." The Bible says, *"The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side. And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns" and the thorns sprung*

*up, and choked them: but other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, and some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.”* (Matthew 13:1–9) Do you have your ears on tonight? “[*He that*] *hath ears to ear, let him hear.”*

Now this is the Sermon by the Sea. And I suppose that the parables that Jesus gave in Matthew 13 are some of the most misunderstood parables in all of the Bible. And the reason that many times they are misunderstood is that people do not have ears to hear what Jesus, the Master Teacher, was saying. And He indeed was the Master Teacher. People said that “*never [a] man spake like this man*”; (John 7:46) and yet, “*the common people heard him gladly.*” (Mark 12:37) Now, when you have a person who can speak as no other person ever spoke, and yet common people can understand Him, indeed, you have the Master Teacher.

### **A. The Method of His Teaching**

What was the method of His teaching? Verses 1 through 3 tell us that Jesus spoke in parables. Look in verse 3: “*And he spake many things unto them in parables.*” (Matthew 13:3) The word *parable* and our word *parallel* are related words. A parable is a story that is laid parallel down alongside a great truth. I suppose the greatest illustration, or the greatest definition or description, of a parable is just simply this: A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. That is, Jesus told a very common story; but there was more to the story than met the ear, and you had to be paying attention. Jesus is speaking in parables. And, incidentally, here in Matthew chapter 13 is the first time that Jesus began to speak in parables. Up until this time, Jesus was not speaking in parables. And so I want you to see the method of His teaching in verse 3: it was parables.

### **B. The Mystery of His Teaching**

I want you to see the mystery of His teaching. Look in verses 10 and 11: “*And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.*” (Matthew 13:10–11) Now these parables reveal mysteries; and so there is the mystery of His teaching. And you cannot just take cold and callused hands, and lay them upon this book, and open this book, and bring to it an undisciplined and an uncircumcised and an unspiritual mind, and expect to understand this book. This book is full of mysteries. Now a mystery, in the Bible, is a hidden truth; and it cannot be known by human knowledge or by human wisdom, but it must come by revelation. It is a hidden truth that you can only know by revelation. And so Jesus here is speaking in mysteries. And that’s the reason that some people don’t understand the Bible: They don’t have eyes to see.

I think it was Bill Gothard who told of a student who was in a class and this professor in his college class asked, “How many of you in this class believe the Bible is the Word of God?” He said it with such a sneer on his face that none would raise their hand except for one Christian young man there in that class. And he knew that he must be true to his Lord and Savior, and so he lifted his hand and confessed that he believed that the Bible was the Word of God and that he loved the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Savior. Then that professor began to cut this young man down. Immediately, at the beginning of the class, he ridiculed the Bible. He ridiculed Christianity. He ridiculed it as superstition, and as fugeyism, and as something that was out of date, and so forth. And then the professor sort of climaxed all that he had to say by saying, “Young man, I want you to know that the Bible is a bundle of blunders and a book of nonsense. I have read it, and it makes no sense to me.” And that young man, nonplussed, said, “Sir, may I say a word to you now?” And the professor said, “What is it?” He said, “Sir, the Bible is God’s love letter to His children. If you’ve read it, and it doesn’t make any sense to you, it’s because you’ve been reading somebody else’s mail.” Amen?

### **C. The Motive of His Teaching**

Now, let me tell you something, friend. It is a book of mysteries, and those mysteries are revealed to God’s children. So you see the method of His teaching was parables. You see the mystery of His teaching: It is full of truths that you cannot know except by revelation. Now I want you to see the motive of His teaching. Look again, if you will, beginning in verse 10: *“And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?”* (Matthew 13:10) That is, “What is your motive for teaching in parables?” And Jesus had a twofold motive: His first motive was to reveal; and, surprisingly, His second motive was to conceal. Now, many times, people tell us, “Well, Jesus spoke to us in parables to help us to understand.” Well, that’s true; but it’s only half-true. He also spoke in parables so that some people would not understand. And if you don’t understand that, you don’t understand the full meaning of teaching in parables.

#### **1. To Reveal**

Now, notice one of His motives was to reveal. Notice again: *“And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.”* (Matthew 13:10–11) And so our Lord says, “I am going to let you in on a secret. I’m going to show you things that I’m not going to show to others.” And I imagine the disciples thought, “Well, why us? Why are you going to show us things that you’re not going to show them?” And Jesus answers that thought in

verse 12, and He explains why He's revealing things to His disciples and He's not going to reveal it to other people. He goes on to say, "*For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.*" (Matthew 13:12)

Now, why did the Lord Jesus reveal His truth to certain people? Was Jesus just being prejudicial? Was Jesus being discriminatory? Was Jesus unfair? Was Jesus biased? Why did Jesus say to these people, "I'm going to explain it to you; and other people over here, you're not going to know"? Well, Jesus gives us a clue in verse 12 when He says, "To him that hath shall be given." Have you ever heard the saying, "The rich get richer, and the poor get poorer"? Well, that, dear friend, is not only true in economics; it is definitely true in spiritual ways—"*whosoever hath, to him shall be given...but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.*" (Matthew 13:12) Jesus selected a variety of people. They were fishermen. They were tax collectors. They were politicians. But Jesus selected certain people, and He revealed truth to those people, because He saw in those people a will to obey and a hunger to know. And when He sees a hunger to know and a will to obey, then that person has something that will cause that person to get more. "To him that hath shall be given."

The Bible says in Psalm 25 and verse 9 that, "*The meek...will he teach his way.*" (Psalm 25:9) Do you know what the word *meek* means? It means "teachable." "A teachable person He will teach" Are you teachable? That is, He said, "Do you have ears to hear?"—"*[he that] hath ears to hear, let him hear.*" (Matthew 13:9) And so our Lord spoke to those who already had, that they might have more.

Let me give you an illustration to see if you can understand it better. Suppose you were a businessman, and you had a hundred thousand dollars to invest. You say, "Yeah, suppose." All right, so you had a hundred thousand to invest, and so you divide your hundred thousand—fifty thousand here, and fifty thousand there—and you put fifty thousand into a business enterprise over *here*, and you put fifty thousand into a business enterprise over *here*; and *this* enterprise starts making money, and making money, and making money; and *this* enterprise starts losing money, and losing money, and losing money. And you know that if you had more to invest over here, you could make more money. And you know if you invested more over here, you'd lose what you had. What would you do? Well, to him that has shall be given. And you would take what you had over here and just put it over here, wouldn't you? Wouldn't you go with the flow and with the action? Of course you would! And, you see, that's the reason the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

You see, our Lord is going to invest. Our Lord is going to invest His life, and He's going to invest His truth, and He's going to invest His Word in those who want to know.

And so they said, “Why do you speak in parables?” He says in verse 11, “*Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries,*” and verse 12, “*For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance.*”

## **2. To Conceal**

But not only did our Lord speak in parables that He might reveal, but our Lord also spoke in parables that He might conceal. Notice again in verse 13: “*Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.*” (Matthew 13:13–16) Now our Lord says, “I’m speaking in parables because there are certain people who are not going to understand. Indeed, I am going to conceal the truth from them. And this same story that’s going to reveal the truth to you is going to conceal the truth from them.”

Now you have to understand that Jesus was not speaking in parables up until this time. He began to speak in parables. Why did He begin to speak in parables? He began to speak in parables because at this time their rebellion against Him had reached a climax, and they had come with hardness of hearts, and they had come to criticize and to try to catch Him, and to try to confuse Him, and to try to ensnare Him. And then He began to speak in parables. For our Lord Jesus refused to cast His pearls of truth before swine. (Matthew 7:6) And so truth that is not received is taken away—truth that is not received is taken away. Look again in verse 12: “*For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.*” (Matthew 13:12) Now, friend, you’d better be careful what you do with truth, because if you do not use it, you will lose it. “To him that hath shall be given, and to him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.”

And you remember that passage over there in 2 Thessalonians the second chapter? I’ve referred to it several times. I want to refer to it again, because it is such an outstanding passage that illustrates this truth. Turn to 2 Thessalonians the second chapter, and I want you to notice an amazing truth. Second Thessalonians the second chapter, and begin with me in verse 9. The Bible speaks of the Antichrist, and it describes him in these words: “*Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,*”—there is coming a man upon this earth, the son of perdition, the man of sin, the beast, the Antichrist, who will be the devil incarnate. He will be the devil in human flesh, and he’s coming with an unbelievable

propaganda machine. The Bible calls it *“power and signs and lying wonders,”*—and notice in verse 10—*“and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish;”*—now, notice those who are going to perish. And why do they perish?—*“because they received not the love of the truth,”*—oh, dear friend, there are some people who have a love of the truth, and there are some who have a hatred and an antipathy for the truth. These people received not the love of the truth—*“that they might be saved.”* And because they did not love the truth, then notice what happens in verse 11: *“And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion...”*—you say, “Now, wait a minute. I thought it was the Antichrist.” Well, the Antichrist is only God’s tool. God allows the Antichrist to do what he does. The Antichrist could not move a finger, except God allowed it—*“And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie...”*—God will see to it that there are certain individuals who will believe the lies of the Antichrist during the Great Tribulation. And—*“God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:”*—well, why would God send them strong delusion, that they might believe a lie? Well, why would God want them to believe a lie? Verse 12 says—*“that they all might be damned”*—well, why would God want them to be damned? The Bible says—*“[they] believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”* (2 Thessalonians 2:9–12)

And, you see, dear friend, when a person receives not the love of the truth, when a person does not want to know, when a person loves his sin and has pleasure in unrighteousness more than God’s truth, God Himself sends that person strong delusion. And Jesus taught with parables, number one, to reveal, but, number two, to conceal. “To him that hath, Jesus is going to give more. And to him that had not would be taken away even that which he had.” You cannot put truth on ice. You use it, or you will lose it.

Now, dear friend, you must be careful, therefore, how you hear. *“[He that] hath ears to hear, let him hear,”* because if you do not have a love for the truth, not only will the truth be taken away from you, but in the place of that truth you will be given *“strong delusion, that [you] should believe a lie.”*

And so we go back now to the parable of the sower. This is the key parable, and it is a parable that helps us to unlock all of the Bible. And I want us to notice the parable of the sower.

## **I. The Seed**

Now Jesus says in verse 3 that *“a sower went forth to sow.”* (Matthew 13:3) Well, what is sowing? It is scattering seed. Well, what kind of seed was this man scattering? Well, if you want to know what the seed is, let’s let the Lord Jesus Christ Himself explain the parable in verse 19, and He says, *“When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was*

*sown in his heart.*” (Matthew 13:19) Well, what was sown in his heart? Well, go back to the first part of verse 19: *“When any one heareth the word of the kingdom...”* The seed is the Word of God—the seed is the Word of God. And that is our job; that is our privilege: to sow the seed. And I’m so grateful that the Bible is described as a seed. The seed is *“the word of the kingdom”*; or, again, the Bible says the seed is the Word of God. And, you see, there are many figures for the Bible. The Bible is called a hammer. The Bible is called a rock. The Bible is called a sword. The Bible is called light. The Bible is called many things, but one of the most beautiful figures and illustrations and metaphors for the Word of God is that the Bible is a seed.

And why is this? Because a seed has life in it. Now one thing that I’ve learned about this Bible is that this book lives. Oh, not these literal pages, but the Word is alive. Hebrews 4:12 says, *“For the word of God is quick, and powerful.”* (Hebrews 4:12) Do you know what that word *quick* is? *Zon*—it’s the word we get our word *zoology* or *zoo* from; it is “alive.” This book pulsates with life. Jesus said in the Gospel of John, *“The words...I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”* (John 6:63) This book is not like any other book. It has life in it.

And so the seed is the Word. And I’ve seen the Word, I’ve seen it bring forth life so many times. Only life can beget life. We are *“born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God.”* (1 Peter 1:23) And so the thing that encourages me when I preach: I’m not depending upon my powers of persuasion; I’m not depending upon my logic; I’m not depending upon any so-called personality or cunningness that I might have. I must depend upon the Word of God. My job is to get the Word out, because I know that if you will understand this Word, if you have ears to hear this Word, there’s life in this Word. And it will germinate; it will sprout.

I was in another city a few weeks ago. I received a note from a man. He said, “You do not know me, but,” he said, “I’m a preacher in this city.” He said, “When I was a teenage boy, I was walking down the street. You stopped your car, and you talked to me about the Lord Jesus Christ, and,” he said, “I refused Christ then.” And he said, “I know it’s been so many years ago that you probably will never even remember the incident that took place, but,” he said, “I want you to know I never did get that out of my heart until God broke my heart. And God has saved me. And God has called me to preach. And I’m pastoring in this city.” That’s in Huntsville, Alabama. Isn’t that a beautiful thing how the Word of God—the Word of God—was down in that boy’s heart, and it just germinated and germinated, and it brought forth life? Oh, how powerful is the Word of God!

And, preachers, I want to tell you something, you preacher boys who are here. It’s not enough to tickle the soil; you’ve got to sow the seed. You have got to get the Word out. No matter what else you do, no matter how good the song service, no matter how

sweet the fellowship, no matter how fine the organization, it is all in vain if you're not putting seed in the ground. What farmer over here would plow? What farmer over here would kill the weeds? What farmer over here would fertilize and then fail to put the seed in the ground? Friend, you must—you must, you must, you must—sow the seed. The seed is alive; and so the seed is the Word.

## II. The Sower

Now, what about the sower? Look again, if you will, in chapter 13, verse 3. And he says here, *“Behold, a sower went forth to sow.”* (Matthew 13:3) Well, who is the sower? Turn over to verse 37, and you'll see: *“He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man.”* (Matthew 13:37) The sower is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. And He pictures Himself as a farmer scattering the seed with a lavish hand, and it is a picture of Jesus Christ Himself.

And as you're going to see in a moment, this sower just scattered the seed on all kinds of soil. You're going to find that some of the seed fell by the wayside, but He scattered the seed there by the wayside. (Matthew 13:4) You're going to find that some of the seed fell on stony ground, shallow ground, but He scattered the seed on shallow ground. (Matthew 13:5) You're going to find out that some of the seed fell among the weeds and the thorns, but He scattered the seed among the thorns. (Matthew 13:7) And you're going to find out that some of the seed fell on good, soft, moist, broken, fertile ground, and He scattered the seed there. (Matthew 13:8) He's just scattering the seed everywhere. And, dear friend, as our Master, so should His servants be, for Jesus is the seed scatterer, Jesus is the seed sower. And Jesus said, *“As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.”* (John 20:21) And Jesus still wants to be scattering the seed through His new body, which is the Church. The sower is the Son of man, and we are His Body. And you never know—dear friend, you never know—who's going to get saved. Again, that boy that I picked up, frankly, I've forgotten that; I had forgotten that I'd witnessed to him. But God had not forgotten. And the seed so many times germinates.

I remember going out on a soul-winning witness one time in Tallahassee, Florida, going to see a man named Mr. Forshay. And I went to Mr. Forshay's house, and he came out—a balding man with a beard—sat down on the couch, and I started to share with Mr. Forshay. Somebody had given me his name. We sat there, and his mother came into the room. And his mother was one of the most wicked-looking women I've ever seen. I mean, she was vile-looking. She, if you had been Cecil B. DeMille and wanted to do a casting for the Wicked Witch of the West, you would have gotten her. Oh, she was something, and she came into that room. And if I ever saw a woman that I thought had a look of evil on her face—if I ever saw a woman that I thought hated God,



and hated me, and hated everybody—it was this woman. And I thought, “O dear Lord, I wish that woman had not come in here while I’m trying to witness to her son.” Her son, I suppose, was in his thirties; but she came in and sat down there, and she fixed her eyes on me, and they burned like coals. And she had a pot of snap beans, and she came in there, and the whole time I was talking, she was snapping those beans—just like that—and looking at me and snapping those beans. I could just feel my neck breaking every time she’d snap one of those beans, and I’d say, “Mr. Forshay, I want you to know that God loves you”—*snap*—“has a wonderful”—*snap*—“for your life.” And I just thought, “Dear Lord, I’ll never get through this testimony. God, help me, please.” And I just steeled myself, and I said, “God, I’m not going to pay any attention to her. I’m going to ignore her, and I’m going to present the gospel to Mr. Forshay.” And I went on to present the gospel to this man.

Finally, I got down and I said, “Mr. Forshay, would you like to receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and be saved?” And his chin started to quiver. He said, “I would.” Wonderful! And I just didn’t even dare look at her. I didn’t know what she was going to do when that happened. I said, “All right, bow your head, and let’s pray.” And he bowed his head and prayed, and he prayed and asked Christ to come into his heart. And I said, “Now, Mr. Forshay, if you meant that with all your heart, with all of your soul, as best you know how; if today, now, right now, you receive Christ as your Lord and Savior, give me your hand.” And he put his hand in mine.

And when he did that, she stood up and she started for me, and I said, “Well, at least I can go out having won a soul to Jesus Christ.” She came across that room, and with the tears streaming down her cheeks she stuck out her hand, and put her hand in mine, too. She had prayed and asked Christ to come into her heart. I had so misread that woman. She might have been ugly; but she wanted Jesus. And it was just her nervousness that was causing her to do all of this, and her heart was broken.

I got so excited I said, “Is there anybody else in the house that might need to be saved?” And there was. They went in the back room and fetched two more out, and they got saved right there. And God taught me a lesson, a lesson that I needed to know, dear friend: that sometimes you cannot tell what kind of soil you’re sowing on. I mean, it may turn out to be rocky soil, and it may turn out to be shallow soil, and it may turn out to be hard soil; but you don’t know.

And in the story, the sower just scattered the seed. And the field is the world. And that’s what we’re called to do. We’re not called to prejudge people. You do not know who’s going to be saved.

I remember another episode that happened to me down in Stuart, Florida. I went out to witness to a man who was a crop duster. How he ever got to be a crop duster I’ll never know, because he was almost seven feet tall, and he sat in an airplane literally,

actually, with both legs dangling out on either side of that airplane in order to sit in the cockpit of that little crop dusting plane, and then had to hike a leg in to kick the rudder. But he would fly, actually, with his legs hanging outside that airplane—that’s how long this old boy was. And I went to talk to him about the Lord Jesus Christ, and he got saved. And then he said, “I want you to come and talk to my daddy.” I went out to the house where this man lived and went in to talk with this man. If ever, ever I saw a man that I thought was obstinate, if ever I saw a man that I thought was hypercritical, if ever I saw a man that I thought was a pseudo-intellectual, who looked with scorn and disdain upon me, it was that man. I gave a pitiful testimony, I’m certain. As best I knew how, I tried to share the gospel with this man. I remember when I drove away from that home I felt so humiliated. I felt so defeated. I just felt like I had wasted my time completely.

I left that part of the country and went to seminary in New Orleans, stayed in seminary for four years, came back to that part of the country, took a little church, and preached. I had not been there but about two Sundays when I looked out in the congregation and I saw that same man. And I thought, “Well, has he come to mock me some more, to scorn me some more? But after the service, when I read the visitors’ cards, on his card it said this: “Wonderful service. Through the testimony of Adrian Rogers I came to know Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior.” Friend, I was stupefied; I was amazed. I had no idea—no idea—that the Word of God was finding lodging in that hard heart. And, you see, if I had gone to some other part of the country, and never come back to that part of the country, I would not have known till this day that that man had received Jesus Christ. Had that boy—that hitchhiker—not told me and written me that note, I would never have known that, ladies and gentlemen.

What I’m trying to say is, don’t you go around saying, “This is hard soil; and this is soft soil; and this is weedy soil; and this is shallow, shallow soil.” Our duty is just to scatter the Word. I mean, “*The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it.*” (Psalm 68:11) That’s what Psalms says. And wouldn’t it be wonderful—just look around you—wouldn’t it be wonderful if everybody in this building just went out tomorrow and just started sowing the seed? You let God take care of the harvest. He’s the Lord of the harvest. But, dear friend, we are to scatter the seed. We are to sow the seed everywhere we go and let God take care of the harvest.

### **III. The Soil**

And so, we see the seed. We see the sower. But I want you to notice the soil. This is primarily a parable of the soil. As we continue to read, let’s notice what happened here.

#### **A. The Stubborn Hearer**

First of all, I want you to notice in verse 4: “*And when he sowed, some seeds fell by*

*the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up.*” (Matthew 13:4) That is Matthew chapter 13 and verse 4. This pictures the stubborn hearer—the hard heart of the stubborn hearer.

Now, what is the wayside? The wayside is just a path through the field. You have to walk through the field, or walk around the field, and it’s the part of the soil that has been trampled down by traffic. And there are so many people whose hearts are like this. There are so many people whose hearts have become byways and thoroughfares for this world. They’re worldly people. Their hearts are like concrete. They have been hardened and trampled down, and there’s no softness there. And so the seed just simply lies on the surface. The fowls come—and we’re going to find out that the fowls represent demon spirits that steal the Word away. And I know, as I preach tonight, there may be some like that who are hearing my voice tonight, and the seed will just fall on hard, stubborn hearts. There is the hard heart of the stubborn hearer.

You know, the Bible warns us about a hard heart. In Hebrews chapter 3, verses 7 and 8, the Bible says, *“To day if ye will hear [God’s] voice, harden not your hearts.”* (Hebrews 3:7–8) It’s a sad thing when a person gets a hard heart. Sometimes a man will come to church, and he’ll say, “Well, preachers don’t preach like they used to when I was a boy.” Some of them do, mister; you just don’t hear like you used to when you were a boy. There was a time when your heart was warm and moist and fertile, and the seed could get in. Oh, the tragedy—the tragedy—of a hardened heart!

Just keep your Bible there in Matthew 13, and turn to John 12. Let me show you a sad scripture in John chapter 12, beginning in verse 32. I think it’s one of the most poignantly sad verses in all of the Bible—John chapter 12, beginning in verse 37: *“But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet”*—and notice the phrase that starts with “yet.” John writes it almost with unbelief and marvel—*“though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?”* And then, notice verse 39: *“Therefore they could not believe.”* (John 12:37–39) Verse 37 says, in effect, they *would* not believe; verse 39 says that they *could* not believe.

Did you know that your heart can get so hard that you cannot believe, that the Word of God can never get in, and your heart just becomes charred and stubborn and unbreakable and un-yieldable? And some seed falls by the wayside; that is, a heart that has been trampled down by the traffic of this world. And so, some seed falls on the hard heart of the stubborn hearer.

## **B. The Superficial Hearer**

And then, let’s continue to look and see. Other seed falls on the shallow heart of the

superficial hearer. Look in verses 5 and 6: *“Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth:”—*now the idea is not rocks in the soil; that’s not the idea. The idea is a rock ledge that just has about an half an inch or a quarter of an inch of soil on top of it. It’s a stony place. Underneath is a rock ledge. There’s not much earth; there’s no depth—*“and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.”* (Matthew 13:5–7)

What does this represent? Well, listen to what our Lord says that it represents in verses 20 and 21. And, incidentally, verse 19 tells us about the hard heart. Let’s look at that while we’re here: *“When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one,”*—that is, the devil. He’s what the fowls represent—*“and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.”* Now, let’s look at the shallow hearer, the superficial hearer: *“But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth”—*or, “endures”—*“for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.”* (Matthew 13:19–21) That is, the seed just springs up, and then it withers away when it’s scorched by the sun—by persecution.

Now the problem was there was just no depth; and, therefore, it doesn’t get in. You see, in the first instance of the hard heart of the stubborn hearer, the seed could not get in. But in the case of the shallow heart, the seed got in, but it couldn’t get down; it had no depth. And it really speaks of superficial emotionalism. And no preacher could be a preacher without knowing how many people there are like this. I tell you that when you stand up here Sunday morning and preach the Word of God, Sunday night and preach the Word of God, and explain the gospel, and talk about Christ and salvation, heaven and hell, and the rest of it, and give the invitation, you see people who come down the aisle, many of them with tears in their eyes, but they’re superficial; they never make a heart commitment to Jesus Christ. The seed gets in, but the seed never gets down. They’re shallow people; they’re superficial people. They are feeling only emotions. Some men—so many people—are looking for an emotional experience.

But, friend, emotionalism never saved any body. As Sidlow Baxter has well said, “Salvation is the deepest work of God. Your emotions are the shallowest part of your nature. And God doesn’t do His deepest work in the shallowest part.”

### **C. The Selfish Hearer**

And so, in the first place, Jesus said some seed is going to fall on the stubborn heart. And then, Jesus said, in the second place, some seed is going to fall on the superficial heart. But then, He goes on to mention the third kind of life. Look, if you will,

in verse 7—Matthew chapter 13 and verse 7. Look at it again. Here's the third type of person: *"And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them."* (Matthew 13:7)

What does this represent? Well, turn to verse 22, and let Jesus explain it: *"He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful."* (Matthew 13:22) Now, here is a person, when the seed gets in and the seed gets down, but the seed does not have an undisputed hold. It has a deep hold, but it is divided. There are two crops growing in the same soil. There are weeds and thorns and briars, and there is a rival crop that was not disturbed. This is the person who never ever really repents. And there are many like that. Again, they come down the aisle to give their heart to Jesus Christ; but they never deal with the weeds, they never deal with the thorns. They never deal with these things, and they have a divided heart. These are those who have never repented. *"A double minded man is unstable in all his ways."* (James 1:8) And the Bible says in Luke 13:3, *"Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."* (Luke 13:3)

And why is it that so many people—members of this congregation and other congregations—are unfruitful? I'll tell you why. They have never let go of this world with both hands and taken Jesus Christ with both hands. Have you done that? Is He Lord of all? Many of you are not fruitful, because you've never been saved—you have never been saved. The seed has gotten in; but the seed has not gotten an undisputed hold in your life, and you've never said, "Lord Jesus, you are Lord of all." And, friend, if you've not made Him Lord of all, in my estimation, you are not saved. He cannot be half Lord. You cannot say, "There's room in my heart for weeds, and there's room in my heart for the seed." No, dear friend, if you do not say, "Jesus Christ alone, Jesus Christ only, and Jesus Christ always," I'm afraid that you've never met the Lord of glory. Nothing wrong with the seed; nothing wrong with the sower; the problem is with the soil.

#### **D. The Sincere Hearer**

Now I want you to notice the fourth category of hearers. First of all, there's the stubborn heart: that's the hardened heart by the wayside. And then, there's the superficial heart: that's the stony heart. And then, there is, dear friend, the selfish heart, where there is weeds and thorns and the cares of this world, and a person is thinking about himself rather than the things of God. But, finally, thank God, there is that sincere heart; there is the open heart of the sincere hearer. Look, if you will, in verse 8 of this same parable. The Lord Jesus goes on to say, *"But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."* (Matthew 13:8–9)

Now, friend, your life—your life—is tested by the fruit that it bears. You see, Jesus said, “If you abide in me, you’ll bring forth fruit.” (John 15:5) You know, we have a way in our Southern Baptist Convention of counting baptisms. Maybe we ought to start counting disciples—amen?—counting disciples. Maybe we ought to start counting fruit bearers—fruit bearers. You see, there are a lot of people who are superficial hearers, a lot of people who are stubborn hearers, a lot of people who are selfish hearers. But thank God for those who are sincere hearers. The Word falls on ground that is warm and moist and fertile and broken.

## Conclusion

Now, friend, it’s up to you as to what kind of soil the seed’s going to fall on. There’s nothing wrong with the seed, and the problem is not with the sower if he’s a gospel preacher; but the heart, dear friend, is what you’re responsible for—your own heart. The Word is what I’m responsible for: I’ve got to preach it.

I shared with you a story, I believe, some years ago about an experience I had when I was preaching in Louisiana. I was in a South Louisiana town, a county seat town. I was holding a revival. I must have been holding it, because it never got loose. We never had anything to happen. I mean, I wept, and prayed, and shouted, and screamed, and threatened, and coaxed. I did everything I know to do: I searched my doctrine; I searched my heart; I fasted; I prayed. A few people came forward during the invitation, I think, because they were sorry for me; but nothing really was happening. I just couldn’t understand it.

During the invitation, I said, “Lord God, you’ve got to give me a word. God, you’ve got to speak to me.” And I sat down over there in that chair on the platform and just bowed my head, Brother Scotty, and said, “Lord, speak to me.” And I said, “Lord, I’m just going to open my Bible, and please give me a word from the Word.” My Bible fell open to Ezekiel chapter 3 and verse 7, and it said this: that *“the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for [they] are [a stubborn and rebellious people].”* (Ezekiel 3:7) And, oh, I cannot tell you what that did to my heart. God spoke to me in an instant and said, “Adrian Rogers, you have no right to be frustrated. You have no right to be feeling sorry for yourself, and you have no right to feel that you’re a failure. You’re not a failure. You’re God’s man. You’re anointed. You preach the truth; and the only reason they won’t hear you is because they won’t hear me. And if they won’t hear me, you wouldn’t want them to hear you. And their problem is not with you; their problem is with God. They are a stubborn people; they are a rebellious people.”

I said, “Lord, that’s such a wonderful verse.” I just saw it by random. I said, “Lord, give me another one.” And I looked away and put my finger down on another verse of

Scripture. And I want to tell you that when I saw that second verse I almost came unglued. And this is what the second one said—it was Ezekiel 2 and verse 5, and it says this: *“And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear...yet shall [they] know that there hath been a prophet among them.”* (Ezekiel 2:5) Amen? I tell you, I’ve carried that in my heart ever since, and I hope it will never get out of my heart, never get out of my life: that sometimes people will not hear me because they won’t hear God. But, whether they hear or whether they don’t, God says, “I’m going to make them know that *“there hath been a prophet among them.”*” Do you know what that says to me, preacher boys? Do you know what that says to me, Mr. Deacon? Do you know what that says to me, ladies and gentlemen? It says to me that it’s our job to scatter the seed. It’s your job to prepare the soil. Our job is to sow the seed. And, whether they hear or whether they don’t, God says, “They’ll know *“there hath been a prophet among them.”*”

And, you see, sometimes the seed falls on stubborn ground. Is your heart stubborn tonight? Have you hardened your heart against God? Oh, I pray that you’d ask God to soften your heart. Sometimes the seed falls on shallow ground. Are you a superficial, emotional hearer, and that’s all? Oh, I pray God that the seed will get down and get deep. Or, perhaps, sometimes the seed falls on thorny ground. Are you one who refuses to repent and get the sin out of your life? You’re trying to raise two crops on the same piece of ground—hold onto the Lord with one hand and the world with the other hand? It cannot be done. But, oh, sometimes the seed falls on good ground. And that’s the reason Jesus said, *“[He that] hath ears to hear, let him hear.”*

# What You Can Expect

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: August 10, 2003**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 13**

*“And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow.”*

MATTHEW 13:3

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## Introduction

Matthew chapter 13. We have just marvelous music today, and I praise the Lord for it, and for the assurance, for the anchor, that we've sung about; for the great love, the overmastering love, our of Lord; for the assurance. And the church is alive and well because we need that assurance today.

There is scandal in the church. To think that a major denomination would ensconce a practicing, open, avowed homosexual as a bishop! It is beyond comprehension, but it



has happened. To see another great denomination pay multimillions of dollars to settle lawsuits because of pedophile priests: we're staggered; we're shocked; we're hurt; we're bewildered. Some may say, "Well, pastor, you're a Baptist so what right do you have to talk about it?" Friend, I join many heartbroken Episcopalians and many heartbroken Roman Catholics in sorrow. I'm also a Christian, and if they profess to be Christians, then somehow we are linked together. At least, we have a right to speak about it because we are Christians. And it's not only in the Episcopalian denomination or the Roman Catholic denomination; we Baptists can hang our head in shame for much that has happened—for scandals, for dishonesty, for apostasy.

Now the question comes: What's going to happen? What about the future? What may we expect? Has all of this taken God by surprise? Not at all! As a matter of fact, the Bible prophesies it. Furthermore, as I've often said, *there is no panic in heaven*. God knows what is happening. As a matter of fact, He has delineated it for us here in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew. And as we look in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, we're going to find our Lord giving seven parables. These are the strange mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. And our Lord looks at the course of this age, and our Lord tells us clearly what we may expect so that we do not get stampeded, so that we do not misunderstand, so that we be not discouraged, and so that we do not get the idea that somehow the gospel has failed—or worse yet, it never was true. So, be prepared to study with me this morning.

Now, in Matthew chapter 13, it tells us that everything is right on track, everything is exactly as God prophesied that it would be. The Lord Jesus, in Matthew chapter 13, gives us seven parables. He calls these "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." Now, they're mysteries because unsaved people don't understand them. They don't have the spiritual apparatus to understand them. But the child of God is not in the dark; the child of God can understand. And the child of God is not stampeded, nor does he throw over his faith when these things happen. I want to mention seven things that you can expect so when they happen, you'll be ready for them.

## **I. You Can Expect Many to Reject the Gospel**

Number one: You may expect many to reject the gospel. Don't get the idea that if the gospel is preached, people are going to stumble all over themselves coming to Jesus. Matthew 13, verses 3 through 9: *"And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns" and the thorns sprung*

*up, and choked them: but other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.”* (Matthew 13:3–9) Now, not everybody has ears to hear. Those who are unspiritual, those who are unsaved, don’t have ears to hear. If you’re saved, you’ll have ears to hear.

Jesus told a parable about a man, a farmer, who took a sack full of seed, and he goes out to sow. The sower goes forth to sow. And he tells of four kinds of soil that the seed fell on.

### **A. Some Seed Fell by the Wayside**

Some seed fell by the wayside. Now, the wayside is the hardened path. When that seed fell by the wayside, it was like concrete, cement. The seed could not get in so it lay there on the wayside. Now, what’s the meaning of the seed by the wayside? Well, go over to chapter 13 and verse 19, and look at verse 19. Jesus explains the parable: *“When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.”* (Matthew 13:19) So, I’ll preach this morning, and in this building and other places where this message will be broadcast or telecast, there will people who will hear it, but it will never get in. Sometimes preaching is like pouring water on a rock. There are people in this auditorium who will not hear at all what I have to say. The seed is on the surface. Satan comes and snatches it away. It does no good.

### **B. Some Seed Fell on Stony Ground**

Now secondly, some seed fell on stony ground. Look, if you will now, in this passage. The seed, it falls on stony ground. The idea of stony ground is not ground that has a stone here or a stone there, but it is ground that has a sub-surface of stone. That is, the soil on the top is only very, very meager. It is thin. In this instance, the seed gets in, but it can’t get down. Jesus explains it. Look in verse 20: *“But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it”—*but then our Lord goes on to say something happens to this man. The seed can’t get in. Look in verse 21—*“yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.”* (Matthew 13:20–21)

Now, there are people who sprout up. You give an invitation, say, “Come to Jesus,” they come forward, say, “Yes, I want to be a Christian.” But difficulty comes, persecution, heartache—they fall away. They have no root. The seed got in, but it doesn’t get down. And so, they don’t last. They’ve never been truly saved.

### **C. Some Seed Fell Among Thorns**

Now then, there's a third category. The seed falls among thorns. Well, what does that speak of? Look in verse 22: *"He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful."* (Matthew 13:22) In some, the seed doesn't get in. In others, it gets in, but it doesn't get down. In others, it gets in, it gets down, but there's a rival crop. The deceitfulness of this world, the weeds, choke out the seed, and therefore it never really prospers.

### **D. Some Seed Fell on Good Ground**

And then, some falls on good ground, ground that is rich, moist, warm, and fertile. What is that? Well, look in verse 23. Jesus said, *"But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."* (Matthew 13:23)

Now, what is the meaning of this parable? Well, friend, the sower goes forth to sow. The problem is not with the seed; the problem is with the soil. I can prepare a good message. My heart can be right. I can be preaching to people today who will not receive the seed. Some are like the wayside. Some are like the stony ground. Some are like a field that is infested with weeds. But I know there are others whose hearts are open today to the Word of God, and that's what keeps me preaching.

Now listen, don't expect the gospel to convert the world. That is to assign to the gospel a purpose that God never assigned to it. Don't get the idea that all you have to do is preach Jesus in His beauty and people will just come running to be saved. There's nothing wrong with the message. There's nothing wrong with the gospel. The gospel is true. The seed is good, healthy, wholesome seed. But there are different kinds of soil.

Now, that's the first thing that you need to expect: you may expect many to reject the gospel of Jesus Christ. So, don't ask yourself, "If the gospel is true, why aren't more people saved?" Jesus said there would be a little flock. (Luke 12:32) Jesus said, "The way is narrow." (Matthew 7:14) Jesus said, *"Few there [are] that find it."* (Matthew 7:14) Don't expect the whole world to be converted. Just don't expect it.

## **II. You Can Expect to Find Hypocrites in the Church**

Number two—here's something else you can expect: You can expect to find hypocrites in the church. "Oh?" Yes, you may. Look, if you will, in Matthew 13, verses 24 through 30: *"Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the*

*householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.*" (Matthew 13:24–30) Now, a man, this time, sows good seed in good soil, but an enemy comes and puts weeds in with the wheat. The weeds here are called "tares," and from the study I have done a tare looks very similar to wheat. At first, it's very hard to tell the difference.

Now, what is the meaning of this parable? I want you to listen now so you'll know what to expect. You can expect hypocrites in the church. The sower who sowed the good seed is Jesus Christ Himself. Look in verse 37: "*He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man*"—"the Son of man" is a term that Jesus used for Himself. Now, what is the seed? The good seed are true believers. Matthew 13, verse 38—"the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom." (Matthew 13:37–38) We are His good seed, and He has planted us in this world. Now, who is the enemy who sows the bad seed? The one who sows the bad seed, or the tares, is the devil. Look in verse 39: "*The enemy that sowed them is the devil.*" (Matthew 13:39) Now, the devil wants to infiltrate the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, and he has done a good job of that. We'll say more about that in a moment. It is the devil who has sown weeds with God's wheat in the world. Now, number three: The harvest is the end of the world. Look in verse 39: "*The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.*" (Matthew 13:39) Now, learn three things about the weeds and the wheat.

### **A. The Sowing of the Tares**

First of all, the sowing of the weeds. Satan said, "If I can't beat the church, then I'll join the church." Friend, *when you look for the devil, never fail to look in the pulpit.* His ministers are transformed as angels of light. (2 Corinthians 11:14) "*An enemy hath done this.*" (Matthew 13:28) That's the sowing of the tares.

### **B. The Growing of the Tares**

Now, the growing of the tares. Many times we would want to go and try to weed out the weeds, but we can't do that. Look again, if you will, in verses 28 through 29: "*An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.*" (Matthew 13:28–29)

Now, God knows who the hypocrites are. We're not talking about apostates here

now; we're not talking about people who openly, blatantly deny. Obviously, they need to be dealt with. But we're just talking about people that look so much like a true Christian, act like a Christian. There's in this place right here... How do I know that *you* are saved and *you* are lost, and *you're* saved and *you're* lost, and *you're* saved and *you're* lost? How do I know? You all look holy to me. You all look like wheat to me. But there is a difference. We don't know. You don't know who's saved and who's lost. We would make a terrible blunder if we just started to say, "*You're* saved; *you're* lost. *You're* saved; *you're* lost."

† I was with a group of men one time at a convention. Some preacher boys came up to Dr. Gray Allison, who is a member of our church and the founder of Mid-America Seminary. They were all upset about a certain person who'd done a certain thing, and they said, "Dr. Allison, do you think he's saved?" I was standing there. I was wondering what Dr. Allison would say. Dr. Allison looked at them and said, "I don't know that you're saved." He said, "The only one in this bunch I know is saved is me." I thought, "There's a lot of wisdom there."†

### C. The Knowing of the Tares

There is the sowing of the weeds. There is the growing of the weeds. But friend, one day there will be the knowing of the weeds. Notice again, if you will, in verse 30: "*Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.*" (Matthew 13:30)

Now, there's a judgment coming. I want to say, you may be sitting in this building today unconverted. You may have a Bible in your hand; you may have a smile on your face; you may have a song on your lips; but you have never been saved, and you're in with the wheat. One of these days, there's coming a separation. And I beg you in the name of Jesus—listen to me—please give your heart to Christ. Quit playing the game. Get saved.

† You say, "Well, I do a lot of good." Friend, a counterfeit twenty-dollar bill can do a lot of good. It can buy medicine. It can buy food. It can buy milk. It can pay the rent. But it will not pass when it gets in the hands of the federal agents. It will be burned no matter how much good that it did.†

### III. You Can Expect the Rise of False Cults

Number three—here's a third thing you can expect: You can expect the rise of false cults. Now, we have all kinds of cults in the world. Do they take God by surprise? No, look in verses 31 and 32: "*Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field:*

*which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs*”—now, watch this—*“and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.”* (Matthew 13:31–32)

Now, wait a minute. You’ve seen mustard greens, but you’ve never see a mustard tree. And yet, our Lord says, “Here’s something strange.” A mustard seed is very small, and the normal mustard plant is comparatively small. It’s an herb, not a tree. But now, Jesus said this herb becomes a tree. What’s He talking about? He’s talking about unnatural growth. He’s talking about something that is monstrous, something that is false, something that is apostate.

Now, some people have the idea that the kingdom is going to grow just like we take a little mustard seed, and then the church is going to grow, grow, grow, grow, grow. “Isn’t it wonderful how big it is? Look at our tree.” No, no, no. That’s not what He’s talking about. “And the sweet little birds come nesting in the limbs of this tree.” No, this tree represents apostate Christianity, and the birds represent demon powers.

Now, see how Jesus uses the word *birds* in this chapter—in chapter 13, verse 4: *“And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came”—the birds—“and devoured them up.”* (Matthew 13:4) These are the devil’s dirty birds. And He, Jesus, said so Himself. Look in verse 19: *“When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart.”* (Matthew 13:19) In the first part, He calls them “birds,” and now He calls them “the wicked one.” These are demon spirits. Over in the book of the Revelation, God described Babylon, which stands for false religion, apostate religion—and here’s what He says about Babylon: *“And he cried”—Revelation 18:2—“And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold”—that is, “the cage”—“of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.”* (Revelation 18:2) These are the devil’s dirty birds—false cults.

All of this monstrous development of the thing called Christianity has not taken God by surprise. The false cults the liberal church may parade under the guise of Christianity, but it has not been done by God. It is a monstrous development. It has not taken God by surprise. So, somebody says, “Well, pastor, if the Bible is the Word of God, why don’t all of you religious guys get together? If the Bible is true, if the Bible is inspired, how do you have this cult, and this cult, and this cult, and this cult?” Listen to your pastor: if everybody did believe the same thing and there were no so-called false cults, it would not prove the Bible true; it would prove the Bible false because the Bible prophesies these things. Do you see? I mean, the Bible tells us you can expect the rise of false cults.

#### IV. You Can Expect Corruption in the Professing Church

Number four: You can expect corruption in the professing church. You can expect it. Look, if you will, in Matthew 13, verses 33: *“Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.”* (Matthew 13:33) Now, in much Sunday school literature and many pulpits they say, “Oh, that’s the gospel: you take a little pinch of yeast, and put in the dough, and it just leavens the whole lump. Isn’t that sweet? Isn’t that wonderful how Christianity grows?” Friend, leaven, in the Bible, is not an emblem and a symbol of that which is good, but that which is evil. The key to understanding this mystery parable is the word *leaven*. Leaven, in the Bible, is symbolic of evil and corruption.

Let me give you some verses; jot them down. Exodus chapter 12, verse 8, speaking of the Passover: *“And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread.”* (Exodus 12:8) Leviticus 2, verses 4 through 5: *“If thou bring an oblation of a meat offering baken in the oven, it shall be unleavened cakes of fine flour mingled with oil.”* (Leviticus 2:4) Oil is an emblem of the Holy Spirit. Leaven is an emblem of sin. Verse 5: *“And if thy oblation be a meat offering baken in a pan, it shall be of fine flour unleavened, mingled with oil.”* (Leviticus 2:5) When Paul talked about the sin in the church at Corinth—and the church at Corinth was a carnal and a worldly church—here’s what he said to that church. They were kind of boastful of their liberality and their liberalism. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 5, verses 6 through 8: *“Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump.”* (1 Corinthians 5:6–7) “Purge it out. Get rid of it.” He says in verse 8: *“Therefore let us keep the feast”—*talking about Passover—*“not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”* (1 Corinthians 5:8) Leaven stands for malice and wickedness.

Now, think of the corruption. Think of what you read in yesterday’s newspaper. Think of what you will read in tomorrow’s newspaper. You say, “How could that happen?” Well, a woman put the leaven in the bread. A woman out of place, in Bible prophecy, parable, and type, always speaks of ungodly religion. The one thing about leaven is it works quietly at first, undetected at first, and it works in lukewarm conditions. You’ve got to get it just right for the leaven to work. But after it’s done its work, it’s very obvious: you see everything all puffed up. Jesus said, *“Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees.”* (Matthew 16:6,11; Mark 8:15) Jesus said, *“Beware of the leaven of...Sadducees.”* (Matthew 16:6,11) Jesus said, *“Beware...of the leaven of Herod.”* (Mark 8:15) The leaven of the Pharisees was legalism. I’m as much afraid of legalism as I am liberalism. The leaven of the Sadducees was liberalism. They said that there’s neither demon, nor

spirit, nor resurrection. And the leaven of Herod, that wild, lascivious king, was license and lasciviousness.

I'm amazed what people will let fly under the banner of the church. I'm amazed how some who call themselves Christians live today. And this leaven has come into the church to corrupt the church of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Paul said, "*Purge out [that] leaven.*" (1 Corinthians 5:7) You let the wheat and the tares grow together because you, as individuals, cannot tell who's who; but when there's open apostasy, it's to be purged out, it's to be taken out. Don't let it corrupt the entire church. You can expect, however, corruption in the church because Jesus said that's a part of the course of this age. That doesn't cause me to lose my faith. Friend, when I see this, my heart is broken, but I say, "Uh-huh, there it is, right in the Word of God. Uh-huh, there it is, just like our Lord said it would be."

## **V. You Can Expect Jesus to Establish His Kingdom**

Number five: You can expect—and I love this—you can expect Jesus to establish His kingdom—you can expect Jesus the Lord to establish His kingdom. Look in verse 44: "*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth the field.*" (Matthew 13:44) Now, here's a picture of a man spading his garden, or maybe working for somebody else, or maybe just walking across a field, and he's sees something glinting there. And he begins to dig, and he looks; and there's a fabulous treasure buried in that field. Nobody else knows it's there so he covers it back up. He goes to the owner of the field and says, "Would you sell me the field?" And he says, "Well, how much?" And he says, "Well, I don't have that much, but I'll go back and get it." And the man sells everything he has, comes back, and buys that field because he knows there is a treasure in that field.

Now, some people interpret this parable as saying that Jesus is the treasure hidden in the field and we sell everything that we have and buy the Lord Jesus Christ. That's foolish. Number one: Jesus is not hidden. He is revealed, open and manifest. He said, "I've done nothing in secret." (Mark 4:22; Luke 8:17) Number two: Friend, He's not for sale. Salvation is by grace through faith, and it's the gift of God. (Ephesians 2:8) Number three: If it were for sale, we don't have a thing to buy it with. We're bankrupt sinners. What is the treasure hidden in the field? It's the kingdom of God; it is the kingdom of heaven. And it is a treasure hidden in a field. Now, the kingdom—listen to me carefully so you can understand this—the kingdom is in four stages.

### **A. The Kingdom Was Promised but Hidden in the Old Testament**

First of all, the kingdom, in the Old Testament, was promised but hidden. What I mean



is the Old Testament prophets prophesied about it, but they never saw it. They just prophesied of it. Look, if you will, in verse 17: *“For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.”* (Matthew 13:17) So, here is a treasure that was hidden. The prophets desired to see them. They couldn’t see them; they’re hidden.

### **B. Jesus Uncovered the Kingdom**

But now, for just a brief moment the treasure is uncovered. Jesus uncovered it. You’re in chapter 13. Go back to chapter 12, and look, if you will, in verse 27. Jesus had just cast the demon out of a man, and they said, “Well, you cast out demons because you’re demon-possessed yourself.” And Jesus answered them and said, *“And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God”—now, watch this—“then the kingdom of God is come unto you.”* (Matthew 12:27–28) Jesus, for a moment, uncovered the treasure, let it shine. There it was; this treasure that had been buried now is uncovered.

### **C. Jesus Covered the Kingdom Back Up**

But they refused Him. They turned from Him. Now He begins to speak to them in parables. He covers the treasure back up, and it is hidden in mystery form. The Bible says in Proverbs 25 and verse 2: *“It is the glory of God to conceal a thing.”* (Proverbs 25:2) From Matthew chapter 12 onward—listen to me carefully—Jesus stopped doing miracles from Matthew chapter 12. Backward, He’s doing all these miracles; but from Matthew chapter 12 onward, He stops doing miracles, and He begins to speak in parables. Why? Because now the kingdom is covered again. It is now in mystery form.

Why did He do this? Well, look in Matthew 13, verse 11: *“He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.”* (Matthew 13:11) It was unseen in the old time, buried. Jesus came, revealed it. They refused it. He covered it back up again. But then, He bought the field with the silver of His tears and the gold of His blood. And the people of this world never understand the kingdom. They walk over it. They trample it. They don’t see its worth. They despise it.

### **D. One Day Jesus Will Uncover the Kingdom Once Again**

But Jesus bought it, and one of these days He’s coming back to uncover it. Then we will see, we’ll understand, what our Lord is all about. Friend, you can expect our Savior to establish His kingdom. The kingdom is coming. You can count on it. You can be sure that it will happen. Now, one day it will be uncovered and displayed for all to see.

## **VI. You Can Expect Jesus to Continue to Seek and Save the Lost and to Build His Church**

Now next, number six: You can expect Jesus to seek and to save—to continue to seek and save—the lost and to build His Church. Look, if you will now, in Matthew 13, beginning in verse 45: *“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.”* (Matthew 13:45) Now, I’ve heard people foolishly preach this, and some very fine preachers preach this: that Jesus is the Pearl of great price, and if you want Jesus, you sell all that you have and you buy the one Pearl of great price. Again, friend, listen to me: Jesus is not for sale. You can’t buy Him, and you don’t have anything to buy Him with. Jesus is the Merchantman. The pearl is the Church of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We don’t seek Him; He sought us. He bought us. He brought us. To Him be the glory.

Do you know how a pearl is formed? A layer at a time that nacre in the shell of the oyster—layer by layer by layer it’s built, just as our Lord is building His Church day by day, and age by age, and layer by layer, and soul by soul. The Church is being formed until it becomes this pearl of great price. A pearl is not like a diamond, not like a ruby. You can divide a diamond. You split a pearl, you’ll ruin it. It is the pearl—the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Church triumphant that Jamie sang about. And Jesus purchased His Church. People say the Church is on its way out. They’re right about that, friend. Jesus called the Church out. He sent the Church out. And soon He’s coming to take the Church out. The Church is on its way out. You can expect Jesus to continue to seek and to save the lost and to build His Church.

## **VII. You Can Expect God to Judge Righteously in the Final Judgment**

Finally, finally, you can expect God to judge righteously in the Final Judgment. Don’t think that these people are getting away with their sin. Don’t think that these people who live high, wide, and handsome; who spit in the face of God; who laugh at the Bible; who go contradictory to the Word of God, these people who lives like this—don’t think that God has forgotten. Don’t think that God is dead. Don’t think that sin can prevail. It can’t. There’s coming a judgment. Oh, if people would read the Word of God! Matthew 13 now, verse 47 and through 51: *“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things?”*

*They say unto him, Yea, Lord.*” (Matthew 13:47–51) “Have you understood all of this?” What’s our Lord saying? Our Lord gives all these parables, and then He says, “Now look, the kingdom is like a great big dragnet.”

‡ Have you ever seen a fisherman drag a net through the sea—not a sand net that is set out, not a cast net, but a dragnet? I worked one summer on a shrimping boat—great experience there in South Georgia. And we were on the trawler; we put down that net. It has something called “doors” that went along just scooping the bottom and running over those grassy areas where the shrimp were. And after we would trawl back and forth, then a derrick would hoist that net up on the deck; and the man would pull the string, and out it would come. Oh, hundreds and hundreds and thousands of shrimp! But also there’d be crabs, and eels, and squiggly things, and stingrays, and jellyfish, and all of that. And it would be all over the deck, all of it squirming. Very interesting to me to see those men with their gloves—and I was one of them—reach in and start to throw all these other things overboard like that, and leave the fish, leave the shrimp. Our Lord says that the gospel message is like a dragnet that goes through the sea, and it gets all kinds of things in the net. But He says there’s a judgment day coming. You see, you know what my job is as a preacher? Is to draw the net. You know what God’s privilege is? Is to sort the catch. God’s going to sort the catch. I’m telling you, as surely as I stand here—you listen to me—nobody gets away with anything.‡

## **Conclusion**

God is God. We’re saved by the grace of God. God knows all of these things that are going to happen. And when you read the newspaper and you see all of this, you say, “Where is God?” I’ll tell you where God is: God is in His heaven. Nothing has taken God by surprise. Everything fits into the sockets of God’s Word. And friend, you read Matthew chapter 13, and you can say, “This I expect.” What do you do? Well, if you’re not saved, you get saved. And if you are saved, you say, “God, teach me to be a soul winner.”‡

# What You Can Expect

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: August 10, 2003**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 13**

## Outline

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Conclusion

## Introduction

**T**ake God's Word, find Matthew chapter 13, and, when you've found it, look up here. Your heart is broken. Your mind is perplexed. You don't know whether to be angry, disgusted, or what, as you read in the paper and listen on the news about what is happening in the world of religion. The Catholic Church is paying multiplied millions of dollars to settle lawsuits with pedophile priests that have been filed against them. And then, to top it all off, in a crescendo of amazement, we read that the Episcopal Church is proffering for leadership as a bishop an avowed, open, practicing homosexual. Now you say, "Pastor Rogers, you're not a Catholic. You're not an Episcopalian. Why don't you speak about what's happening in the Baptist Church?" Friend, I could, and there's much that causes me to want to weep and to hang my head in shame. But I am a believer in Jesus Christ, and all these others profess to be believers in Jesus Christ, so I feel, as a believer in Jesus Christ, not only do I have a right—I have a responsibility—to speak about these

things with a broken heart and with much concern, but not with dismay and not with hopelessness. For, friend, none of these things have taken God by surprise.

There is a message from the Word of God, and it may surprise you to know that all that we see here, read, and know about has been prophesied by the Lord Jesus Christ in seven parables that He gave here in Matthew chapter 13. These are called “mysteries”—“mysteries”—“of the kingdom of heaven.” They are seven sacred secrets. And if you, as a child of God, learn these secrets, you will not be destroyed by shock and awe as you read the newspapers, as you see what’s going on, for our Lord, in His omniscience, knew what the conditions would be down through the ages; and so He gave us these seven parables. And the title of the message today is “What You Can Expect.” I want you to know what you can expect. I want to give you seven things that, if you live in this age, you can expect, and you can say, “Well, nothing really has gotten out of hand.”

## **I. You Can Expect Many to Reject the Gospel**

Number one: You can expect many to reject the gospel of Jesus Christ. Look in Matthew 13, verses 3 through 9: *“And he”—that is, Jesus—“spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow;”—that’s a farmer who’s planting seed—“and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprang up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: but other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.”* And then, here’s what our Lord says: *“Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.”* (Matthew 13:3–9) Now our Lord knew that not everyone would understand this. Those who did not have spiritual ears would not comprehend. It’s a parable of a sower who goes forth to sow, and his seed falls on four kinds of soil.

### **A. Some Seed Fell by the Wayside**

First of all, some fell by the wayside. Now the wayside was comparable to our sidewalks: trampled, hard, crusted. The seed fell, but it could not get in. And because it could not get in, the birds came and carried it away. What does that mean? Look, if you will, in verse 19: *“When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one,”—that’s the devil—“and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.”* (Matthew 13:19)

Now there are people in this auditorium and people who will hear later by tape, or watch by television, or whatever, who are like this. Their heart is so hard that the Word of God never gets in. There’s nothing wrong with the seed, but it just lies there on the surface.

I've preached long enough to know that when you're preaching to some people, it's like pouring water on a rock: it gets down, but it never gets in—it never gets beneath the surface. And Satan just carries it away, and they go away totally unchanged.

### **B. Some Seed Fell on Stony Ground**

Now there's a second kind of soil: and not only the seed that fell by the wayside, but there's some seed that fell on stony ground. Now the word *stony*, it doesn't mean ground with a rock here and a rock there, but it means ground that has a sub-surface of rock and just a thin layer of soil on top. And so the seed gets in, but it doesn't get down; it has no root. And when the sun comes up, it is scorched. Notice verse 20: *"But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;"*—but notice what happens here—*"yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth"*—or, "endures"—*"for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended"* (Matthew 13:20-21)—that is, "he goes away." We see them. They come down the aisles of our church. They join. They get baptized. But then difficulty comes. The sun scorches them, and they're gone. In my New Members Class, I describe them as *"Alka-Seltzer Christians": you drop them in water—they fizz for a little while and then disappear*. They have no root. They never have truly been saved.

### **C. Some Seed Fell in with Thorns**

But then, there is a third kind of soil. This time the seed gets in; it gets down, but it's mixed with thorns. Look, if you will, in verse 22: *"He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful"* (Matthew 13:22)—that is, "it never lasts." The weeds squeeze it out and choke it out. And there are many people like that: they come down the aisles of a church, or talk to a soul winner, or whatever, and pretend to give their heart to Christ; but they have never been broken from this world, they never do honest repentance.

### **D. Some Seed Fell on Good Soil**

But then, thank God—hallelujah, praise God—there is some seed that falls on the good soil: soil that is warm, moist, and fertile; soil that is broken and ready, like I pray God some of you are today to hear the Word of God. And notice what Jesus said about them: *"But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."* (Matthew 13:23) And I believe, when I speak today, there will be some here today who will hear the Word of God, who will receive it, who will be saved, and, glory to God, ten billion

years from now, they'll be praising God in the kingdom, because the seed got in: it got down; it took root; it showed fruit. They have been twice-born. That's what keeps me going.

But now, listen. I've been preaching long enough to know that not everybody's going to receive the message. I can have a clear message straight from the Word of God; I can think it out and be clear and plain; I can pray and be filled with the Holy Spirit of God; I can preach with all of my heart, with a broken heart; but not everybody's going to be saved. You can witness, and not everybody's going to be saved, because the problem is not with the seed; the problem is with the soil. And so, don't get discouraged if it looks like not everybody's coming to Jesus. Our Lord said, "The way is narrow. Few there be that enter." (Matthew 7:14) Our Lord said, "There's going to be a little flock." (Luke 12:32) He is calling us out of the world. So, don't assign to the gospel a task that it was never given—and that is to convert the world. *The gospel was not given to save civilization; it was given to save men from the wrecks of civilization.* And so, don't expect everybody to be saved. That's the first thing you may expect: you may expect many to reject the gospel.

## II. You Can Expect to Find Hypocrites in the Church

Number two: You can expect to find hypocrites in the church. Every now and then somebody comes to me and says, "Pastor, did you know there are hypocrites in the church?" I say, "Oh, no! Oh, don't tell me." Friend, there have always been hypocrites in the church. One of the twelve was a hypocrite. Notice what Jesus said, again, in Matthew 13, verses 24 and following: *"Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn."* (Matthew 13:24–30)

The parable is simple. A man sows good wheat. An enemy comes and sows weeds called "tares." Darnel: it's a certain kind of weed that looks like wheat. And until the wheat begins to head you can't tell the difference between the weed and the wheat. And so these are growing together. Now they say, "Master, do you want us to pull up the weeds?" He says, "No, let them grow together." "Why?" "Because if you're not careful, you're going to pull out

some wheat, and you're going to leave some weeds, because they look so much alike." And what our Lord is saying here is there are hypocrites in the church, but you and I are not appointed, nor anointed, to tell who they are.

Now if we were to go through this congregation this morning and to find who's saved and who's lost, why, that would be simple for me to do, because I have the spirit of discernment. You know, I could just go right through right here and say, "You—you're obviously lost; you—you're saved; you're lost; man, I can tell you're lost; now, you're saved; you're lost." What a mistake I would make! You all look so holy. You all look so perfect. You all have Bibles. You all have smiles. You all are nodding. Some of you are nodding off, but I couldn't tell who's saved and who's lost. God knows. Friend, there's the sowing of the tares: "*an enemy hath done this.*" (Matthew 13:28) The devil has done it. There is the growing of the tares: they grow together. There is the knowing of the tares: the Judgment is coming. God is the One who's going to separate the weeds and the wheat.

I was at a convention one time, and some preacher boys came up to Dr. Gray Allison, who is the founder and president of Mid-America Seminary, former president—president emeritus. They were all upset about this particular man who'd done a particular thing, and they said to him, "Dr. Allison, do you think he's saved?" And Dr. Allison looked at those preacher boys. I was waiting to hear what he would say. He said, "I don't know whether he's saved or not. I don't know whether you're saved." He said, "The only one here that I know is saved is me."

Think about it. Friend, we've not been set up to judge other people and to say, "This one is saved, and that one is lost." We're not talking about open apostasy here. We're not talking about people who are in open contradiction to the Word of God but weeds that look so much like wheat. There are hypocrites in the church. And don't you let some hypocrite keep you from going to heaven. You're hiding behind a hypocrite: you can't hide behind something unless it's bigger than you are. Don't hide behind a hypocrite, and don't get discouraged because you find hypocrisy in the church. Our Lord, in Matthew chapter 13, said that there would be weeds among the wheat.

### **III. You Can Expect the Rise of False Cults**

Now, here's the third thing you can expect: You can expect the rise of false cults. Notice what our Lord says now in Matthew 13, beginning in verse 31: "*Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.*" (Matthew 13:31–32) Very strange parable. A little mustard seed:



you plant it, and it becomes an herb. Most of us like mustard greens. Some of us do; some of us don't. I do. It becomes an herb. It grows to an herb. "But then," Jesus says, "it becomes a tree." Now if you're into horticulture, you know that herbs don't become trees. You read Genesis. God said, "Let the herb bring forth, and the trees, and so forth, after their kind." (Genesis 1:11) But here's an herb that becomes a tree. What is happening here is something monstrous, something unusual, something abnormal. And what He's talking about is the monstrous, unusual, abnormal growth of cultism in Christianity.

Some people say, "Oh, isn't it wonderful that our little, sweet mustard seed has become this great, enormous tree? Isn't it wonderful?" No, He's not talking about something that's wonderful. These birds are not sweet little chirping birds. These are the devil's dirty birds. Look in chapter 13, verse 4: "*And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up.*" (Matthew 13:4) And, in verse 19, He says those fowls represent the devil. (Matthew 13:19) Over in the Book of the Revelation, Babylon, which stands for cultism and false religion, is described as a tree. And it says here that "*Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and...become the habitation of devils,*"—that literally means "of demons"—"*and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.*" (Revelation 18:2) This monstrous tree is full of the devil's dirty birds, and it speaks of apostate Christianity, false cults.

Now many today say, "Pastor Rogers, if the Bible is the Word of God, why are there so many false cults? Why are there so many strange interpretations? Why do we have all of these—as Dr. Lee used to say—'*isms* that ought to be *wasms*'? Where did they come from?" From the devil himself, the same one that sowed the weeds among the wheat. And he has this apostate, amalgamated form of Christianity. "Well, Pastor Rogers, because of all of these cults, isn't that a sound reason to reject Christianity?" No, it's the perfect reason to accept Christianity. Why? Because, friend, this is exactly, precisely what God said would happen: "*In the [last days men] shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of [demons].*" (1 Timothy 4:1) If we did not have this, the Bible would not be true. These things, in a strange way, are an affirmation of the truth of the Bible. You can expect the rise of false cults. That's exactly what our Lord said would happen. They do not denigrate our faith. We're sad for them. We wish they were not here, but they don't take away from the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

#### **IV. You Can Expect Corruption in the Professing Church**

Number four: You can expect to find corruption in the professing church. Now, when you read about these horrendous things, it breaks my heart to read them. And I don't mind telling you, I could not have believed ten, fifteen, twenty years ago that in my lifetime I

would ever see what we see today. But notice what Jesus said in Matthew 13, verse 33: *“Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole”—that is, the whole loaf—“was leavened.”* (Matthew 13:33) Now, again, people falsely misinterpret this parable. They say, *“Isn’t it sweet? Isn’t it wonderful how Christianity just grows and grows and grows like leaven, how we’re changing society?”* Friend, we are not changing society, and we will never change society. As a matter of fact, the Bible says contrariwise: *“In the last days perilous times shall come.”* (2 Timothy 3:1) Don’t get the idea that as the church we’re going to Christianize the world. We’re not going to do that.

Leaven, in the Bible, is never used as an emblem for the gospel; it’s used as an emblem for sin, of evil. It’s symbolic of evil. Exodus chapter 12 and verse 8, speaking of the Passover: *“And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread.”* (Exodus 12:8) Leviticus 2, verse 4: *“If thou bring an oblation of a meat offering baken in the oven, it shall be unleavened cakes of fine flour.”* (Leviticus 2:4) Paul, in the New Testament, speaking to the church at Corinth that had become carnal and worldly and lascivious, told them to do something about the leaven that was in the church. First Corinthians 5, verse 6—they were boasting about how liberal and affirming they were, and he said, *“Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven.”* (1 Corinthians 5:6–7) And then he goes to say later on, in verse 8, *“Let us keep the feast,”*—talking about the spiritual feast of Passover—*“not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”* (1 Corinthians 5:8) *Leaven* stands there for malice and wickedness. *Unleavened* stands for sincerity and truth.

Now here Jesus says the kingdom is like a woman that took three measures of leaven and put it in some dough, and then the whole loaf was leaven. You see, let me tell you about leaven, how it works. First of all, it works quietly. You don’t see it working, but it’s working. It works steadily, and it works best in lukewarm conditions. That’s the way leaven works. It’s like yeast. It is yeast that a woman would put in a lump of dough. In religion, it stands for evil.

Now, what is our Lord saying? Don’t be surprised when you find corruption in the church. Jesus Christ, in His ministry, warned of three kinds of leaven. Jesus said, *“Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees.”* (Matthew 16:6; Matthew 16:11; Mark 8:15) Again, Jesus said, *“Beware of the leaven of...Sadducees.”* (Matthew 16:6; Matthew 16:11) Again, Jesus said on another occasion, *“Beware...of the leaven of Herod.”* (Mark 8:15) The leaven of the Pharisees was legalism. Friend, I’m as much afraid of legalism as I am liberalism. It is a distortion of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the gospel of rules and rituals and regulation—and all

outward and not inward: legalism—the leaven of the Pharisees. Liberalism was the leaven of the Sadducees, another religious group of Jesus’s day. They didn’t believe in angels, or demons, or the resurrection, like our modern day liberals today. And Jesus said, *“Beware of the leaven...of the Sadducees.”* (Matthew 16:6; Matthew 16:11) And then Jesus said, *“Beware...of the leaven of Herod.”* (Mark 8:15) Who was Herod? He was a pleasure-mad king. He lived in licentiousness. And so Jesus said, “Beware of legalism. Beware of liberalism. Beware of license and licentiousness. Get that leaven out.”

But He said this: “The kingdom of heaven is like unto a woman that hid three measures of leaven in a loaf.” (Matthew 13:33) What did our Lord mean by that? Friend, there is going to be wickedness and corruption in the professing church. The devil, if he cannot whip us from the outside, tries to whip us from the inside. If he can’t steal away the seed when the preacher preaches, what will he do? He’ll sow weeds in the wheat. If he can’t keep us from having a loaf of bread, what will he do? He’ll put his leaven into that loaf to try to infiltrate. And what you and I read about today, what we hear on the radio, on the news, what breaks our heart, is sad indeed, but it doesn’t take heaven by surprise. It’s there. You can expect corruption in the church: not because God planned it, not because God wants it, not because God desires it; but God knows human hearts, God knows what is going to happen.

## **V. You Can Expect Jesus to Establish His Kingdom**

Now, here’s something else that you can expect—and let’s get on a positive side: friend, you can expect God to establish His kingdom—you can expect it. Do all of these things head our Lord off at the pass? Do all of these things keep God from doing what He intends to do? No, absolutely not! Philippians 1:6: *“He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it.”* And, as Jamie sang, “The Church triumphant is alive and well.” Look, if you will, in Matthew chapter 13, verse 44: *“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.”* (Matthew 13:44) Now, what is the picture? What is the parable? Do you know what a parable is? It’s an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.

Well, the earthly story: here’s a man; he’s in the field, just maybe scuffing the dust, and he looks down, and he sees something glowing, and says, “What is that?” He gets down: there it is, an incredible treasure. He looks around, covers it back up. He says, “Somebody tell me who owns that field.” “Well, So-and-so owns it.” He said, “Mister, will you sell that field?” “Well, for thus-and-such I’ll sell it.” He says, “Stay right there.” This man goes back. He sells everything he has. He sells his house. He sells his horse. He sells his cart. He sells

his dishes. And he gets the money, and comes back, and says, “I want that field. Here. Sell it to me,” because he knows when he gets the field, he gets the treasure.

Now, again, so many people foolishly misinterpret this parable. They say, “Well, the treasure hid in the field, that’s salvation; that’s Jesus. And you and I ought to sell everything that we have so we can buy salvation.” Right away, that will tell you there’s something wrong with it. Friend, salvation is not for sale; it is the gift of God. Number two: If it were for sale, what would we bankrupt sinners have to buy it with? Salvation is the gift of God. What is that treasure hid in a field? It is the kingdom that our Lord Jesus Christ came to establish and will establish.

There are four phases to the kingdom. I want you to learn this now.

### **A. The Kingdom Was Hidden but Prophesied in the Old Testament**

First of all, the kingdom was hidden but prophesied in the Old Testament. Look, if you will, in verse 17: *“For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see,”*—talking to His disciples—*“and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.”* (Matthew 13:17) Now the Old Testament prophets, they looked forward. They prophesied about the Lord Jesus Christ, but many times they didn’t even understand everything they were prophesying, because the Spirit of God was upon them. But they wanted to see these things and hear these things. And there the disciples were seeing them and hearing them. So in the Old Testament the kingdom was prophesied but not seen.

### **B. Jesus Began to Uncover the Kingdom**

Then, when Jesus Christ came, He began to do miracles. He began to uncover the treasure, so people could see it and glimpse it. For example, just take your Bibles now, and go back to Matthew 12. We’re in 13. Go back to Matthew 12, and look in verse 27. Jesus had just cast the demon out of a man, and they said, “Yes, the way He did it is He Himself is demon-possessed.” And Jesus said, “You’re not thinking straight. I’m not in collusion with the devil; I’m in collision with the devil.” Notice what He says: *“And if I by Beelzebub”—* that’s their name for Satan—*“cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God,”*—now here’s the key—*“then the kingdom of God is come unto you.”* (Matthew 12:27–28) There He was: the King, the miracles, the power over Satan, all of it. They saw it. It had been hidden. Now it is seen. The treasure is uncovered.

### C. The Kingdom Was Covered Up Again

But they despised Him. They turned from Him. They accused Him of being demon-possessed. And now the treasure is covered back up again. Proverbs 25, verse 2: *“It is the glory of God to conceal a thing.”* (Proverbs 25:2) And let me give you a little Bible lesson here. From chapter 12 forward, in the Book of Matthew, Jesus does no more miracles. He begins to speak in parables. Up until this time, He has uncovered the kingdom, the kingdom that was prophesied. He uncovered it, just like a treasure in a field. But they refused it, and He covered it back up and began to speak in parables. Why? Not only did He speak in parables to reveal; He spoke in parables to conceal. Look, if you will, there in chapter 13, verse 11. They said, *“Why are you speaking in parables?”* (Matthew 13:10) And, *“He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.”* (Matthew 13:11) And so they don’t understand. Jesus just covers the treasure up. Now He reveals it to us, but the people of this world, they walk through the field of this world; they step right on the treasure; they step right over it; they never see it; they don’t know it’s there; they don’t understand it. Why? It was prophesied. It was uncovered. It was refused. It is covered.

### D. Jesus Will Uncover the Kingdom Once Again

But Jesus went to the cross, and with all that He had He paid the price and bought the field. And you can be certain, friend, one day He’s coming to uncover His treasure. One day He’s coming, and *“the kingdoms of this world [will] become the kingdoms of our Lord, and...his Christ.”* (Revelation 11:15) You can bank on it.

*Jesus shall reign where'er the sun  
Does his successive journeys run;  
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,  
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.*

—ISAAC WATTS

## VI. You Can Expect Jesus to Continue to Seek and Save the Lost and to Build His Church

Number six: You can expect Jesus to continue to save the lost and to build His Church. Look, if you will now, in verse 45 and following: *“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.”* (Matthew 13:45–46) Again, people sometimes—good people, sometimes fine preachers—misinterpret this. They say that Jesus is the pearl

of great price; and you and I, who want to be saved, we need to sell everything that we have, and buy Jesus. Jesus is not for sale. We don't have anything to buy Him with.

The pearl of great price is the Church that Jesus purchased. You see, a pearl is a precious jewel. How is it built? Layer upon layer upon layer upon layer that nacre that is excreted by the oyster, layer by layer the pearl is built. It began at Pentecost; it continued through the ages. Today we've had some more layers put on that thing. You see, you can divide a diamond. You can divide a ruby. If you try to divide a pearl, you'll ruin it. What a wonderful illustration of the Church, the one Church that is alive and well, the true Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, of any denomination, people who know and love Jesus Christ. Our Lord has bought the Church, and you can be sure—and I'm sure—that every time I preach, there are people who are going to be saved, or could be saved, if they would listen. And I know our Lord is in the business of calling out the saved, and I know our Lord is building His Church. And I know that I know that I'm on the winning side, that I'm a part of that Church. And when our Lord comes to make up His jewels, He will find the pearl of great price.

## **VII. You Can Expect God to Judge Righteously in the Final Judgment**

Now, here's the last and the final thing you can be sure of, friend, so you'll not be dismayed: You can expect God to judge righteously in the Final Judgment—in the Final Judgment. The Final Judgment is not here. Look, if you will, in verses 47 through 51: *“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord.”* (Matthew 13:47–51) Now you can expect a Final Judgment. It's coming. Our Lord says, “The kingdom of heaven, it's like a net” (Matthew 13:47) —not like a sand net, not like a cast net, but like a dragnet.

When I was a kid, I worked on a shrimp boat for a while—great experience. A shrimp boat has a net called a “dragnet.” It has two wooden panels that go beneath the water and hold the net open—the mouth of the net. They call those the “doors.” And all manner of things are swept up by that net. It's an interesting thing when they take that yardarm and hoist that net full of squiggly things up. And then, over the deck the man pulls the drawstring, and out it comes: thousands of shrimp, if we're blessed; but jellyfish, other kinds of fish, crabs, eels, squirmy, wiggly things all over the deck. And those men get down there with their rubber gloves and begin to throw all of that other stuff away, and only the

shrimp is left. Now God says that's what it's going to be at the Judgment. There's going to be a time when His angels that have been sweeping to and fro are going to sort the catch.

You know what my job is today? My job is to draw the net. Do you know what God's responsibility is? It is to sort the catch. We don't sort the catch. God does that, but God is going to do that. And that's the reason I want to say to you—listen to me now very carefully—what our Lord does in Matthew 13 is to give us a history, a spiritual history, from the time that men began to sow the Word of God and people got saved. As we look down, we see the hypocrites in the Church, we see false cults, we see apostasy and corruption, but we see the one true Church being built and built. And then we see the Final Judgment. We're not dismayed—we're heartbroken—when we see certain things that happen; but we're not dismayed, for we have the Word of God.

## **Conclusion**

Are you saved? I mean, are you saved? Do you know Jesus? Have you been twice-born? Don't be the devil's wheat. Be saved—truly saved. If I could do it for you, I would, but I can't. I've preached as best I know how. Look at me. Don't go away without Jesus. Don't crucify your soul. Don't commit soul suicide. Don't say *no* to Jesus when you could say *yes*. The Lord Jesus is saying to you today, *"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden"* (Matthew 11:28) —“come to me”—not to some church, not to some denomination, to Jesus. He's the One who saves. And I promise you on the authority of the Word of God, He will save you and keep you saved.

# Has the Gospel Failed?

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: November 26, 1989**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 13:1**

## Outline

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- C. The Motive of His Teaching
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- III. The Right Welcome
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### Conclusion

## Introduction

**T**he title of our message is “Has the Gospel Failed?” Sometimes we look around at our world that’s sinking into mire, filth, danger, degradation, despair, and disappointment, plummeting on to death and to judgment, and we say, “What has happened?” We have had the preaching of the gospel for 2,000 years. Has the gospel failed? Friend, if you don’t get a good theological understanding, and if you just look at circumstances, you might say, “Yes, the gospel has failed.” But when you open the Bible and read what our Lord has to say here in Matthew chapter 13, you’ll know it has not failed, it cannot fail, and it shall not fail, hallelujah!

Now I had an experience one time. I was preaching in a revival meeting, holding a revival meeting, in a county seat town. I must have been holding it, because it never got loose. I was preaching. I preached my heart out. And I’m telling you, folks, that it was as dead as a hammer. Nothing was happening. I would preach, pray, plead, and give an



invitation. People just sat there and looked at me stony-faced. They looked like a wooden Indian in front of a cigar store. They just stared at me.

I said, “Well, the problem must be me.” I began to fast, pray, and search my heart. And I fasted and wept before the Lord. Still nothing happened. I said, “Well, maybe I’m not preaching the right things.” I looked over my sermon preparation. I prayed, and I did everything. And I said, “Well, maybe I’m not visiting enough.” And I tried to visit. I tried to do everything that I knew to do. And it just wasn’t happening. Finally, toward the end of that revival crusade, I felt like a failure. I felt intimidated. I felt, “Oh, God, somehow, someway, God, I have failed you.” And I sat down in that big chair on the platform, and I just told the pastor, “Pastor, you give the invitation. Let me just sit here.” And I said, “Oh, God, I need a word from you. Oh, God, I want you to speak to my heart. Please, Lord. I know, Lord, this is not the right way to study the Bible, but, Lord, I’m desperate. I’m just going to open the Bible and put my finger on a verse, and this one time, Lord, please just speak to my heart. I need a word from you, Oh, God.”

And I opened the Bible and I let my finger drop on a verse. It was in the Old Testament. I just looked away, opened at random, and put my finger on a verse. It was Ezekiel chapter 3 and verse 7. And this is what it said: *“But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are impudent and hardhearted”* (Ezekiel 3:7). I said, “Lord, thank you. God, that is so wonderful. Lord, thank you. There’s nothing wrong with what I’m preaching; my heart is right. Thank you, God! They won’t hear me because they won’t hear you.” I said, “Lord, that’s such a sweet verse.” I said, “Lord, give me another one.” I just looked away and I put my finger on another verse without even looking, and then I almost came unglued when I read it. It was Ezekiel 2, verse 5. And it says, *“And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear...”*—that is, refuse to hear—*“...yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them”* (Ezekiel 2:5).

Friend, I’ve never forgotten that. God gave me a liberty, Brother Bob, that day that I’ve never failed to have since then, in some measure. God showed me it is not my responsibility to make the gospel work. It is my responsibility to proclaim it and to preach it. And whether people hear or whether they don’t hear, I’m to have my heart right with God. And at least, one day, somehow, they’ll know that they heard the Word of God.

Now the Lord answers the question here, why is it sometimes when the gospel is preached that people don’t respond, or when they do respond, sometimes their response is not the right response? Well, begin reading here in Matthew chapter 13, verse 1: *“The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side. And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and*

*the whole multitude stood on the shore.*” Now we’ve heard of the Sermon on the Mount. This is the sermon on the sea. *“And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow”* (Matthew 13:1–3).

Now even before I get into the message, let me talk to you a little bit about parables. Now, why did the Lord Jesus spoke in parables?

### **A. The Method of His Teaching**

First of all, I want you to think about the method of His teaching. This is the first time Jesus ever spoke in parables. Up until this time He’d not been teaching in parables. And now, for some reason, He begins to teach in parables. And what is a parable? A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. That is, Jesus would tell a very common story. The story that He’s about to tell is about a sower who went out to sow some seed. It is a very common story. It is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. That is, there is more than meets the eye in the story. And you have to kind of peel the story back, and you have to look beneath the surface of the story. That was the method of his teaching.

### **B. The Mystery of His Teaching**

But I want you to notice the mystery of His teaching. Look down in Matthew 13, verses 10 and 11: *“And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given”* (Matthew 13:10–11). Now, what is a mystery? You see, a parable has a mystery in it. What is a mystery? A mystery is a hidden truth. And it is a truth that you will never get with human wisdom. It must be given to you. Do you see that? *“Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.”*

So, my dear friends, whether you’re listening by television, radio, or whether you’re listening in this service, or by tape later on, I’m going to tell you something. You will never know the things that you need to know until you lay your intellectual pride in the dust and say, “Oh, God, teach me.” A mystery is something in the Bible that you can never know by human intuition, human ingenuity, or human study. I don’t care how much Greek you know. I don’t care how much Hebrew you know. I don’t care how much history you know. I don’t care how much theology you know. Jesus said that it’s going to be given to you.

### **C. The Motive of His Teaching**

Now the method of His teaching was parables. The mystery of His teaching was that He was going to unlock something. Now, what was the motive of His teaching? Why did

the Lord Jesus teach that way?

### 1. To Reveal

Well, first of all, to reveal. Notice in verse 11 that, *“He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given”* (Matthew 13:11). And then, look in Matthew 13, verse 12, a marvelous verse: *“For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath”* (Matthew 13:12). Have you ever heard the expression, “The rich get richer, and the poor get poorer”? That’s exactly what verse 12 means. If you have, you get more. If you don’t have, you will lose more. What you do have, “to him that hath shall be given, but to him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.” Why is that? My dear friend, there is a spiritual principle that God does business with those that mean business, and that God speaks to those who want to hear.

Let me illustrate it this way. Suppose you’re a businessman, and two business opportunities come before you. And both of those business opportunities will cost you 50,000 dollars to get into them. You have 100,000 dollars of capital, and you put 50,000 dollars in one business and you put 50,000 dollars in another business. One business begins immediately to lose money, while the other business begins immediately to make money. Mr. Businessman, what are you going to do? You’re going to turn around and start putting more and more money in the business that is making money. Isn’t that right? Of course, you will. The business that is losing money, you’re going to take the money out of that and put it into the business that is making money. Isn’t that right? That is exactly what Jesus Christ is talking about. *“To him that hath shall be given, but to him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.”*

### 2. To Conceal

So, why did Jesus speak in parables? Number one: It was His way of getting His message to those people that were ready to receive the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. But there is another reason that He spoke in parables. And don’t forget it. Not only to reveal, but also to conceal. Look, if you will, in Matthew 13, verses 13 and 14: *“Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive”* (Matthew 13:13–14). Now, why? Jesus said, “I’m teaching in parables not only to reveal, but I am teaching in parables to conceal.” All they will get is the plain message, but they will not get the deeper truth. I am preaching to them to take away even that which they have.”

Now, why is this? Well, I'll tell you why. If you would go back and read, for example, in Matthew chapter 11 and 12, you'll find out that the opposition against Jesus Christ had never been greater. Those wicked, dirty, low-down—I don't have words enough to explain them—hated the Lord Jesus Christ. In them the milk of human kindness had curdled. And they had finally come to the place concerning the Lord Jesus Christ when they said, "He's casting out devils by the prince of devils; He is in league with the devil" (Matthew 12:24). Can you imagine anybody saying anything like that about Jesus? That's what they said in the chapters just before this.

And now Jesus begins to speak unto them in parables. He had warned them about the sin against the Holy Ghost. And, my dear friend, they had committed that sin. Notice in Matthew 13, verses 15 and 16: *"For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear"* (Matthew 13:15–16).

Now, my dear friends, let me tell you something. You be very careful with the truth that you hear. When you hear truth and you understand truth, but you don't live by the truth that God has already given you, God will take away the truth that you already have. You just can't put truth on ice. The Bible says, in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, verses 11 and 12, *"And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth"* (2 Thessalonians 2:11–12). Jesus Christ would not cast His pearls before swine (Matthew 7:6).

Now you may be sitting here today and you don't want to know truth. You're sitting here today in your pride and your arrogance. I don't know why. Perhaps you came—or maybe you're listening by television, and you're just going through the channels—and you come up here, and you say, "Let's hear what this babbler will say." My dear friend, I want to tell you something. Truth is a dangerous thing. You use it or you lose it. "To him that hath shall be given; but to him that hath not shall be taken away even that he hath."

Now that's the setting for the parable that I'm going to give you. Actually, in Matthew chapter 13 there are seven parables. This parable is the first parable, and it sets the tone for all of the others. It's a very familiar parable. And that's part of the danger of it, because you say, "Oh, I understand the parable of the sower." But make certain you really understand, because what I'm saying is, there's more to it than meets the eye. So you need to really understand this parable.

Now, first of all, I want to tell you there are three things. And if I can get these across to you, and if God the Holy Spirit will bring them home to you—they're very simple

things, and yet God the Holy Spirit must enlighten you to truly understand them—there are three things that make the gospel effective to do its work. First of all, there must be the right word. Secondly, there must be the right witness. And, thirdly, there must be the right welcome to the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

## I. The Right Word

Now, let's think, first of all, about the right word. Look, if you will, in Matthew 13, verse 3, which says, *"And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow"* (Matthew 13:3). Now that's simple enough. There was an agrarian society. And here's a man with a bag full of seeds. He's just throwing seeds out, just sowing seeds indiscriminately, just sowing seeds out of his seed bag. As a sower, he's going forth just sowing seeds. Now they've seen this many times. They've seen the sower sowing seeds. And that's what this sower is doing. He's just scattering the seed in abundance. He's just sowing the seed.

Now, what does that stand for? What is the seed? Well, go on down to verse Matthew 13, verse 19: *"When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not"* (Matthew 13:19). The seed is *"the word of the kingdom."* That's what the seed is. Luke 8, verse 11, says, *"The seed is the word of God"* (Luke 8:11).

Now, my dear friend, every one of us has been called to be a seed sower. The seed is the Word of God. May I tell you, dear friend, that this book is different than any other book. And the words I preach unto you from this book—not my words, but these words—are different than any other words. This book is not like any other book on earth. Jesus said, in John chapter 6, verse 63, *"The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life"* (John 6:63). The Bible says, in Hebrews chapter 4, verse 12, *"The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword"* (Hebrews 4:12). The word *quick* is the word *zon*. It means, "alive." The word *powerful* is the word *energes*. It means it has "power." You don't just read this book, dear friend; this book reads you. You don't just hold it; it cuts you. It is quick and powerful and sharper than a two-edged sword. On the day of Pentecost, when Peter preached, the Bible says, in Acts 7, verse 54, *"They were cut to the hearts"* (Acts 7:54). There is power in this book just like there's power in a seed.

A seed went into the ground and brought those flowers out. That's incredible—that you put a seed in the ground and something that gorgeous and that beautiful could come from a seed! The Word of God is a seed. The Peter tells us, *"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God"* (1 Peter 1:23). So every preacher, if he wants a harvest, and every soul winner, if he wants a harvest, has got to sow the seed.

Do you know what the problem is in so many churches today? I will tell you plainly and simply, we're tickling the soil and not sowing the seed. That's the problem. I mean, we're saying, "Oh, don't you like our facilities? Don't you come out here and do this and do that and all of these nice things?" I don't care how much you plow the soil, how much you rake the soil, how much you smooth the soil, or how much you soften the soil: you must sow the seed. The seed is the Word of God. Friend, there's power in a seed, indescribable power, because there's life in that seed. A seed may look insignificant, but there's an oak tree in an acorn. My dear friend, the seed is the Word of God.

## II. The Right Witness

Now I want to go on and say, not only must there be the right seed, but, oh, my dear friend, there must be the right sower. Not only must there be the right word; there must be the right witness. Jesus said that a sower went forth to sow. And that sower is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. This parable tells us that Jesus Christ is the sower; He Himself is the sower. And look, if you will, in Matthew 13, verse 37: "*He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man*" (Matthew 13:37). "*The Son of man*" was a term that Jesus used to describe Himself: "*He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man.*" Jesus has sown the seed of His Word in this world.

But now, wait a minute. Is He the only one that sows? Oh, no. Jesus said, "*As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you*" (John 20:21). Now, what is your job? Your job is to do exactly what Jesus Christ did. Why did Jesus come? Luke 19, verse 10: "*For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost*" (Luke 19:10). And how did He do it? He was a sower who went forth to sow to scatter the seed. What is your job? What is your responsibility? It is to sow the seed. Gentlemen, just look at these people. What would happen this week if every one of them became seed-sowers? What would happen if you fellows sowed more seed? I mean, it is our responsibility to sow the seed. Psalm 126, verse 6, says what? "*He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him*" (Psalm 126:6). The nearest thing, the dearest thing, to the heart of God is getting the lost saved.

I'm going to tell you something, and if I hurt your feelings, you can come up afterward and apologize to me, and I'll forgive you, okay? Now, listen. If you're not a seed-sower—if you're not a seed-sower—I don't care what else you do, you're not right with God. I don't care what else you do. "*He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.*"

## A. The Commencement

You must go! And you don't spell go, *t-e-a-c-h*. And you don't spell go, *g-i-v-e*. And you don't spell go, *l-i-v-e*. You spell go, *g-o*! And you can't spell *gospel* without starting out *g-o*. And you can't spell *God* without starting out *g-o*. And you can't spell *good* without starting out *g-o*, *go*. "*He that goeth forth and weepeth...*" Get started. Get somebody on your heart, somebody that you need to bring to Jesus Christ.

## B. The Compassion

But I want you to see, not only the commencement; I want you to see the compassion. "*He that goeth forth and weepeth...*" We water these seeds with our tears. That's what's going to cause the seed to sprout: the broken heart in soul winning. Do you have a broken heart for the lost? Do you really believe that souls are lost and dying and going to hell without Jesus Christ? I say, "Do you believe it?" If you had the cure for cancer, would you not tell it? My dear friend, if you believe that you have the message that redeems men and brings them from a devil's hell to a glorious heaven fellowship with the Lord, why don't we tell it? Why aren't we brokenhearted? Why don't we weep? When is the last time you ever shed a tear over some soul that was mortgaged to the devil? Oh, we need to weep! We need to weep!

God is moved by our tears. He said to Hezekiah, in Isaiah 38, verse 5, "*I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears*" (Isaiah 38:5). I can tell you in my own heart, when I weep over souls, God does something in my heart and in my life. You don't have to weep publicly. Weep privately. Get in your closet and weep over lost souls.

## C. The Content

"*He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed...*" The seed is the Word of God. You need to scatter the seed lavishly. Just share the Word of God. Everywhere you go, be dropping a seed—dropping a seed.

## D. The Consequences

You don't ever know when it's going to sprout, because I want you to notice, not only the content, but also I want you to notice the consequences. The Bible says that he "*shall doubtless come again*"—"doubtless come again"—"*with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.*"

Sometimes, when we witness, we don't think that we're doing any good at all. I can remember a time in Florida when I was in a revival meeting, and I went out door-to-door soul winning. And I went into a house of a man named Mr. Foshay. And I'd never been in that house. I was a stranger in that town. I went and knocked on the door. Mr. Foshay was there. He was a bachelor. He had never been married. And I went into the living

room. He was staying with his parents. He looked to me to be a man of about thirty-five or forty years of age, as I remember now. And I sat down with Mr. Foshay, and I began to share Christ with that man. And he seemed receptive enough. But what happened was his mother came in there.

Now, folks, I've only seen two ugly women in my life, and she was both of them. That woman, she had a face like a hatchet. I mean, she looked like the Wicked Witch of the West. I've never seen a woman whose face was more a mirror of evil. And when I started opening the Bible, she came down and sat on the other side of the room from me. And she had in her hands a bowl of snapping beans—long green beans. And she just sat down over there, and I tried to witness. And every time I'd say something, she'd go *snap, snap*. I could just feel my neck breaking. Every time, she'd just be snapping those beans and snarling at me, looking at me. I said, "Oh, dear God, that woman is so full of hate. She's so full of evil. God, help me to keep my mind on what I'm doing." And the whole time I witnessed to him I just ignored her. She was snapping and popping those beans and glaring at me. Finally, I said to him, "Sir, would you like to receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior?" He said, "I would." I said, "Wonderful!" We prayed a prayer, and I led him in the sinner's prayer. And I said, "If you really meant that, would you give me your hand?" And he slipped out his hand into mine.

And then she started for me. I said, "Uh oh." She said, "Boy, I've had it!" She left the room. She came across and put that trembling hand in mine with a tear coming down her cheeks to say, "I, too, want Jesus." The whole time she was under conviction. The devil had lied to me. The devil had said, "That's a mean woman, a wicked woman. She doesn't want God. She's not interested." All I did was to look at appearances. I didn't look at that poor woman's heart. I got so excited I said, "Is anybody else here?" They said, "Yeah, there are some more in the kitchen." I said, "Go get them." They brought them in there. Everybody in that house that I remember that day got saved.

And I've learned something, dear friend. You don't have to worry. You just scatter the seed. You're going to find out that the Lord Jesus Christ here just scattered the seed indiscriminately. He scattered the seed on good ground, bad ground, shallow ground, and among the thorns. He was just getting out the seed. That's our job. Don't you try to worry about whether this one will be saved, or that one will be saved; or this one can, or that one can't. You don't know, and I don't know. Just keep on scattering the seed.

### **III. The Right Welcome**

Now, I'll tell you, there's a third thing. Not only must there be the right word, and not only must there be the right witness, but there must be the right welcome to the word given by the witness.



Now the Lord Jesus here talks about four kinds of soil. And, very quickly, I want to mention those four kinds of soil. And I want you to look at them, and see what these four kinds of soil are.

### **A. The Hard Heart of the Stubborn Hearer**

First of all, he mentions—and these soils represent hearts—the hard heart of the stubborn hearer. Look, if you will, in Matthew chapter 13 and verse 4—and he says here, *“And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up”* (Matthew 13:4). And then, if you will, look in Matthew 13, verse 19: *“When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side”* (Matthew 13:19).

Did you know that there are a lot of people here today who are not understanding what I’m saying? Some of you are writing out menus. Some of you are thinking about the movie you’re going to this afternoon. Some of you are working out business deals. The devil’s got his birds here just picking the word out of your heart right now—just picking it right out. The Word is out there. The Word is coming, but you’re not hearing it. And I’ll tell you why your heart is hard, and why your will is stubborn. Your heart is hard, and your will is stubborn.

Do you know what *“the way side”* was? *“The way side”* was just the path through the garden. And people walked on it. All day long they walked on it. It got hard like concrete, and the seed could get down, but the seed could not get in. There was no reception of the seed, because the traffic of this world had hardened the soil. These are the materialists whose lives have been hardened by the traffic of this world. And they have a heart that is hardened against God. And therefore they hear, but they don’t hear. They see, but they don’t see. And I want to tell you, there is nothing wrong with the seed, and there’s nothing wrong with the sower; but there’s something desperately wrong with the soil. It is hard, and it is unreceptive.

All right, there is, first of all, then, what I want to call the hard heart of the stubborn hearer. You know, sometimes a person will say something like this: “You know, preachers don’t preach like they used to when I was a boy.” Some of them do. You just don’t hear like you used to. Did you know that? Your heart has gotten hard. The Bible says, in Hebrews chapter 4, verse 7, *“To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts”* (Hebrews 4:7).

### **B. The Shallow Heart of the Superficial Hearer**

Now there’s a second kind of soil. Not only is there the hard heart of the stubborn hearer in Matthew 13, verse 4, but also there’s the shallow heart of the superficial

hearer in Matthew 13, verse 5. Look at it: *“Some fell upon stony places,”*—now it doesn’t mean rocks in the soil, but it means soil about a half inch deep on a rock ledge—*“where they had not much earth:”—*that is, there are only two or three inches of earth—*“and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth”* (Matthew 13:5). Now some of these people are the quickest to respond, because that warm soil is almost like a hothouse, and they just spring up immediately. But notice what happens in Matthew 13, verse 6: *“And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away”* (Matthew 13:6). Then, look in verses Matthew 13, verses 20 and 21: *“But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended”* (Matthew 13:20–21).

Now this is the superficial hearer of a shallow heart. The superficial hearer—the shallow hearer—has a superficial emotionalism. I can tell you that I’ve been preaching the gospel long enough to know that there are some people, when they hear the gospel, it sounds so good to them. They say, “Well, man, a free trip to heaven! Joy and happiness and peace and prosperity.” So here they come down the aisle supposedly to give their heart to Jesus Christ.

Now in the first place, the hard heart: there was no reception. In this place, there is no root. The Word gets in, but it doesn’t get down. These people appear to be saved. We see them for a while. They join our churches, and then they fall away. And do you know why they fall away? Because of the persecution of the Word. If you’re looking for a cheap way, an easy way, or a lazy way to serve God, forget it, mister! There are a lot of people who are caught up in emotionalism, and they have never met Jesus Christ.

Now I’m not against emotion. But I want to tell you, dear friend, that you will never know you’re saved by some emotional, fickle feeling. Feelings are fickle. The Bible never says, “Feel *any way*, and be saved.” The word *feeling* is only used twice in the entire New Testament. *Your emotions are the shallowest part of your nature.* Salvation *is the deepest work of God. And God doesn’t do his deepest work in the shallowest part.* Now I’m not against emotion. But I’m telling you, dear friend, that there are thousands of people who have come down church aisles: they have had an emotional experience, but they have never committed their lives to Jesus Christ. I wonder if you are some of them. And when persecution comes, or maybe your feeling gets hurt, or maybe you poured pink lemonade and somebody didn’t call your name, or maybe they moved the doily out of your classroom this morning, and you get your feelings hurt, you know your problem? You are a child of your emotions. You’re about *that* deep.

Somebody asked a preacher one time, “What size is your church field?” He said,

“It’s seven miles wide and a half inch deep.” I can sympathize with that. Give us some people who are rooted in the Word of God.

### **C. The Divided Heart of the Selfish Hearer**

Now there’s a third kind of soil. And, very quickly, I must finish. That third kind of soil is what I want to call the divided heart. Look, if you will now, in Matthew 13, verse 7: *“And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them”* (Matthew 13:7). That’s the divided heart of the selfish hearer. Here’s a person who is trying to live for God and live for self at the same time. And the seed falls among thorns, because he doesn’t make a clean break with this world. The thorns come up, and after a while the thorns just choke out the seed. Do you know anybody like that? Why, sure! I know a lot of people like that. Look, if you will, in Matthew 13, verse 22—look at it: *“He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful”* (Matthew 13:22). There is a rival crop that’s never rooted out.

Now in the first place, the hard heart, there was no reception. In the shallow heart, there was no root. In the divided heart, there is no repentance—no repentance. He doesn’t deal with the thorns and the briars. No repentance. My dear friend, listen to me. Jesus Christ did not come to save you in your sin; He came to save you from your sin. Do you know what’s wrong in America today? We’ve got a brand of gospel that says, “Jesus Christ came to save you from hell.” Jesus Christ did not come to save you from hell. That is only a by-product. *“Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins”* (Matthew 1:21). That’s what He came to save you from. And when He saves you from your sin, then you don’t go to hell. But there are a lot of people who want to hold on to their sin and somehow go to heaven. You can’t do it. I don’t mean that you’re going to be perfect. I’m not perfect. You’re not perfect. Nobody is. But, dear friend, in your heart and in your life, you are going to have to repent and say, “God, begin now to make me what you want me to be.”

### **D. The Soft Heart of the Receptive Hearer**

First of all, no reception. Then, no root. And now, no repentance. But, last of all—and I must finish—look, if you will, in Matthew 13, verses 8 and 9: *“But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear”* (Matthew 13:8–9). Not everybody here today has ears. Oh, you have physical ears. But, oh, my friend, listen to me. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. Are you listening to this pastor today? Is your soil good? Let your heart be warm, moist, and fertile upon which the good seed will fall. Earthly soil can’t do anything about itself, but you can. You can prepare the soil of your heart. And

you can say, “God, I turn from that stony heart. And, oh, God, I turn from that hard heart. And, oh, God, I turn from those weeds and those thorns. And, Lord God, I open myself to your Word today.” And I promise you on the authority of the Word of God that He will save you.

## **Conclusion**

When the seed gets down, after a while that new life will grow. You’re not going to be changed automatically or instantaneously. When the seed went in, it was quite a while before these flowers came up. But they did come—they did come. And what you need to do is to say, “God, I’m going to give you my heart today, and begin now to bear fruit in my life. Just let that new life begin to grow in me.” No, the gospel hasn’t failed. My dear friend, many times there is nothing wrong with the seed, nor the sower, but it is the soil where is the problem. And there must be the right word, the right witness, and the right welcome to the Word of God. Open your heart today to Jesus. Let him save you. And I promise you on the authority of the Word of God that He will. And you will bring forth fruit. You will. Just abide in Him, and the life that is in you will bear fruit. It will! It will! It will! Hallelujah!

# The Strange Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: January 4, 1998**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 13:1–13**

## Outline

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## Introduction

**B**e finding Matthew chapter 13. We begin tonight on Sunday nights a Bible study entitled “The Strange Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven.” Now in many ways the Bible is a love story—we just heard that—but it’s also a mystery story. And there are mysteries that need to be discovered and unlocked. The Bible is not an open book to those who are the enemies of the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, but it is plain and sweet to those who have certain mysterious truths revealed to them. And as we’ve said many times, the Bible is God’s love letter to His children. If you read it and don’t understand it, it’s because you’ve been reading somebody else’s mail. It is a message written to a particular class of people, as we’re going to see, and there are mysteries in the Word of God. You cannot pry truth out of the Word of God. There are certain truths that have to be revealed to you.

Now, in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew are seven parables, and Jesus calls these parables the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. And they’re going to help us tonight.

The first one that we're going to look at in just a moment deals with the seeming failure of the gospel. The title of our Bible study tonight is this: "Has the Gospel Failed?"—because, when we look at the world with its wickedness, and we look at the church with its weakness and failures and disappointment—and many times sin—we may have the idea that, really, the gospel's not all that it purported to be or began to be back some 2,000 years ago, and perhaps the gospel has failed. And when we think, first of all, we look around, and there's disappointment; and the disappointment causes doubt; and the doubt causes despair.

Well, I want to take all of that away from you. When you study these seven parables, these seven sacred secrets, these seven mysteries of the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, you're going to say, "Hallelujah! Praise God! Everything is exactly, precisely, what God said that it would be," and it will engender great faith in your heart and in your life.

Now Jesus was the master teacher—Jesus was the master teacher. Nobody ever taught like the Lord Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, even His enemies had to say no man ever spake like this man (John 7:46). Who could withstand the teaching of Jesus? Who could controvert Him? Who could argue with Him? Who could confuse Him? And yet the Lord Jesus taught in such a way that little children could understand Him, who had open and ready hearts. And so I hope you'll have a childlike heart tonight as we begin this sevenfold series on "The Strange Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven."

## **A. The Master Teacher**

Now before we really even get into this chapter, I want you to notice several things about the master teacher.

### **1. The Method of His Teaching**

First of all, I want you to notice the method of His teaching—the method of His teaching. Verses 1 through 3: "*The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side.*" Now you've heard of the Sermon on the Mount. This is the sermon by the sea. "*And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.*" They were crowding Him so much He had to get in a boat and get a little way off shore so that He could have room to speak. "*And he spake many things unto them in parables*" (Matthew 13:1–3).

Now, you see the word *parable*? Just underscore that. That was the method of His teaching at this particular time: He spoke in parables. Now, fast-forward to verse 10: "*And the disciples came and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?*" (Matthew 13:10). Now, what is a parable? Well, it reminds us of the word *parallel*—and the two words are related. A parable is an earthly story that has a heavenly meaning,

okay? That's the definition of a parable. You got that? A parable is an earthly story; but it has a heavenly meaning. It's a story; but in the story there is more than what meets the ear, all right?

## **2. The Mystery of His Teaching**

Now the method of His teaching here is parables. Now, what is the mystery of His teaching? Why did He teach in parables? While you're in verse 10, continue to read: “[His] disciples came, and said unto him, *Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given*” (Matthew 13:10–11). So there are some on the inside, and there are some on the outside.

And so the mystery of His teaching is this: that there is hidden truth in the Bible that cannot be known by human wisdom. Man's wisdom, man's intellect, is not enough. You may be a Ph.D. over here at the University of Memphis, but you're not going to pry truth out of the Bible. I don't care how smart you are, how intellectual you are, how many grams of gray matter are between your ears: you're not going to be able to wrest truth and get truth out of the Bible. Some people truth is given to, and other people it's withheld from.

## **3. The Motive of His Teaching**

Well, why would Jesus do that? The method: parables. The mystery: to you it's given; to them it's not given. So what is the motive?

### **a. To Reveal**

Well, first of all, to reveal. He wanted to reveal to them certain things. For example, look, if you will, in verse 12: “*For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance*” (Matthew 13:12). So the Lord says, “I'm going to teach certain things to those of you who have certain things. I am letting you in on a secret.” Now they might have said, “Well, why us? Why do you want to let us in on a secret?” Well, He saw certain things in these people. They may have been tax collectors, they may have been fishermen, they may have been ordinary people; but they had something on the inside, and Jesus could see what they had on the inside. And so He says, “*For whosoever hath, to him shall be given.*”

You see, they had a desire to know truth. Do you ever desire to know truth? The Bible says, in Psalm 25, verse 9, “*The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way*” (Psalm 25:9). Do you know what the word *meek* means? It means, “teachable and guidable.” Are you that way tonight? Are you teachable and guidable? If you are, God wants to share His sacred secrets with you. But on the other hand, there are those that not only does He want to learn and to reveal things to, but

there are others that He's going to hide things from. It's very strange, but look at this—verse 12: *“For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance.”*—now, watch—*“but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand”* (Matthew 13:12–13).

#### **b. To Conceal**

Now, why did Jesus speak in parables? Sometimes people say, “Well, Jesus spoke in parables to make it very clear.” Only to a certain class. He spoke in parables to reveal and to conceal. “That those to have, to them shall be given more. But to those who have not shall be taken away, even that which they have.” Now, what does that mean? Well, it means, spiritually, the rich get richer. Have you ever heard in the material realm the rich get richer? It's true in the spiritual realm. “To him that hath shall be given; to him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.” You say, “Well now, why would Jesus do that? I mean, why doesn't He just give more to the person who doesn't have? Why does He give more to the person who already has? Why, spiritually, do the rich get richer?”

Well, let's go back to the material world. Why do the rich get richer in the material world? Suppose you were a businessman, and you had two businesses; and let's suppose that you invested 50,000 dollars in each of those businesses. One business immediately began to lose money and was mismanaged; the other business immediately began to make money and to grow and to make money for you. What would you do? You would take the money that you'd invested over here in this business that's losing money, and you would put it over here in the business that's making money, wouldn't you do that? You would give to him that hath, and to him that hath not you'd take away even what he has. If he doesn't have the moxie, if he doesn't have the drive, if he doesn't have the incentive to make that business work, you take what you've invested there and you invest it somewhere else.

Now so there's a truth about truth. And here's the truth about truth: If you don't use it, you'll lose it. Now truth is not something you can just put in your pocket and say, “Well, that's interesting.” It's not meant to be interesting; it's meant to be disturbing—disturbing enough that you will obey it. And so you must use it. Truth not used is taken away. Use it or lose it.

Now so what you have here is the master teacher. You have the method of His teaching, which is parables. You have the mystery of His teaching: both to reveal and to conceal. And you have the motive: that to those who have He's going to give more; to those who have not He's going to take away even that which they have. And so you have to understand that the reason that the Lord Jesus was doing this. Very frankly, this



thirteenth chapter of Matthew is the very first time He ever used parables. Don't get the idea that Jesus came teaching in parables. He didn't. He began to teach in parables at this stage. You know why He taught in parables? You go back to Matthew 12. They said He has a demon. The hostility began to rise against the Lord Jesus Christ, and they began to carp and criticize and find fault. He began to teach in parables. Why? It was His righteous judgment.

You know, the Lord Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, you know what He said? He said, "Don't cast your pearls before swine" (Matthew 7:6). Isn't that what He said? "Don't cast your pearls before swine." And He was not going to take the pearls of His truth and cast them before those people who accused Him of having a demon. So He said, "To those of you who want to know truth, it is given; but to those of you who don't want to know truth, I'm going to take away even the so-called truth you think you have." So He taught in parables, not merely to make it clear, but also to make it obscure; not merely to reveal, but also to conceal. Now that's all just by background.

Now we're going to get into the first of these seven sacred secrets tonight, and we're going to talk about "Has the Gospel Failed?" And this is, of course, one of the most prominent and well-known parables in all of the Bible. It is the parable of the sower. So go back now to chapter 13, verse 3: "*And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed,*"—now, boys and girls, that doesn't mean sew, like you sew up your britches; it means he's planting seed—"*some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: but other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear*" (Matthew 13:3–9). Now not everybody that day had ears to hear. But He says, "Those of you who can understand, those of you who have ears to hear, let him hear."

Now there are three basic things in this parable. There is the seed, the sower, and the soil. And we're going to think about those: the seed, the sower, and the soil. And we're going to find out why, what all of this means, and really then we're going to ask ourselves this question: Has the gospel failed?

## **I. The Seed**

Now, what is the seed in this parable? Well, we don't have to guess about it. You know, verse 3 says that "*a sower went forth*" (Matthew 13:3); he sowed some seeds. Well, go

over to verse 18, and Jesus explains this. And He says, *“Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not...”* (Matthew 13:18–19).

Now the seed therefore is *“the word of the kingdom.”* *“The word of the kingdom”* is the Bible. The Bible is like the seed. As a matter of fact, the Bible describes itself as a seed. And why is the Bible like seed? Because seed has life. My wife can tell you that one of the things that I ponder about often, and almost get philosophical about, is seed. I’m enamored by seed. Seeds are incredible things. Take a watermelon seed, a little thing no bigger than my little fingernail there, and you can put that in the ground, and that little seed will go out in the ground and suck out a vine, and then it will take that vine and suck watermelons out of the ground. It does. Where does it get all that? From the dirt and the moisture.

Now you say, “Well, sure, everybody knows that.” Suppose you’d never seen one before. I mean, you would say, “Oh, that’s a miracle!” I mean, think: you’d take that little thing and put it in the ground, and that’s what it does. It’s an amazing thing. But we’re just used to it. Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, “Everything’s wonderful till you get used to it.” You remember when you first could change the channel like *this*? Your kids are not impressed with that at all. But, you see, we just get used to things. And the Bible is a seed.

Let me give you some verses that teach this. For example, 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 23—the Bible says, *“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever”* (1 Peter 1:23). See, the Bible is alive. Hebrews 4:12: *“For the word of God is quick, and powerful.”* The word *quick* is the word we get our word *zoology* from—*zon*, life; it’s the word we get our word *zoo* from. *“The word of God is quick, and powerful.”* And the word *powerful* is the word we get our word *energy* from: *energes*. The Bible is *zon*, *energes*; it pulsates with life. It’s not like any other book.

Friend, I have been preaching the Bible long enough to know there is power in the Word of God—I mean, power. Remember what I said: it is alive; it is powerful; it pulsates with power. It’s like a seed; and the secret of a seed is that it germinates life. It has life in it. Jesus, in John chapter 6, said to His disciples, *“The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life”* (John 6:63)— *“The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”* A seed has life. If you want to have a crop, let me tell you, you can plow all you want, you can fertilize all you want, you can irrigate all you want; but if you don’t put a seed in, you’re not going to have a crop. Isn’t that true? I wish preachers would learn this.

You know, there are preachers who specialize sometimes in plowing and irrigation

and fertilizer, but they fail to put the seed in. It's not enough to tickle the soil. You've got to sow the seed. A sower went forth to sow. No church that is not a Bible-preaching church is going to grow; it's not going to reproduce, because the life comes from the seed. "*A sower went forth to sow.*" The seed is "*the word of the kingdom.*" You want to be a soul winner? You'll never be a soul winner without sowing the seed. You've got to sow a seed. All right, there are many ways to do it; but why don't you pray that God will make you a seed sower? The seed is the Word of God.

## II. The Sower

Now, let's move to the second thing. If the seed is the Word of God, who is the sower of the seed? The sower of the seed in this parable is Jesus Christ Himself. Now, notice, in verse 3, He says, "*A sower went forth to sow*" (Matthew 13:3). Well, who is the sower? Well, go over to verse 37, and look, if you will. You're going to find out who the sower is: "*He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man*" (Matthew 13:37). Now *the Son of man* was a term that Jesus used to describe Himself. He, the Son of God, called Himself the Son of man, because He was both God the Son, and the God-man. And so He was the Son of man. That was one of His favorite designations of Himself. So He is Jesus Christ, the sower, and He is shown here just scattering seed with a lavish hand. He's not careful about the seed. He says some seed falls on the worst sod; some falls on stony ground; some falls among thorns; some falls on good ground. He's just scattering seed everywhere. That is the Son of man, the Lord Jesus.

Now He's taught us to do the same thing, because He says, "*As my father hath sent me, even so send I you*" (John 20:21). So as He is a sower, I'm to be a sower. He is my example; I'm His follower. One of the things I think all of us need to do—and I'm going to ask you folks at Bellevue to do this—is to begin to scatter seed everywhere. It doesn't make any difference where you are at any time: you never know when the seed is going to sprout. And don't you be as much a soil tester as much you are a seed sower.

Now I've had enough experiences in life to know that, many times when you think that your seed is going to bring forth fruit, it doesn't do it. And sometimes you think you're just sowing on stony ground, or thorny ground, or hard ground, and shallow ground, and it brings forth fruit.

I can remember Mr. Brennan. He had a son—a great big, tall, crop-dusting son. And I wanted to go witness to his son. His son was so tall—he was a crop-duster—he actually hung both legs outside the airplane when he flew—literally. He couldn't get them up there—he was that tall of a guy. And he'd been on drugs, but he got saved. And then he wanted me to come out to his house. And so I went to his house. He said,

“Now my daddy doesn’t like you. As a matter of fact, my daddy hates you. But,” he said, “I want you to come, and I want to have some friends over.” So I went over to Mr. Brennan’s house, and I sat there and I opened my Bible, and I taught. He came in. I’ve never seen a stonier, harder look on any man in my life than Mr. Brennan. But I shared, you know, and talked, and tried not to notice him. Very frankly, I was a little intimidated by him. But I just went ahead and shared—and just sowing seed, sowing seed.

I had forgotten about that incident at that time until several years later—more than four years later. I was in a church service, and a man stood up to give a testimony, and I thought, “Well, I think I know that guy.” I looked at him. You know who it was? Mr. Brennan. And this was his testimony. He said, “Through the witness of that man”—and he pointed to me—“I came to know Jesus Christ as my personal Savior and Lord.” I thought, “My goodness!” I thought that guy, I thought if I ever I sowed on concrete, I did that night—and there he came to know the Lord Jesus Christ. The sower’s just sowing everywhere.

I was in Pensacola one time, and there was a man whose name was Mr. Forshay. And I had gotten his name somehow, and I went to his house to share with him. I’ve never told you this story. I sat down. I got him out in the living room. I wanted to get him isolated so I could share the gospel with him. And he seemed to be very open, but his mother came in. Now, folks, if I had been Cecil B. DeMille and I wanted to do some typecasting for a witch, she’d be number one. She had a face like a hatchet. And she came in and sat down on the couch across the room. Now I’m sitting by this guy, and she’s sitting over there. And she had a bowl of snapping beans and a colander. And I’m over there sharing the gospel with that man, and she’s over there snapping those beans; and every time she snapped one, I could feel my neck break: *snap, snap*, snapping those beans, just looking at me. It was as disconcerting as any witness I’ve ever been in. But I just kept on going. I said, “I’m not going to let the devil intimidate me; that woman is so full of the devil, she must be demon-possessed,” and I just went on. And, boy, she was snapping those beans just like that. Finally, I said to Mr. Forshay, “Would you like to pray and receive Christ as your personal Savior and Lord?” He nodded his head. By that time, he was probably thirty-five or forty years of age. He’d prayed and asked Christ into his heart.

I, you know, wanted to obey the Bible. It says, “*Watch and pray*” (Matthew 26:41; Mark 13:33). Well, I kept one eye on her while I was praying. But he prayed and asked Christ to come into his heart. Then I said to him, “If you really meant that, would you give me your hand?” And he gave me his hand. And, boy, then she stood up and started for me. I said, “Uh oh, here it comes. How do you fight a woman? What am I going to do?” And she started for me—and she put out her hand to let me know she too

had prayed to ask Jesus Christ into her heart. I thought, “Adrian, what a klutz you are! How dumb you are! You’d already made up your mind what kind of soil that was. That dear, precious woman had come out because she wanted to hear about Jesus. And she sat there and saw her son get saved. And she got saved. You never know.

I got a letter a while back, Brother Jim, from Merritt Island. A man—he’s a Presbyterian minister—he said, “Forgive me for not writing you, but,” he said, “years and years ago I was a long-haired hippie, and you stopped and picked me up and shared Jesus with me.” He said, “I made out like I didn’t care at all what you said.” He said, “I stonewalled you, but,” he said, “I never could get it out of my heart. And,” he said, “God has saved me and called me to preach.” I don’t even remember it. I have no recollection of even picking the guy up.

But, folks, I tell you what: we need to go, just scatter the seed. Don’t test the soil! Just scatter the seed! Here’s the Lord Jesus Christ—He’s sowing with a lavish hand. Some falls by the wayside. Some falls in the stony places. Some falls among the weeds. Some falls on the good ground. The sower is the Lord Jesus Christ.

### III. The Soil

But the main emphasis in this parable is the soil. Now there are four kinds of soil in this parable—and the soil represents the hearts of men and women, the hearts of those who hear the Word. For example, look in verse 4: “*And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: some fell on stony places*”—verse 5 (Matthew 13:4–5). And then, verse 7: “*Some fell among thorns*” (Matthew 13:7). And then, verse 8: Some “*fell into good ground*” (Matthew 13:8). Well, what does that represent? Well, go over to verse 15, and you can see that it represents those who hear: “*For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed;*”—so He’s talking here about the heart. And then He goes on to say—“*lest...*”—in that same verse—“*lest...they should...understand with their heart*” (Matthew 13:15). And so the soil is the hearts of people. And we’re sowing the seed in hearts.

Now there are different kinds of hearts. There are three basic reasons why a preacher can preach and people will not respond to his preaching, or why a soul winner can witness and people do not respond to the witness.

#### A. No Reception

First of all, there is the heart where the seed has no reception—the seed has no reception. Listen to verse 4: “*And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up*” (Matthew 13:4). Now, what does that mean:

*“some...fell by the way side”? Well, go again to verse 19: “When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side” (Matthew 13:19).*

Do you know Satan always attends church? He sends an emissary, if he doesn't attend himself—the wicked one. And so Adrian is up here sowing seed. Now if your heart is a hard heart, a wayside heart, when I sow it, Satan just comes like a bird and steals the seed right off the surface; because while I'm here speaking tonight, you're trying to decide whether or not you're going to go to El Chico's or J. Alexander's or something like that; and you're just all on what you've got to do tomorrow; or whether the kids' clothes are ready for school tomorrow, or whatever. Your mind—Satan's just stealing away the seed, because the seed has no reception in your heart.

What is the wayside? Well, in Bible times, the wayside is what we would call today the sidewalk—only they didn't have sidewalks of concrete; they just had packed down soil. And many times the wayside is just a path through the field, or alongside of the field, and it has been trampled on, it has been trodden underfoot by this world, until it becomes so hard that it is impenetrable. And so the seed is the Word of God. The sower is Jesus Christ Himself. Nothing wrong with the seed; certainly nothing wrong with the sower; but the heart is so hard that the seed has no reception. It cannot get in. And there are many people like that. You may sit in this service tonight, and God knows why you're even here; but you have a hard heart, and you're not going to understand what I say, and the seed is not going to get into your heart and into your life tonight.

Look again in verse 19: *“When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side” (Matthew 13:19).* Your heart can get hard. There are some of you here tonight that may have a hard heart; certainly there are some listening to me by radio, I trust, that you have a hard heart. I don't want you to have a hard heart; but you could have a hard heart. You see, in Hebrews chapter 3, the Bible says, *“To day if ye will hear [God's] voice, harden not your hearts” (Hebrews 3:7–8).* Your heart can get hard.

Now anything you do long enough, you get good at. If you reject the gospel long enough, you become a professional gospel rejecter. Your heart can get hard. Have you ever heard anybody say something like this: “Preachers don't preach like they used to when I was a boy”? Some of them do. You just don't hear like you did when you were a boy. That's the difference.

**I illustrate it this way. If you've ever been out in the woods and you've seen some charred stump—maybe the stump of a pine—and it's just the stump that's there, and it**

is black and covered with charcoal, it's just charred and burned over—now, what happened? Well, there was a time when somebody came in there and cut that pine tree down. And you know what happens when you cut a pine tree down? The sap, the resin, just oozes out. And then there comes a fire in the brush and the weeds and the bushes and everything all around that stump; and when the fire comes roaring by, that stump blazes and catches fire, and blazes brightly. But then, what happens? After a while, it burns itself out, and it's charred and blackened.

Now perhaps in a year or so that underbrush grows up again, and again there's a fire, and the fire comes to where that stump is; and that stump this time, if the fire is hot enough, it will flicker, it will burn, not nearly as bright, not nearly as long, and then it will go out. But, you know, there will come a time when, no matter how hot the fire is, it can be a roaring inferno; but when it comes to that stump, it just jumps over it. There's not a glow. You know why? It is charred. It is hardened. It is burned over. It is seared.

The Bible speaks of those whose conscience is *“seared with a hot iron”* (1 Timothy 4:2). And I've been in services, folks, where the Holy Ghost of God is moving like a fire across the congregation. But there are people that just sit there and are not moved at all; they don't feel one thing. They are not touched, because the seed does not get in. Their hearts are charred, hardened. They're like the wayside that's been trampled on; they're like the stump that is bent over and burnt over; and that's the reason the Bible says, *“To day if ye will hear [God's] voice, harden not your hearts”* (Hebrews 3:7–8).

And I want to say something to you. If you have any inclination to come to Jesus, do it—do it. Don't play with this thing called salvation. There's a very interesting verse in John chapter 12, beginning in verse 37. The Bible says, *“But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: that the saying of [Isaiah] the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe”* (John 12:37–38).

## **B. No Root**

Now, notice the sequence. At first, they *would* not believe, and then they *could* not believe. And so there's, first of all, the seed that has no reception. The seed can't get in; it falls on the wayside. But then, there's another kind of seed. First of all, the seed with no reception; and, secondly, the seed with no root. It gets in, but it doesn't get down. Look in verse 5: *“Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth”* (Matthew 13:5).

Now when the Bible says, *“stony places,”* it doesn't mean soil with a lot of stones in it; it means soil that is shallow. In the Bible, there in Israel, if you've been to Israel, you

know that there are great limestone ledges and limestone strata sometimes right under the earth. There may only be a half an inch of earth on top of solid rock. Now you don't know there's only half an inch of earth there; it may be feet deep so far as you know. But that's what the Bible calls "the stony place." And it doesn't have much earth.

And so now, look at it: *"Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth"* (Matthew 13:5). They come up first. The shallowness causes the seed to sprout. It's like an incubator. It's warm. It's warmer there. The sun is beating upon it. It's right there on the surface. Why, it just springs up immediately! You say, "Well, what a wonderful harvest!" But now, notice in verse 6: *"And when the sun was up,"*—that is, all the way up—*"they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away"* (Matthew 13:6). Some seed, no reception; some seed, no root.

Well, what does that speak of? Well, go over to verse 20. *"But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended"* (Matthew 13:20–21). I've seen it happen so many times. I've been preaching the Bible long enough now that I'm getting a perspective. And I don't get excited every time somebody shouts, "Hallelujah!" I don't get excited every time somebody comes down the aisle weeping. Well, I do get excited. I take that back. But I try to see it in perspective—I try to see it in perspective—because I know that there are shallow individuals, and they are living in the realm of emotion; and you can preach, and maybe tell a moving story, or maybe do a great song like Greg Sims sang this morning, and everybody gets happy, and I get happy. And that's wonderful. And nothing's wrong with emotion. That's fine. We're to love God with all of our soul. But I want to tell you this—and I've told you before: *Your emotions are the shallowest part of your nature. Salvation is the deepest work of God. And God doesn't do the deepest work in the shallowest part.* Don't you ever forget that.

Salvation is in the spirit of man down deep; and so many times people have an emotional spasm, they get into meetings, and a certain kind of music, certain kind of preaching, certain kind of exhortation, and so forth, and they say, "Yes, I want to be a Christian, hallelujah!" But let the sun get up, let tribulation come, let persecution come, let somebody hurt their feelings, let the doctor give them a bad report, let them get fired from their job, let them have some problems in life: oh, they're gone! They're gone! They didn't lose their salvation; they never had it. The seed got in, but the seed did not get down. And it happens so many times. These are the emotional people. You see, if your heart is a shallow part, it's soon going to be scorched, and you're going to wither.



### C. No Room

Now, here's the third seed. The first of the seed has no reception. Secondly, the seed has no root. Thirdly, the seed has no room. Look in verse 7: *"And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them"* (Matthew 13:7). That is, literally, it "crowded them out." Well, look, if you will, in verse 22: *"He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches..."*—did you know that riches are so deceitful?—*"the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful"* (Matthew 13:22).

Now, in the first place, the seed could not get in. In the second place, the seed could not get down. In the third place, the seed can't get free. It's just choked by all of these things. There was a rival crop, and that rival crop was undisturbed. Like so many people, they just want to add Jesus Christ on; they don't want to make Jesus Christ all. You say, "Well, I'd like salvation as a byproduct." But, you see, the thorns, from time immemorial, from the Garden of Eden, represent that which is cursed; it's typical of sin, and unless there's repentance, you're not saved—if there's a rival crop, if you tried to make Jesus Christ a sideline.

So many people don't know what repentance is. Repentance is not being broken over your sin; it's being broken from your sin. The Bible says, *"Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins"* (Matthew 1:21). *It may surprise you to learn that Jesus didn't come to save you from hell. He came to save you from sin. And if He can't save you from sin, He sure can't save you from hell. "Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."*

First time: no reception. Second time: no root. Third time: no room. Now, in each instance, there was nothing wrong with the sower, and nothing wrong with the seed. Now I don't want to get cavalier about preaching, and no decisions; but I've learned, folks, that I can be right with God, I can preach a good sermon, and there can still be no results. And that's not my problem, and it's not my fault. I am the man who's to scatter the seed. I can't take credit if the seed grows. I certainly cannot take blame. What I must do is make certain that I'm preaching and teaching the Word of God.

### D. No Refusal

But now there was a fourth kind of soil—and thank God for that! And this soil, it was not a matter that there was no reception, no root, no room, but this soil, there was no refusal; he just opens his heart. Look in verse 8: *"But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear"* (Matthew 13:8–9). This is the open heart of the man with sincerity who hears the Word of God. And, by the way, you know how you test your life as a

Christian? Is there fruit in your life? Is there fruit in your life? Has your life been changed? Or are you just a church member? Is there fruit in your life? Is the Bible real to you? Is there joy in the Holy Ghost? Is Christ Lord? Do you have a desire to share the gospel of Jesus Christ? What right do you have to call yourself a follower of Jesus if the fruit of the Spirit is not there?

“Well,” you say, “maybe I’m just bad soil—not my fault.” Well, the Bible teaches that the soil can do something about itself. Let me give you a couple of verses, and I’m finished now in just a few moments. Jeremiah chapter 4, verse 3: *“Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns”* (Jeremiah 4:3)— *“Break up your fallow ground.”* Do you know what fallow ground is? It’s ground that has not been plowed. It’s ground that’s not been cultivated. It’s just lying fallow. And God says, “Put the plow in and break it up.”

That’s what I want you to do tonight. I want you just to get those thorns out, to be willing to repent of your sin, in case you can’t get the thorns out apart from the Lord. But He will do that for you. Again, in Hosea chapter 10 and verse 12, he says this: *“Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you”* (Hosea 10:12). See, you’re not destined to go to hell just because your heart is hard. Break it up. “A broken and a contrite spirit, thou wilt not despise, O God” (Psalm 51:17).

You know, I was preaching a revival, I was holding a revival—I guess I held it; it never got loose—in a southern Louisiana town—as a matter of fact, New Iberia, Louisiana. And if you’re from down there, New Iberia, it’s where they make Tabasco sauce, one of my favorite condiments. And I was down there in New Iberia, Louisiana, and I was preaching. And, folks, I’m telling you, it was as dead as four o’clock. Nothing was happening. I fasted. I prayed. I wept. I sought God. I did everything that I knew to do. Nothing was happening. It was just dead. Oh, a few folks came down the aisle because they were sorry for me; but it wasn’t a move of God.

And one night I preached my heart out; I tore my lungs out preaching the Word of God: and those folks just sitting there unmoved, undisturbed. I said to God, “God, I’ve got to have a word from you. I am frustrated.” Nobody needs to be frustrated if he’s a preacher of the gospel. It was one of those churches that didn’t have chairs like Brother Bob’s sitting on right now. It had those wooden chairs with those arms that kind of looked like the electric chair. Have you ever seen the electric chair? You know, they have those things for preachers to sit in, and they were up on the platform. I said to the pastor of that church, I said, “Pastor, you take the invitation. I’ve got to pray.”

This happened during the invitation. I was so, I guess, frustrated; and I opened my Bible. And I don’t recommend this as Bible study; but, folks, I was desperate. I said,

“God, I’ve got to have a word from you. I’m going to let my Bible fall open at random, and I’m going to put my finger upon a verse of Scripture. Let it be for me.” I opened my Bible. I put my finger on a verse of Scripture. It was in Ezekiel chapter 3, verse 7. And it said this: *“But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for [they are]...rebellious house”* (Ezekiel 3:7–9). I said, “Oh, why didn’t I see that? I haven’t failed. I’m just the messenger boy. I preached right. My heart was right. The only reason they didn’t hear me, is, Lord, they didn’t hear you. They have not sinned against me. I haven’t failed. They’ve just hardened their heart against you.”

That was such a blessing, I almost shouted. I said, “Lord, that was so good: show me another one.” I’m telling it, folks, just like it happened. And I just turned the page and put my finger down on another verse—and, when I did, I almost came unglued. Here’s what it said: *“And they, whether they will hear...”*—listen, Ezekiel 2:5—*“And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear...yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them.”* “Thank you, God. That’s it! Thank you, God. Whether they hear, whether they don’t...” You say, “Well, that’s just a coincidence you found those verses. Coincidence or not, it’s still true—it’s still true.”

## **Conclusion**

Whether they hear or whether they don’t, that’s not my business. My business is to scatter the seed, to sow the seed. Some falls on hard ground, the wayside—and there’s no reception. Some stony ground: there’s no root. Some falls on thorny ground: there’s no room. But I’ve been preaching long enough to know—thank God—some falls on good ground, and it brings forth fruit. Has the gospel failed? Absolutely not! There’s nothing wrong with the seed. The problem is always the soil.

# Why Some Preachers Have Crop Failure

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: May 25, 1980**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 13:1-23**

## Outline

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## Introduction

**A**nd today I'm going to be preaching on "Why Some Preachers Have Crop Failure"—  
"Why Some Preachers Have Crop Failure." We're going to find out that that some preachers preach and nothing really happens like they expected to happen or wanted to happen—and why. So Matthew chapter 13: a brand new series of seven messages on the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 13, verse 1: *"The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side. And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up,*

*and choked them: but other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?"* (Matthew 13:1–10).

Now we've all known about the Sermon on the Mount. That's in chapter 5. But this is the Sermon by the Sea. The Lord Jesus is giving another sermon, and we need to understand the truths that are there, because these are such vital truths that, when you understand them, they will keep you from much misunderstanding that you would have if you did not understand them. Now, let me say that Jesus taught them, and Jesus was the master teacher. They said, "Never a man spoke like this man" (John 7:46).

## **I. The Method of Jesus' Teaching**

And I want you to notice now the method of His teaching. In verse 3, the Bible says that He spoke to them in parables. Now, what is a parable? Well, think of the word *parallel*, because both words are rooted in the same word. A parable is a method of teaching that lays one truth down alongside another truth, just like parallel lying. First of all, the Lord gives a truth in the natural world, and then He makes an application to the spiritual world. A little girl was not far from wrong when she said, "A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning." And so that was the method of His teaching: parables.

## **II. The Mystery of Jesus' Teaching**

This is the first time, so far as we can tell, that Jesus ever taught in parables. And He gives seven parables here, and these seven parables are called the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, as we will see in just a moment. So look in verse 11. Now, remember the method of His teaching was parable. But now notice the mystery of His teaching, in verse 11: "*He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given*" (Matthew 13:11). That is, "I'm teaching in parables to help you to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven."

Now, what is a *mystery* in the Bible? A mystery, in the Bible, is some spiritual truth that you could not know by human discernment, by human logic, by human computation. A mystery is something that you can only know by the Holy Spirit and divine revelation.

I heard Bill Gothard tell about a college student who was in a class; and that professor in that class said, "Is there anybody in this class who believes the Bible?" And this college student who was a fine Christian stood up and said, "Yes sir, I believe the Bible." And with that, the professor began, in excoriating terms, to humiliate this young man, and to ridicule the Bible, and to take it apart a piece at a time; and he said, "I've read the entire Bible

through, and I want to tell you it is a bundle of confusion; it doesn't make any sense at all to me." And that young college student, filled with the Holy Spirit, said, "Sir, I mean you no disrespect; but may I tell you, sir, that the Bible is God's love letter to His children. If you've read it and didn't understand it, it's because you've been reading somebody else's mail." Amen?

You see, listen, friend. These are things that are mysteries that you only know as God the Holy Spirit reveals them unto you. And here a mystery is something that you have to receive by a revelation. You lay your intellectual pride in the dust, "For God hath hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, and God hath revealed them unto babes" (Matthew 11:25; Luke 10:21).

### III. The Motive of Jesus' Teaching

The method of His teaching: parables. The mystery of His teaching: things that you could not understand any other way. But now, let's notice the motive of His teaching. Why did Jesus teach by parables? The disciples ask this question, in verse 10: "[His] disciples came, and said unto him, *Why speakest thou unto them in parables?*" (Matthew 13:10). And Jesus gave two reasons why He spoke in parables—number one: to reveal; number two: to conceal.

#### A. To Reveal

Now He spoke in parables to reveal. He wanted them to understand certain things. So He says, in verse 11, "I'm speaking in parables"—"*Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath,*"—verse 12—"*to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath*" (Matthew 13:11–12).

Now, what does that mean? Have you ever heard this expression: "The rich get richer, and the poor get poorer"? You say, "Heard it? I'm experiencing it. From the latter end, that is." All right, the rich get richer, and the poor get poorer. Or, as they say in the country, "Them that has gets." Now, that's a principle; and it's not only true materialistically and financially; it is definitely true spiritually. Jesus said, "I have a certain motive, and it is to reveal; and I'm going to reveal certain things to you." And Jesus said, "*For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance.*" That is, Jesus said, "If you have a certain thing, you're going to get more."

Now, why did Jesus reveal certain truths to these disciples? Why is He wanting to reveal truth to them? Because they had something. What was it that they had that caused them to get more? They had a hunger for spiritual truth and a willingness to act upon it when they heard it.

You know, Jesus walked the shores of Galilee, and He saw certain ones, and Jesus knew men. He needed not that anybody tell Him what was in man. He knew men (John 2:24–25). And He saw Matthew. He saw John. He saw Andrew. He saw others. Why did Jesus choose fishermen, tax collectors, others? Why did He choose these people? Not because they were wealthy, not because they were handsome, not because they were educated; but because there was something about these men. They had something, and the thing that they had was a hunger for spiritual truth and a willingness to obey that truth, because when Jesus called, they left their nets; they forsook it all, they followed Him.

There was a certain spiritual levity in the hearts and minds of these people. They had something, a hunger to know truth and a willingness to obey truth. “And to him that hath shall be given, and he shall have in more abundance.” And so our Lord here is willing to teach these men more, because they were teachable. You know what the Bible says, in Psalm 25, verse 9? The Bible says, “*The meek will he teach his way*” (Psalm 25:9). Do you know what the word *meek* means? It means, “teachable.” Are you teachable? You see, you may not be teachable today. And so you won’t get any. As a matter of fact, you’re in danger of losing what you already have. “To him that hath shall be given; but to him that hath not shall be taken away, even that which he hath.”

Here’s a man, let’s say, who has 100,000 dollars he wants to invest in business, so he invests 50,000 dollars in a business over here, and he invests 50,000 dollars in a business over here. Now, let’s say this business doesn’t do a thing. As a matter of fact, it’s just going backward. It’s losing money. It’s causing him all kinds of heartaches and headaches. And over here is a business that’s making money hand over fist. What’s he going to do? To this business that has he’s going to give more, and to this business that has not he’s going to take away the 50,000 that it already had and put it in this business. You see, he’s just going to invest his money where he’s going to get the biggest return. “To him that hath shall be given; and to him that hath not shall be taken away, even that which he hath.”

There is a spiritual principle in the world. It is in everything that we see, dear friend, that if you have a willingness to know truth, if you have a meek heart, if you have a obedient spirit, then “to him that hath shall be given.”

## **B. To Conceal**

But not only did Jesus teach in parables to reveal; He also taught in parables to conceal. Continue to read. Look in verse 12 again from the other side: “*For whosoever hath, to him shall be given,*”—that is, he’ll have a revelation—“*and he shall have more abundance:*”—but now, watch the other—“*but whosoever hath not,*”—that is, a hunger for truth and a willingness to obey truth—“*from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak*

*I unto them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of [Isaiah], which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them" (Matthew 13:12-15).*

Now, why did He say He spoke in parables? Because there were certain people He didn't want to understand. You say, "You mean, the Lord didn't want them to understand?" That is absolutely right. You see, if you will read chapter 12, you will read where Jesus just warned them about the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost and the unpardonable sin. He had done miracles that only God could do. He had taught as only God can teach. He had loved as only God could love. And yet, in their arrogance, and in their spitefulness, and in the hardness of their heart, they said that Jesus Christ cast out devils by the prince of devils (Matthew 12:24). They had truths, but they would not obey truth. And their rebellion reached a climax in chapter 12; and, in chapter 13, He starts to speak in parables.

Never spoke in parables before this, but now He starts to speak in parables. Why? "To him that hath shall be given, but to him that hath not shall be taken away even that which they have." They had truth; they did not act upon truth. They had no love for truth. And now the Lord is teaching His own to reveal to them. But He's also teaching a way to conceal to the others. Friend, if you do not use truth, you will lose truth. Truth is not something that you can just put in your pocket and say, "Well, I'll spend that whenever I get ready." You'll use it or you'll lose it. Truth not received, not acted on, not welcomed, is taken away.

Now I want to show you a passage of Scripture that will just...—oh, I'll tell you, it's a devastating passage of Scripture—so put your bookmark there in Matthew 13 and turn to 2 Thessalonians the second chapter—2 Thessalonians the second chapter. Don't miss this. Here God is explaining why some people will follow the Antichrist when he comes. And the Antichrist is coming, and some, doubtless, who are listening to my voice right now will believe the lies of the Antichrist. You talk about a man who's going to have persuasive powers: look in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, verse 9. The Bible describes him: "*Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,*"—he'll be a miracle worker. He will have such ability of persuasion he'll be able to make you think that red is blue, and up is down, and good is bad. He will make you, dear friend, where you would be willing to cut your mother's throat. He'll have such power of persuasion. You say, "Well, who's going to believe him?" Well, let's go on to read. The Bible says he's coming, in verse 10—"*...with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish;*"—well, who's



going to perish? Continue to read—*“because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.”* Now there are some people who have a love of the truth and other people don’t have it. That love of the truth is what Jesus is talking about when He says, “to him that shall be given.” All right now, there are some who receive not the love of the truth that they might be saved. Now, look in verse 11: *“And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion...”*—who is sending them strong delusion? The Antichrist? No. The devil? No. Look at it—*“And for this cause...”*—what cause? They don’t have a love for the truth—*“for this cause, God shall send them strong delusion,”*—well, why would He do that? Well, continue to read—*“that they should believe a lie:”*—my goodness, why would God, who is truth incarnate, want anybody to believe a lie? Well, continue to read—*“that they all might be damned...”*—it’s getting worse, isn’t it? God sends them delusion so that they will believe a lie, so that they will be damned. Well, why would God do that? Continue to read—*“that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness”* (2 Thessalonians 2:9–12).

It is not that they had not first heard the truth. They had heard the truth, but they wouldn’t believe the truth. And why wouldn’t they believe the truth? Is it because they had intellectual problems? No, not at all! They wouldn’t believe the truth because they didn’t have a love for the truth. What did they have a love for? They had a love for unrighteousness. Look at it: *“that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”* Now, write it down big and get it in your heart. The opposite of truth is not error. The opposite of truth is sin. Now, learn that. It doesn’t say that they received not the love of the truth, but had pleasure in error. It says they *“had pleasure in unrighteousness.”*

Now here’s the situation. Over here is God’s truth, perfect truth. Over here is a man’s sin, his lifestyle, his unrighteousness that he loves; and he’s coming down the road of life, and he is confronted with truth, and he hears the gospel, and he knows that if he believes this truth, receives this truth, he’s going to have to turn from his unrighteousness. And so he makes a choice. And he says, “Over here is truth, and over here is my sin,” and he doesn’t have a love for the truth. He has pleasure in unrighteousness, so he chooses unrighteousness. And then the error comes in. Along with the unrighteousness comes the recompense of that unrighteousness, which is the error. And when a man has pleasure in unrighteousness, God sends him strong delusion that he should believe a lie.

When a man decides he’s going that way, God gives him a shove. God says, “You cannot have your sin with one hand and my truth with the other hand. You cannot have both.” “To him that hath it shall be given; but to him that hath not, shall be taken away, even that which he hath.” The Pharisees had come to a place where they’d heard truth, they knew

truth, but they refused that truth. And Jesus then for the first time started speaking in parables. And He spoke in parables to reveal to His own, because “to him that hath shall be given.” But He also spoke in parables to conceal the truth from those who did not really want to know the truth.

Ladies and gentlemen, you’d better be careful how you hear. I want to ask you a question today. Do you have something? I mean, do you have a love for the truth and do you have a willingness to obey the truth? If you do, “to him that hath shall be given.” If you don’t, even that which you already have is going to be taken from you, and you’ll be sent strong delusion that you should believe a lie, and it will be God’s perfectly righteous judgment for a man who had rather have unrighteousness than to have God’s truth.

That’s why Jesus spoke in parables. His method of teaching: parables. The mystery of his teaching: things you couldn’t understand any other way except by divine revelation. The motive of his teaching: to reveal and to conceal.

#### **IV. The Parable**

Now, let’s look at this parable that we just read about—and we’re talking why some preachers have crop failures. Now Jesus said a man went out to sow, and as he was broadcasting his seed all over, some of the seed fell by the wayside. That’s the path that goes through the garden, or through the farm, packed down, hardened, because people walk on it, and it’s just crusty, and the seed can’t get in. Then, He said other seed fell upon stony ground. That doesn’t mean ground that has some rocks in it, but stony ground means ground that is solid rock covered with a thin layer of dirt only about a quarter of an inch deep; but from the surface it looks just as good as any other ground; stony ground, with a rock ledge underneath it. And some seed fell on that. And then, He said other seed fell among the thorns. And the thorns and the brambles came and choked it out. And then, He said other seed fell on good ground and it brought forth fruit.

When I was in Galilee there beside the Sea of Galilee with my wife one day, I said, “Honey, look at this.” And there was a farm, and there were some crops growing. There was the pathway, hard and deep down. And then, there were some rocky places where nothing would grow, or wouldn’t grow very long. And then, there were some of those big brambles and thorns. And then, there was a beautiful crop growing. I said, “It’s just like in the Bible, isn’t it?” Right there, the same spot where the Lord Jesus, or in the same vicinity where the Lord Jesus gave this Sermon by the Sea.

Now what I want us to learn from this parable now: we’re talking about strange mysteries of the kingdom, and there are seven of these strange mysteries. The first of these

mysteries is why some preachers have crop failure, why sometimes we preach, and we preach a message that's based on the Word of God and nothing really happens.

Well, there are three parts to this first parable. The parable, we call the parable of the sower—it really ought to be the parable of the soil—but there are three parts to it. First of all, I want you to notice the seed. Secondly, I want you to notice the sower. And, thirdly, I want you to notice the soil. And then I think we'll see something, at least, of what Jesus is talking about.

### A. The Seed

Now, what is the seed in this parable? Look again, if you will. We'll go back to Matthew chapter 13, and look again at the parable, if you will, and notice in verse 3: *"And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side."* Now, what are the seeds that He's talking about? Well, let's let the Bible interpret itself. Look in verse 19. Jesus said, *"When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart."* All right, what was sown in his heart? This is he which received seed by the wayside. All right, what is the seed? Well, continue: *"But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word"* (Matthew 13:19–20).

So, what is the seed? The seed is the Word of God—the seed is the Word of God. This sower who went forth to sow is like a preacher preaching the Word of God. And when the Bible calls itself seed, that's very interesting to me, because seed has life, and this book has life. Jesus said, *"The words that I speak unto you...they are life"* (John 6:63). And Hebrews 4:12 says, "The Word of God is living."

I want to tell you there is such power in this seed today. It has life to transform. And that's why I enjoy preaching it, because I know that it's not just dead words; it's not merely philosophy, or history, or good ideas; but it is power. Oh, the power of the life of this Word!

Do you know why God has used Billy Graham all these many years? Because Billy Graham has been faithful to preach the Word of God. How many times have you heard Billy say, "the Bible says"—"the Bible says"? You see, and there's power in that. When Billy Graham was in London, preaching in Harringay Arena, there was a medical doctor and another man sitting up in the stadium talking about the American evangelist. And they were criticizing him because they thought he was a little too flamboyant and a little too much of a showman. And they said, "Well, he's probably a money grabber," and so forth. And they were criticizing this man. They didn't know Billy Graham.

And so Billy Graham got up and he started to preach. And you know how Billy preaches with that warmth and sincerity and the power of the Holy Spirit upon his life. And God came over that arena, and Billy gave the invitation; and that medical doctor who had been gripped by the life of the Word of God said to this man that was sitting next to him, "I don't know about you, but," he said, "I'm going forward to give my heart to Christ." And that man sitting next to him said, "And I'll go with you. And here's your billfold: I'm a pickpocket." That literally happened in Harringay Arena. Both of these men gave that testimony.

Now, what transformed them? Not the personality of that American evangelist. I thank God for the personality of Billy Graham. Not some logic in his mind. My friend, this book has power. It's like a seed, and a seed has the ability to bring life. And, you see, it's not just enough if you want to be a farmer to tickle the soil; you've got to sow the seed, see? All right now, if you want people to get saved, you've got to give them the Word. *"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him"* (Psalm 126:6).

## **B. The Sower**

All right now, we see what the seed is. Now, what about the sower? Who is the sower? Look again, if you will, please, in verse 3 of this chapter. And the Bible says, *"And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow."* Who is this sower who is casting seeds all over the place? Well, look in verse 37 of the same chapter: *"He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man"* (Matthew 13:37).

Jesus is the sower of the seed. Everywhere Jesus went He was sowing the seed. The Bible says Jesus came preaching (Mark 1:14). And notice where He scattered this seed to begin with. Everywhere! I mean, He was just like He had seed to spare. He's throwing the seed in the thorns. He's throwing it on the wayside. He's throwing it on the stony ground. He's throwing it in the good ground. Just scattering seed everywhere!

And what a wonderful lesson there is for us there, because Jesus said, *"As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you"* (John 20:21). And we're to be seed-sowers. Everywhere we're to go we're to scatter the seed. You see, friends, you cannot tell by casual observation what soil will be productive.

Now soil looks alike. You all look the same today. It's hard for me to tell which one is the stony soil, which mind has weeds in it; and it's hard for me to tell which is the hard heart, and the wayside, and so forth. It's hard for me to tell that. I can't tell that. If I were to say, "This man is interested; that man is," you know, some of you can look at me and smile and

nod your head while you're figuring up a business deal. Sure! I mean, you fool me. Others, you know, you say, "Well, I'm meditating." Your eyes are closed, and you're asleep.

One man trying to impress his pastor, he said, "Pastor, give me a good prayer that I might pray when I enter the church." The pastor knew his habits. He said, "How about this: 'Now I lay me down to sleep.'"

Now it's hard sometimes, though, to be able to tell what is the attitude of the heart. You can't tell.

I remember one time in Florida I was out on a soul-winning mission, and I went to see a man named Mr. Forshee. And I went in to talk to Mr. Forshee about the Lord, into his house. And I asked for him, and he came out. I had reason to believe he wanted to be saved. And so I sat on the couch, and I opened the Bible, and I started to scatter the seed. I started telling him about the Lord Jesus Christ. And about that time a lady—or I think I should say a woman; looked like a woman to me—came in—oh, listen: I've only seen two ugly women in my life, and she was both of them. She came in. If I had been Cecil B. DeMille trying to cast the Wicked Witch of the West, that would have been her. She had a face like a hatchet, and her eyes seemed to be the very mirror of evil. And she came in and just plopped herself down across the room. And she had a colander full of snap beans. And I was trying to talk to this man about the Lord Jesus, and she was snapping those beans—*snap, snap*—and looking at me. I felt like every bean was my neck. "*Snap,*" she'd say. I thought, "Dear Lord, who is this woman? Surely, I'm in a spiritual battle today." And, you know, I just said, "Lord, help me to keep my mind on the subject."

And I continued to witness to this man and continued to press the claims of Christ on him. And finally I came to the place where I thought he was ready, and I said, "Sir, with your permission, I'd like to pray for you and lead you in a prayer to receive Christ." He bowed his head, and I prayed for him, and then I led him in a prayer where he opened his heart and asked the Lord Jesus to come in. And then I said, "Now, sir, if you meant it, will you give me your hand?" And he reached out his hand and put his hand in mine. And I said, "We'll thank God for that."

But then it started. Boy, she came off that couch and headed toward me. I said, "This is it. I've had it. I don't know what she's going to do, but it's going to be terrible." Well, she got up close to me, she slipped her hand in my hand, brushed a tear from her eye. She too was saying, "I want to trust Christ as my personal Savior." I was so wrong on that day, I couldn't have been *wronger*—if that's a good word. There was nothing wrong with that little lady. It was all psychological in me. I had it all doped out that she wasn't interested, that she was mean, she was hateful. That was all me. She had a hungry heart. She came in there and snapped those beans so she could listen to me talk about the Lord Jesus Christ.

You don't know the soil, friend; you just scatter the seed. This farmer just scattered the seed everywhere; everywhere he went, he's just scattering the seed. That rascal in your office that you think is so mean, so hard, so obdurate, who'll never be saved, may be the first one to get saved. And that person you think has that tender heart may be just superficially emotional and will not really receive the Lord Jesus.

Now, you just scatter the seed. That's what this man did. Remember the seed is the Word of God. The sower, Jesus. But not only Jesus; that's us, for He said, "As my Father has sent me, even so send I you."

### **C. The Soil**

But primarily let's look at the soil. There were four classes and four categories of soil on this particular day.

#### **1. The Hard Heart of the Secular Hearer**

First of all, there was the wayside soil. Look, if you will, in verse 4: "*And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up.*" Now, what does this refer to? Well, let's let Jesus tell us. Turn, if you will, please, to verse 19: "*When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side*" (Matthew 13:19).

Now the wayside is hard. The wayside is the pathway through the field, and it has been packed down and hardened by traffic. The traffic of the world over it and over it and over it has made it hard and obdurate, and the seed cannot get in. This represents the hard heart of the secular hearer—the hard heart of the secular hearer. And there are some like that who are listening to me today. Your mind has been so beaten down by the things of this world, your mind has become such a footpath for materialism, that what I'm preaching today goes right off your back like water off a duck's back, and the seed never gets in. It's just lying right out there on the surface. And you're sitting here scheming, thinking about other things, and the ol' devil is just picking that seed away, and it never gets into your heart.

That's one kind of soil. It is the hard-hearted soil. That's the reason the Bible says, in Hebrews chapter 3, verses 7 and 8, "*To day if ye will hear [God's] voice, harden not your hearts*" (Hebrews 3:7-8).

#### **2. The Shallow Heart of the Superficial Hearer**

Some of you have a heart, a secular heart, a hard heart. But not only is there the hard heart of the secular hearer; go on and look: there's also the shallow heart of the superficial hearer, because now, read verses 5 and 6: "*Some fell upon stony places, where they had not*

*much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away*" (Matthew 13:5–6). This is what I call the shallow heart of the superficial hearer.

Now there are people who hear the Word of God: here the seed got in, but it couldn't get down, because it had no root. They were only about *that* deep; there's just a thin layer of dirt right on top of solid rock. And they looked so good outwardly. Oh, it looks like fertile soil, but you can't see beneath the surface. There's no depth there. They were superficial.

Do you know I preach to crowds like that too? I preach to people, and they'll hear the Bible, and their chin will quiver, and a tear will come in their eye, and they get a lump in their throat, but they've still got a vacuum in their head. They never really receive the Word of God. They seem to. They sometimes come down aisles and join churches. Sometimes they make emotional statements about the Lord. But they're superficial. One man was asked, "How big is your church field?" "Oh," he said, "it's seven miles wide, half an inch deep." Well, I think I know some that are half an inch deep. They may be seven miles wide. The seed can get in, but it never gets down.

I'm not against emotionalism, but I am against superficiality. Do you know what Dr. Sidlow Baxter said when he was here? Do you remember Dr. Baxter? Dr. Baxter was talking about emotionalism and superficiality, and he said, "Your emotions are the shallowest part of your life. And God is not going to do his deepest work in the shallowest part." Now here we see the hard heart of the secular hearer, and then we see the shallow heart of the superficial hearer—people who spring up. They say, "Yes, I want to serve the Lord Jesus," while the flags are waving, the bugles are blowing, and everything is happy; but as soon as a little persecution comes, as soon as some discipleship is demanded, as soon as some hard times come, these candy-legged soldiers are the first to quit. They know a lot about sentiment, but they know very little about sacrifice. They've never been born again. The sun comes up. They're scorched and they're withered away, and we don't see them anymore. That's why some preachers have crop failure. They're preaching to the shallow hearts of superficial hearers.

### **3. The Divided Heart of the Sinful Hearer**

But now, thirdly, let's look at another kind of soil. Not only is there the hard heart of the secular hearer, the shallow heart of the superficial hearer; but there is the divided heart of the sinful hearer. Look, if you will, please, in verse 7 of this chapter: "*And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them.*" Now, what does that represent? Well, look in verse 22, if you will: "*He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the world, and he becometh unfruitful*" (Matthew 13:22).

Now, in the first place, the seed couldn't get in. In the second type of soil, the seed couldn't get down. But in this soil, the seed got in, and the seed got down; but there was a rival crop that was undisturbed. The thorns were there, and the good seed was there, and the thorns were never dealt with; and therefore the thorns crowded out the good seed and choked it, and it became unfruitful.

Now, what does this represent? This represents a man who is not necessarily superficial. He hears the Word of God, and he receives it; but he never repents of his sin—he never repents of his sin. There is the divided heart of the sinful hearer. He wants the good seeds, and he wants the thorns and brambles at the same time. And you cannot have both. I hate to tell you that, friend. No, I'm glad to tell you that, because it is truth. You cannot have both. And Jesus said, in Luke 13:3, *“Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”*

Now someone says to me, “Well, I tried this thing called Christianity for a while, and it didn't work for me. I gave my heart to the Lord. I trusted Christ to save me, and now I'm back just like I was. It didn't work for me.” I'll tell you why it didn't work for you, sir: because you tried to hold the Lord Jesus with one hand and this world with the other. You had a divided heart. You know what a Christian is? *A Christian is somebody who has let go of the world with both hands and taken hold of Jesus Christ with both hands.* Have you done that? Have you given Jesus Christ undisputed claim upon your life?

I don't mean that you're going to be perfect. I'm not perfect. I sin every day. You say, “How?” I'm not going to tell you. Every day, I have to come to God and say, “Oh, God, I'm sorry. I've failed. Forgive me. Cleanse me.” And He does. But I'm going to tell you something else. Before I was saved, I was running to sin. And now I'm running from it. There's a difference in my life, and there is a desire in my heart to serve God, and I want the Lord Jesus Christ with all of my heart. Do you? Or has your garden been half weeds and half God? You can't have it that way.

And the reason that some preachers when they preach have crop failure is there is nothing wrong with the seed, and there's nothing wrong with the sower, but there's plenty wrong with the soil. Sometimes he's farming the secular heart. Sometimes he's farming the superficial heart. Sometimes he's farming the sinful and selfish heart. And therefore there's no crop.

#### **4. The Open Heart of the Sincere Hearer**

But I want to tell you something else. Thank God there's the open heart of the sincere hearer. Continue to read. Look, if you will, in verse 8 of this chapter: *“But other...”*—and I thank God for the *but*—*“But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an*



*hundredfold, some sixtyfold, and some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear”*  
(Matthew 13:8).

I've been preaching the gospel long enough to know also that, if I keep scattering the seed, some of it is going to fall on good ground—and some of it already has today. Bless God! Hallelujah! I preached this morning at eight o'clock, and I just scattered a whole lot of seed over a big field; and out of that field there were some who said an everlasting yes to the Lord Jesus Christ. And I trust that what they said was so sincere that it will be seen by the fruit of their lives; it will bring forth fruit, because, dear friend, there is that kind of soil, and that's what keeps you going. That's what keeps you preaching.

Man, I go some place where I preached twenty years ago, and someone will come up to me with a face like the noonday sun and say, “Brother Rogers, you're the one that preached the Word to me,” or, “You're the one that sat in my home and led me to Jesus, and I'm so happy in Christ.”

Thank God for that good ground! Thank God for that good seed! And, friend, you just sow. You just keep on sowing. And if you go forth with weeping, bearing precious seed, you will doubtless come again with rejoicing, bring your sheaves with you (Psalm 126:6). But *it is not our job to be* successful. *It's our job to be* faithful. Just scatter the seed—just scatter the seed.

I tell you, I was in a town in South Louisiana, a county seat town, holding a revival. I must have been holding it: it never got loose. And, boy, just nothing was happening. And a few people were coming, moderate crowds; but there was no movement of God. It was just—it was deathly. I did everything I knew to do. Yea, I searched my heart motives. You know, I wanted to make sure that I wasn't just preaching for me or for any wrong motive. I said, “Dear God, you know that I want to be your messenger and bring glory to you and not to my own name.” I searched not only my motives; I searched my message. I said, “Lord, I know this is truth.” And I searched not only that, but I searched my methods. I said, “Maybe I'm not being hard enough on them.” Boy, I preached hard. Oh, boy, I walked up and down the spines with hot-nailed boots, and then poured the salt in—and that didn't work; and then loved them—and that didn't work. Man, I gave the invitation: a few people came forward, but it was like they were feeling sorry for me, you know. And there was no revival. There was no moving of God.

And I said, “God, I know I'm preaching your truth. I know I'm right with you. I know my motive is right. God, why no crop? Why no crop?” And during the invitation I went and sat down in one of those big chairs—looks like an electric chair like we have up here. And I sat down in that thing, and I said, “Pastor, you take the invitation,” right in the middle of the

service. And I started praying, and I was kind of frustrated. I said, “God, you’ve got to help me. Lord, I don’t understand.”

Now I don’t recommend this always. I don’t recommend it most of the time. But I was desperate. I said, “Lord, I’m just going to let the Bible fall open at random and put my finger on a verse, and I want you to speak to me, God, from that verse.” Now I don’t recommend that. I call that the *lucky dip*, and I don’t think that’s the best way to study the Bible. But I needed a word from God, and I felt impressed to do it at this particular time. And so I was just sitting up there, and people didn’t know what was going on in the service, the invitation, and I’m sitting up there. I just let my Bible fly open, and I dropped my finger on a verse of Scripture, and it was a verse of Scripture in Ezekiel chapter 3, verse 7—and this is what it said. When I read it, I just almost shouted. It said this: *“The house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for [they are]... a rebellious house”* (Ezekiel 3:7–9).

And I saw it in a moment. I said, “Oh, thank you, God! Thank you! There’s nothing wrong with the seed, and there is nothing wrong with the sower. The problem is with the soil. ‘They will not hearken unto you because they won’t hearken unto me.’” Well, that was such a blessing to my heart. I said, “God, that’s so good. Show me another one.” And I looked away and put my finger down on another verse. And I tell you, folks, when I read it, I almost came unglued. It was Ezekiel 2, verse 5—and this is what it said: *“And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear...yet shall they know there hath been a prophet among them”* (Ezekiel 2:5). I said, “Thank you, Lord! Hallelujah!” He said, “One of these days they’ll know. Whether they hear you, or whether they don’t, one of these days I’ll make them to know that I sent my prophet.” And God showed me in an instant a lesson that I’ve never forgotten: that it is not my job to make anything grow; it is my job to scatter the seed. Amen? That’s my job.

*“A sower went forth to sow.”* Jesus was that sower, and even his seed fell upon stony ground, and his seed fell upon hard ground, and his seed fell upon thorny ground; but some of it fell on good ground.

## **Conclusion**

Now I want to ask you a question. What kind of ground are you? What kind of ground are you? You say, “Well, is that fixed? Is it irrevocable? Am I forever one type of soil?” Praise God, no! Praise God, no! That answer is up to you. And today you can choose to be that good soil. Today you can make the soil of your heart warm and moist and fertile upon which the good seed shall fall. Remember, dear friend, “To him that hath shall be given; and to him that hath not shall be taken away, even that which he has.” To him that has what? To him

that has a hunger to know truth and a willingness to act upon it. Are you that way? If you are, you're like good soil, and the seed will come and bring forth life and fruit.

God loves you. He wants to save you. He called me to preach and sent me to preach to you today. And He in His providence sent you here to hear the message. I pray God today that you'll receive the Word, which is Jesus Christ, the living Word, the seed of life into your life.

# What to Expect in the Coming Year

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: December 27, 1987**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 13:3-50**

## Outline

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## Introduction

Take God's Word, and I want you to turn to a key chapter in all of the Bible. It's Matthew 13. If you understand Mathew 13, you're going to have a penetrating insight into things that many people have never understood and need to know. I'm going to be talking to you in just a few moments about "What to Expect in the Coming Year." I read in Matthew 13:10: *"And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given."* (Matthew 13:10-11) Underscore the phrase *"the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven,"* for, you see, the Bible is a mystery story, but the child of God can understand it. The child of God has a key that unlocks the mystery. But to those who are not saved, and to those who do not have the anointing and the

enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, they cannot know the future course and events of this age that Jesus Christ here calls *“the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.”*

How important it is that you understand what Jesus Christ has to say about what is going to happen in the spiritual world in the future! When you know it, dear friend, it gives you a confidence, and it gives you an authority and a peace that comes with it. But if you don't know these things, if you expect the gospel to do something that the Bible never says the gospel was meant to do, here's what's going to happen to you. First of all, you're going to be disappointed. You're going to expect the gospel to do something, and it doesn't do it—and you're going to be disappointed. And then, right on the heels of that disappointment is going to come doubt. You're going to say, “Well, maybe it's not true.” And then, following after that doubt is going to come despair. And then, the devil has you right where he wants you, and your problem will be that you do not understand what the Bible calls *“the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.”*

In the thirteenth chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew are seven parables. Understand these parables, my dear friend, and it will give you great confidence. Let me tell you why. For many people today, they feel that the gospel has failed. The gospel has not lived up to their expectation. They look, number one, at the world in its wickedness; and then they look, number two, at the church and its weakness. They see the church with its problems, with its sin, with its apostasy, with its arguments, with its division, with all of these horrible things, and they say, “Well, maybe there's really nothing to it after all.”

Well, friend, you stay with me today, and pay attention to what I have to say from the Word of God—what God has to say through His Word today through this unworthy servant—and I believe with all of my heart it will put steel and concrete in your spiritual fiber. And you'll be able to face the future with a confidence and an assurance that will enable you to live this coming year with authority. All right, I want you to see what these parables are and what you can expect in the coming year. Now I'm going to seem negative in the first part of this message; but if you'll listen long enough, you're going to understand that what seems to be negative is really going to be very positive.

## **I. Expect Many People to Reject the Gospel**

Number one: What can you expect in the coming year? Number one: You can expect many people to reject the gospel—you can expect many people to reject the gospel. Let's read the first of these parables here in Matthew 13, and I begin reading in verse 3: *“And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: some fell on stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had*

*no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: but other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.”* And now, here’s a message for you: *“Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.”* (Matthew 13:3–9) Do you have your ears on this morning? *“[He that] hath ears to hear, let him hear.”*

Here’s the parable, a very simple parable. A man is out sowing seed. Some seed falls on the hard place, the wayside, the path through the field. And, of course, the seed can’t get in, and the birds just come and eat the seed. Other seed falls on what he calls the stony place; that is, the earth was very shallow, about a quarter of an inch deep. It looked all right—the seed could get in, but it couldn’t get down. And, therefore, when the sun comes up, that little tender plant that has no root, no sustenance; it is withered and it just dies. Then, other seed falls on deep ground, good ground; but there are so many thorns there that the weeds come and choke out the seed, and it can’t survive. And then, other seed falls on good ground, and it brings forth abundance fruit.

Now, what is our Lord saying here? Our Lord is saying that the seed is the gospel, the sower is the Lord Jesus Christ. There is nothing wrong with the seed, but there is much wrong with the soil. And you’re going to find out, dear friend, that our Lord has said, because of the bad soil of men’s hearts, the gospel will not penetrate and will not bear fruit in every life. Now, don’t make the mistaken assumption that if Jesus Christ is presented in all of His beauty, and all of His purity, and all of His winsomeness, and all of His power that the world will just stumble over itself coming to fall at His feet. They will not. There’s the hardness of some men’s hearts; there’s the shallowness of some men’s hearts; there’s the wickedness of some men’s hearts that the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will not penetrate. So, don’t be amazed, and don’t be surprised if everybody doesn’t accept the gospel. The Bible clearly and plainly teaches in this parable that many, many will reject the gospel of Jesus Christ for these reasons. And so, here’s the first thing you can expect in the coming year: don’t expect everybody to receive the gospel. Just don’t expect it, and therefore, you won’t be disappointed.

## **II. Expect Some Church Members to Be Lost**

Number two—let me tell you what else to expect: Expect some church members to be lost. I read here in Matthew 13 now, and I want to read in verse 24—look at it: *“Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:”—*again, there’s nothing wrong with the seed. It is good seed, and it’s sowed in the field—*“but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat,*

*and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.”* Now the tares are weeds. I think the specific name is darnel. And these weeds look so much like wheat that it takes an expert to tell them apart. And we read in verse 27, *“So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?”*—that is, *“Do you want us to go pull out the tares?” “But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.”* (Matthew 13:24–30)

Now here our Lord is talking about the problem of counterfeit Christians and hypocrites in the Church. What can you expect in the coming year? You can expect some unsaved church members. You can expect some hypocrites in this church or any church where you belong. You say, “Well, if we had the right kind of pastor, we wouldn’t have any hypocrites.” Well, Jesus had one in His bunch. His name was Judas.

Now, let’s look at this situation: The sower—verse 37—is the Son of man, the Lord Jesus Christ; the good seed that He sows, the believers—verse 38; the enemy who sows the tares is the devil—verse 39; and the harvest is the end of the world—verse 39. So there are three basic things in this parable.

#### **A. The Sowing of the Seed**

First of all, there is the sowing. Who sows the good seed? Jesus. Who sows the bad seed? The devil. You see, the devil has attacked the church from the outside so long and found out it does no good. The more we are persecuted, the more we grow. So Satan very wisely and very cleverly said, “If I can’t beat them, I’ll join them.” And Satan is not fighting churches as much as he’s joining churches today. And so he works from the inside. That’s the good seed.

#### **B. The Growing of the Seed**

All right, there’s the sowing of the seed. And then, there’s the growing of the seed. Our Lord says in this parable, *“Let both grow together.”* Verses 28 and 29—there were some who said, “Lord, let’s go and pull out all the tares.” The Lord said, “Don’t do that. You’ll make a mistake; you’ll get some wheat.” Now, suppose old Bob over here is a tare, and old Jim, he’s wheat. Well, you see, we’d make a big mistake, because Jim just looks wicked and Bob just looks saved, you see. And so we’d just make a mistake. We wouldn’t know who’s who or what’s what. I mean, in all seriousness, folks—in all seriousness—had you been a member of that early church and our Lord gave you this assignment, our Lord said to you, “Go to the twelve disciples and find a lost man, and get him out of there; one of them is

lost,” you know who we’d all head for? Peter—Simon Peter! I mean, if there was ever a guy that kept on blowing—as I’ve said before, about the only time he ever opened his mouth was just to change feet—I mean, he was constantly in trouble: cursing, swearing, denying Christ. Do you know who we would have said was “one person I’m certain is saved”? Judas. You know why? He was the treasurer.

Now I want to ask you a question. Who do people choose to be the treasurer? The man they have the most implicit trust in, right? You see, we would have made a terrible, horrible mistake. We don’t know who are the wheat and who are the tares—not at all! Our Lord knows. And so our Lord says, *“Let both grow together.”*

### **C. The Knowing of the Seed**

There’s the sowing, the growing; but then there’s the knowing. He says, “At the end of the age, at the harvest, the angels are going to come. They’re going to gather the tares into bundles and burn them, and the wheat will be gathered into the barn.” Point: Don’t you get all bent out of shape and blown out of the water because there’s some hypocrite in the church. It may take you by surprise. It hasn’t taken our Lord by surprise. All right, okay. Expect it, and you won’t be disappointed. Expect some to reject the gospel, and you won’t be disappointed. Expect there to be hypocrites in the church, and you’ll not be disappointed.

## **III. Expect the Rise of False Cults and Weird Religions**

Now, let me show you a third thing that you can expect: You can expect the rise of false cults and weird religions—you can expect it. Our Lord prophesied it. Matthew 13:31—continue to read: *“Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh”—*watch it—*“a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.”* (Matthew 13:31–32)

Now herbs don’t become trees. But Jesus said, “Here’s something that’s strange. Here’s something that’s weird. Here’s something that’s abnormal. You take the mustard seed and plant it, and what is meant to be an herb, a shrub, becomes a tree so big, so large, that the fowls of the air come and lodge in its branches.” Our Lord is talking about an abnormal, grotesque, weird development, something that is contrary to the nature of the seed. And what our Lord is saying is that in Christendom and in the realm of religion you’re going to have a rise of false cults and apostasy. You’re going to have the final form of Satan’s super-church that’s going to come in the last days.



Friend, there is coming today, in a culmination of cultism, New Ageism, liberalism, and apostasy, a church that will be based upon false religion. Jesus Christ will not be a part of it. It will be the final corporation of the amalgamation of old Adam and sons, and it will be such that if you don't know your Bible, you're going to say, "Hey, something must be wrong. If the gospel is true, and if the Bible is right, why do we have all of these false cults? All of these false cults and all of these isms and weird things, they prove the Bible to be wrong." That's where you're wrong, my friend. They prove the Bible to be right, for the Bible says, *"In the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils."* (1 Timothy 4:1) And if we all believed alike, and if the church were all together, it would not prove the Bible right; it would prove the Bible wrong.

I want to tell you, folks, these false cults, these weird religions, they haven't taken Jesus by surprise. You say, "Are you certain that's talking about false religion?" Of course! Look in verse 32. He says in the last part of this verse that *"the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches."* Now, who are the birds of the air? Well, pay attention. It's not all that hard to understand. Look back in verse 4: *"And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls"—*that is, "the birds of the air"—*"came and devoured them up."* (Matthew 13:4) Who are these birds that devour the good seed? Well, look in verse 19: *"When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart."* (Matthew 13:19) The birds that devour the seed are the power of Satan. And yet here these birds are lodging in the branches of this grotesque tree. What is our Lord saying? Our Lord is saying, dear friend, that these false cults who deny the Bible and yet parade under the guise of Christianity will not take Him by surprise, nor should it take you by surprise.

#### **IV. Expect to Find Sin and Corruption in the True Church**

Now I hope you're listening. What can you expect in the coming year? One: Do not expect everybody to believe the gospel. Two: Expect there to be hypocrites in the church. Number three: Expect there to be a rise of false cults and apostate Christianity. Number four—and it grieves me to say this—but you can expect to find sin and corruption in the true church. Look, if you will, in Matthew 13:33: *"Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."* (Matthew 13:33)

Now, that's a short parable: only one verse. What is the parable of the leaven? Well, when a woman bakes bread, she puts leaven in her bread. Our modern word for leaven is *yeast*. It works quietly, almost undetected; it puffs the bread up. Actually, though, it breaks down bacteria. It is a form of corruption, and it works best in lukewarm conditions. Now,

folks, leaven in the Bible is an emblem and a symbol of sin. When Moses gave instructions for the Passover in Exodus 12, he said that the Passover feast was to be kept without leaven. (Exodus 12:20) In Leviticus 2, when our Lord said how to make the offerings to the Lord, He said, “Make those offerings without leaven.” (Leviticus 2:11) In 1 Corinthians 5, the Apostle Paul says, “Purge out...the leaven.” (1 Corinthians 5:7)

Jesus mentioned three measures of leaven in this parable. Look in verse 33 again: “*The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal.*” (Matthew 13:33) And there our Lord has the idea of three kinds of leavening influence. Jesus, in the Gospel, warned us to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. (Matthew 16:11) Put in your margin Matthew 16:11. And then, Jesus, in Matthew 16:11, said, “*Beware of the leaven of...the Sadducees.*” And then, in Mark 8:15, Jesus said, “*Beware...of the leaven of Herod*”—“the Herodians.” (Mark 8:15) Three measures, three kinds of leaven, that Jesus warned against.

### **A. Legalism**

The leaven of the Pharisees was legalism. The Pharisees had heads full of Scripture, but they had hearts full of sin. They could dot every *i* and they could cross every *t*, but they didn’t know how to spell the word. They had “*a form of godliness, but [they denied] the power thereof.*” (2 Timothy 3:5) Jesus called them “*whited sepulchers.*” (Matthew 23:27) They were whitewashed on the outside, but inside, they were full of corruption and dead men’s bones. They were like many folks who sit in this congregation and other congregations today. The devil has put forth that leaven of legalism: people who know the words, but they don’t know the music. They know the plan of salvation, but they don’t know the Man of salvation. They have the form, but they don’t have the life. Jesus said they were twice dead. Jesus called them a generation of serpents, (Matthew 23:33) “*blind leaders of the blind.*” (Matthew 15:14) The leaven of legalism.

### **B. Liberalism**

And then, who were the Sadducees? Well, that’s just the opposite of legalism; that’s liberalism. The Sadducees said there was no demon, nor angel, nor resurrection from the dead. Jesus said, “Sadducees, you make a mistake for two reasons. Number one,” He said, “you don’t know the Scriptures; and, number two, you don’t know the power of God.” And that’s what makes a liberal, folks: a man who does not have confidence in the Word of God and the power of God. That’s just a recipe for a liberal. But, folks, let me tell you something. Liberalism and legalism are both deadly. You don’t have to choose either one: Legalism and liberalism are heads and tails of the same coin. And Jesus said, “*Beware of the leaven of the*

*Pharisees,*” and Jesus said, *“Beware of the leaven...of the Sadducees.”* (Matthew 16:6; Matthew 16:11)

### **C. Licentiousness**

Now, what about Herod? What was the leaven of Herod? Herod was a pleasure-mad, profligate, wicked king. There’s another kind of leaven that gets into the church, and it is sinfulness, worldliness, licentiousness. There is the leaven of legalism, liberalism, and licentiousness. Three measures—three measures. *“Beware of the leaven...of Herod.”* (Mark 8:15) Oh, how worldly our churches have become today! You know, you look at the average church member in the average church and you cannot tell the difference between him and the man of the world and the woman of the world, whereas the Bible says, *“Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.”* (2 Corinthians 6:17) People of the church today, they go to the same places; they dress alike; they look alike; they drink the same things; they smoke the same things; they read the same things; they watch the same things as the people of this world. God has put a difference, dear folks, in us. We’re to be different. And a Christian ought to stand out like a diamond in a coalmine. But we don’t do it. There’s worldliness. It is the leaven of worldliness.

I hear so much today about the separation of church and state—which I believe in—but, dear friend, we need not only a message on the separation of church and state; we need a message on the separation of church and world. *“Be...separate.” “Come out from among them. “Touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.”* And how that worldliness has permeated our churches today! But listen—listen! Don’t you let that cause you to lose your faith. Friend, it is prophesied; it is predicted. What did our Lord say? Our Lord said, not every one will believe the gospel. What did our Lord say? He said there will be hypocrites in the church. What did our Lord say? Our Lord said there’s going to be a false religion based on Christianity, but not Christianity. Our Lord said there’s going to be corruption, liberalism, legalism, and licentiousness in the church.

Now, dear friend, when you understand that, it’s going to help you to stand and to stay firm, because these things do not mean that the gospel has failed. As a matter of fact, Jesus clearly told us that it would happen.

### **V. Expect the World to Overlook and Despise the Kingdom of Heaven**

I’ll tell you what else you can expect: You can expect the world to overlook and despise the kingdom of heaven. Look in Matthew 13:44 with me for just a moment: *“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.”* (Matthew 13:44)

Now, what is this parable? Here's a man out in a field. He's walking along, and for some reason, he digs in that field. Maybe just on a hunch, or maybe he's planting a tree or working as a farmer, or a sharecropper, whatever. And he brushes it back, and it is an immense, fabulous treasure. Now the man says, "Whoever owns this field, owns this treasure," and he says, "I'm sure the owner of the field doesn't know it's here, or he would have already come for it." He says, "I'm going to buy this field." He goes back. He mortgages his house. He sells his animals. He sells everything that he has. He gets enough money, and he goes and he buys that field, because he knows when he gets that field, he gets what's in that field, which is the treasure.

Now, that treasure, my dear friend, is the kingdom of heaven. It's like a treasure hid in a field. Let me explain the meaning of this parable to you. The kingdom of heaven is in four stages. Understand this; and, friend, listen. It will help you to walk with confidence in this coming year.

#### **A. The Kingdom of Heaven Is Prophesied but Hidden**

The first stage is the prophesied but hidden aspect of the kingdom of heaven, when the kingdom of heaven was prophesied but hidden. Now, let me show you what I'm talking about. Look in Matthew 13:16: "*Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.*" He's talking to His disciples. "*For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.*" (Matthew 13:16–17) Now, verse 17 tells us that the prophets—those people who lived before the age of Jesus—they looked forward to the kingdom. They desired to see it, but it was hidden. It was promised but hidden before Christ came.

#### **B. The Kingdom of Heaven Is Revealed**

But then, for a brief period when Jesus Christ came to this earth, the kingdom was revealed. It was uncovered for just a moment. For just a moment, Jesus revealed the power and the glory of the kingdom. Now, in Luke 11:20, He said, "*If I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.*" (Luke 11:20) Look in verse 17: "*For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see.*" What had they seen? They had seen the lame healed. They'd seen blind eyes opened, deaf ears unstopped, dumb tongues loosed. They'd seen the dead raised. They'd seen Jesus Christ do miracle after miracle. What had happened is this: that, for a moment, that treasure that had been hidden in a field had been uncovered. And He showed it to them, and they saw it.

### C. The Kingdom of Heaven Is Buried in Mystery Form

But now, here's the third form of the kingdom. First of all, it was prophesied, but hidden. Then, when Jesus Christ was here, He uncovered the kingdom. He displayed His glory. He displayed His majesty. But then, He buried the treasure again. And it's very important that you understand this. The kingdom of heaven is now buried in mystery form. Luke 10:21—Jesus said, *"I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent."* (Luke 10:21) The Bible says in Proverbs 25:2, *"It is the glory of God to conceal a thing."* (Proverbs 25:2)

Now what God has done is just covered the kingdom up again. Why did He do that? Well, you see, Jesus Christ came and presented the kingdom; but they refused it. Now I don't want to insult your intelligence; but Matthew 13 follows Matthew 12. And if you read Matthew 12, you'll find out that Jesus Christ had displayed a marvelous and a wonderful miracle. He had healed a man who was blind and a man who was dumb. Do you know what His enemies said? His enemies said, "Well, He did it in the power of the devil." They accused Jesus of being filled with Beelzebub, a devil. And from that time on, Jesus performed no more miracles. Jesus then began to teach in parables; no more miracles—parables! They said, "Why?" Because, my friend, not only is a parable given to reveal, but it's also given to conceal. Jesus said, *"It is given unto you to know the mysteries...but to them it is not given."* (Matthew 13:11) And He just buried the treasure, put it again beneath the ground. It was prophesied. It was uncovered. It was buried again. And, friend, it will not be uncovered again till He comes in all of His glory and majesty, and displays His kingdom. And, *"The kingdoms of this world [will] become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ."* (Revelation 11:15) And righteousness shall cover the earth as waters that cover the sea. (Isaiah 11:9; Habakkuk 2:14) What a day that will be when Jesus Christ comes again! But until that time, men walk across the field of this world, and they trample under their feet the kingdom of heaven.

Hey, folks, don't you expect this ungodly, unsaved, sin-blinded world to appreciate the things of the kingdom of heaven. They can't do it. They're blind. And what you and I love, they walk on. What you and I see as a treasure, they have no idea about. They are blind. *"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."* (John 3:3) It's hidden from his eyes. And Jesus speaks in parables.

## VI. Expect Jesus to Continue to Seek and to Save the Lost

I'm telling you what to expect in this coming year. Don't expect everybody to get saved. Expect there to be hypocrites in the church. Expect there to be the growth of false cults and false religion. Expect the leaven of corruption to enter in: liberalism, legalism, and

licentiousness. And expect, my dear friend, for this world to despise the kingdom of heaven. But I'll tell you what else you can expect: You can expect Jesus Christ to continue to seek and to save the lost. Thank God for that. Listen to verse 45: *"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl"—"when he had found one pearl"—"of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it."* (Matthew 13:45–46)

Now some people foolishly say that Jesus is the pearl of great price. Friend, Jesus is not the pearl of great price. Let me tell you why. We don't buy Jesus. He's not for sale. I mean, we're bankrupt. If He were for sale, we have nothing to buy Him with. The one seeking the pearl of great price is Jesus Christ Himself. And who is the pearl of great price? The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, which He has purchased with the silver of His tears and the gold of His blood. He has bought His Church.

The most beautiful pearls, they say, come from the floor of the Persian Gulf, where those tankers are going back and forth right now—hundreds of feet deep. Do you know how a pearl is formed? There's a piece of grit, irritation, that comes into the body of the oyster. And the body of the oyster just encloses that and begins to bathe it with a substance known as nacre. And layer upon layer upon layer upon layer is built upon that which was ugly and a wound until he makes something beautiful of something ugly. That's what the oyster does. It's a picture of the Church built from the wounded side of the Lord Jesus Christ. And our Lord takes that which wounded Him and makes a pearl of great price. And layer upon layer upon layer upon layer, as the saints are added, that pearl becomes more and more beautiful. One of these days, it will be complete, and it will be taken from great depth to great height. It will be taken from darkness to light. It will be taken from the bottom and brought to the top, and made a diadem for His crown; for He bought it with His precious blood.

And He's still in the business of doing that, my dear friend. Thank God He paid the price and bought that pearl. And you can expect Him to continue to do it, because, my dear friend, He is the merchantman who gave all for me and for you.

## **VII. Expect God to Judge Righteously**

There's one last thing that I want you to see: You can expect God to judge righteously. You say, "Pastor, what about all of the sin? What about all of this corruption? What about these false cults? What about those who trample the kingdom under their feet? What about these tares? What about these liberals? What about these legalists? What about these licentious people? Is God just going to overlook all of that?" Oh, no—oh, no. Friend, read the last parable—Matthew 13:47—and look at it: *"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net,*

*that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to the shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”*  
(Matthew 13:47–50)

Have you ever seen the net called a *dragnet* work? One summer when I was a kid, I worked on a shrimp boat—one of the most interesting things I ever did. A great net pulled behind that shrimp boat, and for hours and hours and hours we dragged that net through the sea. And then a great winch would hoist that net to the deck. Folks, that’s an exciting time. That net is full of fish and squiggling, wormy kinds of creatures, and crabs—and only God knows what all is in that net—and the guy pulls the string, and it’s dumped on the deck, and everything is in there: It’s the most interesting thing you’ve ever seen. And those fishermen with those big gloves, they reach in there, and there are stingrays, and the crabs, and the eels, and all of these things. They begin to separate the good from the bad. God is saying that the kingdom of heaven is like a net that’s dragged through the sea; and not only do the good fish get in, but all of these vile and wicked things—these hypocrites, and these false cults, and all of this—it’s all there. But there’s coming a time, dear friend, when our Lord, who draws the net, will also sort the catch. He’s going to sort the catch. He knows.

## **Conclusion**

Hey, don’t get all bent out of shape! I mean, don’t! You say, “Well, the gospel has failed.” My friend, there will be hypocrites. You keep on loving Jesus! There will be false religions. You keep on loving Jesus! There will be liberalism, and legalism, and licentiousness. You keep on loving Jesus! There will be some who’ll trample the kingdom beneath their feet. Some scientist will say, “I don’t believe the Bible.” You keep on loving Jesus! There will be some who’ll say we’re fools. You keep on loving Jesus! There will be scandals with television evangelists. You just keep on loving Jesus! There will be all kinds of things; but I’m telling you, my dear friend, one of these days our Lord is coming to uncover His treasure, take up His pearl, and sort His catch. That’s what’s going to happen, and we’re blessed because we know; because “unto us it is given to know.” Hey, folks, everything is right on schedule. Hallelujah!

# Seven Sacred Secrets

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: March 22, 1998**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 13:3-51**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Expect Many to Reject the Gospel
- II. Expect Many Church Members to Be Hypocrites
- III. Expect the Rise of False Cults
- IV. Expect to Find Corruption in the Professing Church
- V. Expect God to Keep His Word to the Nation Israel
- VI. Expect Jesus to Be Building His Church
- VII. Expect God to Judge Righteousness

Conclusion

## Introduction

**W**ould you be finding Matthew chapter 13, please. And this is the last of seven messages on “The Strange Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven.” Now, why we call these mysteries is because Jesus called them mysteries. Jesus was speaking in parables. They asked Him why He spoke in parables, and, “*He answered,*” in Matthew chapter 13, verse 11, “*and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 13:11).

So the Bible is a mystery story. To those who do not know the Lord, to those who are not saved, to those who do not have the Holy Spirit inside them to illumine them and interpret the Word of God, the Bible is a mystery story. They may know facts. They may be able to name the kings of Israel. They may be able to give you a Bible chronology, but they don’t understand the deep things of God.

There are some sacred secrets that God reveals to His children through His Word. These are the strange mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. The Bible is to the child of God who prays, has the illumination of the Holy Spirit, and begins to obey the Word of God, it has a teaching, a ministry, that the unsaved know nothing about.

Now these are seven parables in this one chapter. And seven, being the perfect number, means that they have a certain completion to them. They are all-embracing, and they talk about the history of the gospel of Jesus. These seven parables begin with a time that Jesus was here on earth and began to preach the gospel to the very end of the age and the Final



Judgment. And everything that happens from the time that Jesus was here until Jesus comes again is comprised in these seven parables. Now, when you understand these seven parables, you know what to expect. If you know what to expect, you're not disillusioned, you're not disappointed, you're not discouraged; you don't drop out. And when things look dark, or things look bad, you say, "You know, that's wonderful. That's exactly what Jesus said it would be like." And so, if it gets dark, you can say, "It's getting gloriously dark." It is exactly, precisely, as the Bible has prophesied.

Sometimes we see the world with its wickedness, and the church with its weakness, and we see people refusing the gospel, and we think, "Well, maybe the gospel isn't true; or, maybe our expectations will not be fulfilled." But then, when we read Matthew chapter 13, we say, "Everything is exactly, precisely, on track." So let's look at them; and I want to tell you seven things that you can expect, seven things that you can just know are going to happen.

## **I. Expect Many to Reject the Gospel**

Number one: Expect many to reject the gospel—expect many to reject the gospel. Don't get the idea that if Jesus Christ is presented with all of His winsomeness, all of His beauty, all of His attractiveness, that people will fall all over themselves coming to know Jesus Christ. If you believe that, you're going to have false expectations, and you're going to be disappointed. Maybe you get into soul winning, and you think, "Well, all I need to do is clearly teach how to be saved, and that's all people need. If they just had enough light, they would be saved."

As a matter of fact, I heard a preacher say—I went to a church growth luncheon here in Memphis, Tennessee, and I won't call the name of this preacher, but he is not in the ministry anymore—and he said, "The reason our churches are not growing," he said, "we have not explained to people what they can have in the Lord Jesus Christ." He said, "Anybody would be saved if you clearly presented who Jesus Christ is and told people what we could have in the Lord Jesus Christ." I thought to myself, "That's one of the most foolish statements I have ever heard in my life." You can clearly and plainly articulate Jesus Christ, and people will reject Him.

And Jesus knew the hardness of human hearts, and so He gave this first parable, which is the parable of the sower. Look in Matthew 13, verses 3 to 9. Now I'm recapitulating. You've been here through these messages, but now we're going to tie them all together. *"And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth; and forthwith they sprung*

*up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: but other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Matthew 13:3–9).*

Now the Lord Jesus is talking about four kinds of soil upon which the good seed falls. The seed is the gospel message. But some fell by the wayside. And what is the wayside? Well, go over to verse 19. And, *“When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received the seed by the way side” (Matthew 13:19).*

Now the wayside is the path through the field. They call that *the wayside*. And because it had been trampled hard, the seed would get down, but it couldn’t get in, because it just fell on hard ground, and the birds would come and devour the seed. And I’ve preached many times the gospel to the wayside crowd. Their hearts are hard. They don’t hear the gospel. It never gets in, because their hearts have been trampled by the cares of this world.

And then, some fell on stony ground. Now, look in verse 20: *“But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it” (Matthew 13:20).* “Boy,” he says, “hallelujah! This is what I want!” Look in verse 21: *“Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended” (Matthew 13:21).* Now, in this case, the word gets in, but it doesn’t get way in. It just gets beneath the surface. And right beneath the surface is a rock ledge. And so this is the surface hearer, the person who you think is going to be a great Christian. He comes down the aisle, makes a profession of faith, you baptize him; and then after a while you don’t see him anymore. I call them Alka Seltzer Christians. They fizzle for a little while and then disappear; and they’re gone after you drop them in the water. They’re just gone. Now these are the people who have no root in themselves.

And then he says again, in verse 22, he talks about those who fell among the thorns. And look at these: *“He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful” (Matthew 13:22).* That is, there’s a rival crop. The word gets in, and the word gets down, but this man has never really truly repented of sin. And so the weeds and the thorns and the thistles choke out the word of God. And this is a person who does not truly know the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then, finally, he mentions the last category of persons, in verse 23. And, if you will, look at this: *“But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and*

*understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty” (Matthew 13:23).*

Now, what should we expect? Well, if you’re a soul winner, or if you’re a preacher, or you are an evangelist, expect many to reject the gospel, and don’t think that you have failed. I used to feel incriminated, absolutely incriminated, if I preached and there would not be a response. As a matter of fact, as a younger preacher, when I would preach and give an invitation, and there would not be a response, I would feel that I had horribly failed God. I would feel so much like a failure that I did not want to go to the door and shake hands with anybody. I would want a back door to get out of. And if somebody were to tell me afterward it was a good sermon, it would make me angry, because I would say, “What is wrong? What did I do wrong? How did I fail?” And then it finally dawned on me that I’ve not failed—not if I preached the Word of God. There was nothing wrong with the seed. Some seed falls on stony ground; some seed falls on shallow ground; some seed falls among weeds. But I’ll tell you something else I’ve learned. If you’ll keep on preaching, if you’ll keep on sharing, if you’ll keep on giving the gospel, some folks will get saved—some folks will get saved. And just don’t get weary; don’t get discouraged. There are people who will come to know the Lord Jesus Christ. Your job is just to scatter the seed. It is God’s job to make it germinate. It is their responsibility to open their hearts and receive the good word.

So in this world, in this life, as you live the Christian life, expect some people to reject the gospel. Don’t expect everybody to come to Jesus. Don’t think that the gospel has failed because the entire world does not come to Jesus Christ. The Bible teaches that we are a “*little flock*” (Luke 12:32). The Bible teaches that straight and narrow is the way, and few there be that enter therein (Matthew 7:14). We are the Master’s minority. We’re never going to take over this world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. If you think we are, you’re going to be discouraged. Now the Bible teaches that only twenty-five percent of the soil here was even ready to receive the word. And when that twenty-five percent received the word, not all of them brought forth the same kind of fruit.

## **II. Expect Many Church Members to Be Hypocrites**

Now, here’s something else you can expect—and this will save you from a lot of disappointment. Expect some to reject the gospel, many to reject the gospel. Number two: Expect many church members to be hypocrites—expect many church members to be hypocrites, to be lost. Sometimes people tell me as a pastor, “Did you know there are hypocrites in the church?” I say, “Oh, hypocrites in the church? Do tell.” Listen. You could not be a pastor for as many years as I’ve been a pastor without realizing that there are

hypocrites in the church. And that doesn't mean that the gospel has failed, nor has it taken God by surprise.

Look now at the second of these parables—Matthew 13, beginning in verse 24: *“Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:”—nothing wrong with the seed now—“but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?”—that is, the tares. “But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn”* (Matthew 13:24–30).

Now, what is the meaning of this parable? Well, wheat, you know, is that which makes bread and sustenance, and God's children are represented as wheat. And then the tares are weeds that look like wheat, and they're placed there by the enemy. The One who sows the wheat, the children of God, is the Son of man, Jesus—verse 37. The good seed, according to verse 38, are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. The enemy who sows the weeds among the wheat is the devil—verse 39. The harvest is the end of the age, when God separates the wheat from the tares.

Now, what is the lesson here? Expect there to be hypocrites in the church. The devil is at work, and every church has them, and it's not our job to go through Christendom and try to separate the wheat from the tares. Never get into a crusade against somebody else's religion. That's not your business. Your business is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Now, surely, you should warn people of false doctrine—the Bible tells us that—but don't you go around rooting out tares. That's what I'm going to say. You will make some horrible mistakes. You will pull up some wheat, and you will leave some tares, because you cannot see an individual's heart. You do not know that individual as God knows that individual. So in this parable, you have three basic thoughts. You have the sowing of the tares, the growing of the tares, and the knowing of the tares. The sowing of the tares: the devil did it. The growing of the tares: the hypocrites and the Christians are side by side, and they grow together. The knowing of the tares will come at the end of the age. The lesson: Don't expect everybody to receive the gospel. Number two: Don't get discouraged because of hypocrites in the church—just don't do it. It doesn't prove the gospel is false—not at all.

A counterfeit is the greatest compliment that anything that is real could have. Why do people counterfeit hundred-dollar bills? Because, evidently, a hundred-dollar bill is worth something. They don't counterfeit gum wrappers. You see, the counterfeit is a testimony to the worthwhileness, the validity, of the real.

### III. Expect the Rise of False Cults

And so, what can you expect from the time that the gospel began to the end of the age? Don't expect everybody to accept the gospel. They're not going to. That doesn't mean the gospel has failed. Number two: Don't expect that everybody who calls upon the name of Jesus, or who names the name of Jesus, is really a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. If you do, you're going to be disappointed and discouraged, and you'll find some old hypocrite, and you'll say, "Well, if that's Christianity, I don't want anything to do with it." Jesus has already warned you. Now, here's the third thing that you need to expect of these seven sacred secrets. You can expect the rise of false cults; you can expect the world to be filled with false cults.

Now, look, if you will, in Matthew 13, beginning in verse 31, and here's the third of these parables. Look at it right here: *"Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof"* (Matthew 13:31-32).

Now some people think, "Oh, isn't this sweet? From a mustard seed to a great big tree! Look how wonderful the gospel is!" But that's not the teaching. You see, a mustard seed is pungent and small. Mustard is fiery and hot. That speaks of the explosive power of the gospel. And that mustard makes a mustard plant, a shrub which is comparatively small, and it becomes a shrub. It grows into a shrub. But then, he said, it becomes a tree. Now shrubs don't become trees. The Book of Genesis teaches us that. So we're talking here about something that is unnatural, a monstrosity, some kind of unnatural growth.

And so, the birds that come and lodge in the branches, what do they represent—the birds that are lodging in the branches of this unnatural growth, this tree? These birds are demon powers. Now, remember in chapter 13, verse 4, where the birds came and stole away the seed? The same word for "birds" or "fowls" that is used in verse 3 is the same word that's used over here in verses 31 and 32. They represent demon powers. I can prove that, if you'll look in chapter 13, verse 19. Look at it again. He's saying here that it's the power of Satan. And, *"When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it*

*not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart"* (Matthew 13:19). These birds that catch away the seed illustrate the devil.

Now, put this verse in your margin. I gave you this before, but this clears it up. In Revelation chapter 18, verse 2, God speaks of Babylon. Babylon was the cradle of all false religion, and even today that's where Saddam Hussein is; that's where the Tower of Babel was; that's where the first type of Antichrist, Nimrod, founded that city so long ago. And God looks to the final judgment of the false religion, and He says, in Revelation 18, verse 2, *"And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird"* (Revelation 18:2). So Babylon is for the birds.

What He's saying is that this thing that started out as a mustard seed has become a tree, and these dirty birds are lodging in the branches. And that's the reason that you see false cults all places and everywhere. Dr. Lee used to call them *"isms that ought to be wasms."* You see them all over. Now that doesn't mean that the gospel has failed. That doesn't mean that the Bible is not true. I'm going to tell you something. If we did not have false cults, then you could say the Bible is not true—because the Bible says they're going to come. The Bible says, *"In the last days men shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils"* (1 Timothy 4:1).

So don't get discouraged if everybody doesn't believe the Bible and everybody doesn't come to Jesus and get saved. Don't get discouraged if there are tares among the wheat—that is, hypocrites in the church. And don't think that the gospel has failed or something has gone wrong if there are false cults all around the world. It is exactly, precisely, what Jesus said would happen. This mustard seed becomes a grotesque, monstrous tree; and the fowls which represent demon spirits lodge in the branches of this apostate Christianity. Now when you understand that, you can say, *"Yes, it's happening exactly as Jesus said."*

#### **IV. Expect to Find Corruption in the Professing Church**

Number four, what else can you expect? You can expect to find corruption in the professing church—not only hypocrites, but corruption in the church itself. Look, if you will, in Matthew 13, verse 33: *"Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened"* (Matthew 13:33). Now that's talking about yeast. Here's a woman—she takes three measures of wheat and she mixes it together, and she puts leaven in it; and the whole thing, these three loaves, swell up and puff up with leaven.

Now the idea here is the woman is sneaky. She's hiding this leaven in the bread. Now unleavened bread is an emblem, a symbol, of purity. Leaven in the Bible is an emblem, a

symbol, of sin. It speaks of evil and sin and corruption. In the Old Testament, the sacrifices were to be made without leaven. For example, the Passover is to be made without leaven. Exodus 12, verse 8: *“And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread”* (Exodus 12:8). The sacrifices, in Leviticus 2, verses 4 and 5: *“And if thou bring an oblation of a meat offering baken in the oven, it shall be unleavened cakes of fine flour mingled with oil, or unleavened wafers anointed with oil”* (Leviticus 2:4–5). And then Paul told the Corinthians who had let sin come into the church, in 1 Corinthians 5, beginning in verse 6, *“Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth”* (1 Corinthians 5:6–8).

So, what does leaven do? Leaven works quietly, stealthily. It works best in lukewarm conditions. And the devil—the devil—has said, “Well, if I cannot beat the church, I’ll join the church.” So he puts the tares in among the wheat, and he says, “Furthermore, I will corrupt the church. I will begin false cults to preach an antithetical gospel, a false gospel. And,” he says, “furthermore, I will stealthily put false teaching in the church.” And Jesus said, *“Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees”* (Matthew 16:6; Mark 8:15; Luke 12:1). What was *“the leaven of the Pharisees”*? Legalism. He said, *“Beware of the leaven of the Sadducees”* (Matthew 16:6). What was the leaven of the Sadducees? Liberalism. And then he said, *“Beware of the leaven of Herod”* (Mark 8:15). What was the leaven of Herod? It was licentiousness. Herod was a pleasure-mad, licentious king. And all three of these things—legalism, liberalism, and licentiousness—have invaded the church of the Lord Jesus Christ in the last days.

Does that mean you and I should quit? Does that mean that there’s nothing to it? No, it means just the opposite: there is something to it. Why would Satan want to corrupt it if it were not good to begin with? Satan is a pervert. And so every now and then you will read, as we’ve been reading in our newspapers lately—have you been reading the horrible stories of apostasy in some of the churches, and things that are going on?—and some of it is right here in this city, and it’s so terrible. Or, every now and then you’ll read about some minister who goes off into licentious sin. That’s the leaven of Herod. Every now and then you’ll read about some person who is so strict and narrow, he’s a legalist and he wants salvation by works. That’s the leaven of the Pharisees. And then sometimes you will read about the man, like we read about—was it last Saturday?—in the newspaper, who denies the Resurrection and denies the deity of Jesus? He denies everything. He’s in this Jesus Seminar. They’re examining the words of Jesus to find out what they’re going to give Jesus

credit for saying, and they're "examining Jesus." I believe they ought to be examined. Good night! I'd just as soon trust a bunch of blind men in a cave with a jar full of lightning bugs to examine the noonday sun as these people examining the words of Jesus. What arrogance to say that Jesus said this, and Jesus said that, and what we can believe, and what we can't! Listen. That's the leaven of the Sadducees, who say that neither demon, nor spirit, nor resurrection. And we have this leaven with us today. Friend, is that going to cause me to close my Bible and not preach anymore? You'd better not believe that. I know—I know—it's exactly as Jesus said it would be.

Here's a woman who hides leaven in three loaves. Three loaves speak of that which is right, and fellowship with God, as we taught you. We don't have time to get into that, because let's go on through, but you can expect that Satan is going to corrupt the church and infiltrate the church with this kind of activity.

## **V. Expect God to Keep His Word to the Nation Israel**

Now, here's the fifth thing you can expect. Now it's going to start getting more positive. You can expect God to keep His word to the nation Israel. You want to know what God is doing in the world today? You just watch the Middle East. Somebody asked me last week, said, "Pastor, what does the Bible have to say about America in prophecy?" I said, "Very little, if anything." You want to know what God is going to do? Keep your eyes upon Israel. And we find this: God, in these last days, is going to keep His word, as He has sworn to do, to the nation Israel.

Now, look, if you will, in chapter 13 and verse 44, and you'll still see what God is up to in this day and in this age: *"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth the field"* (Matthew 13:44). Now, what is the treasure hid in a field? It is Israel. And the parable is this: A man is walking through a field. He discovers there's a buried treasure in the field. He uncovers it. He sees what it is. He covers it back up again. He goes and buys the field. And so, when he owns the field, he owns what's in the field. He owns the treasure.

Now some people have the idea that the treasure hid in the field is the gospel of Jesus Christ, and that we are the man walking through the field, and we sell everything we have so we can buy the field and so that we can get the treasure. Well, the field is the world. The Church doesn't buy the world. Christians don't buy the world. And the gospel is not for sale. And the gospel is not discovered and then covered. I mean, none of that makes sense. But that's the way that some people interpret this parable. No. Jesus called Israel His peculiar



treasure. And I want you to see that His dealing with Israel is in four basic steps, and you need to see these.

Step number one: There came a brief time when Jesus promised the treasure. That is, He made a solemn promise to Abraham. But the treasure was hidden. That is, it was covered before Jesus came. Israel was a nation that was ignominiously small when Jesus was here on earth. That is, the treasure was buried in the field for a brief time. Jesus simply uncovered the treasure. You're in chapter 13; go back to chapter 12, and you're going to find out how Jesus uncovered the treasure. Look, if you will, in verse 27. This is chapter 12 and verse 27. They had accused Jesus of casting out devils by the prince of devils, and Jesus said, *"And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then"*—watch this—*"the kingdom of God is come unto you"* (Matthew 12:27–28).

Now, what does that mean? Well, Jesus said, "I have come doing all of these miracles." The treasure in the field was hid. Jesus said, "I've just uncovered the treasure. I have shown you the kingdom." And that's why Jesus did all of these miracles: to show the kingdom power. But the Jews refused Him; they lied about Him, they criticized Him, and they were compliant in the crucifixion of Jesus, as were the Gentiles, and the treasure now is covered again. But Jesus went to the cross to purchase that treasure. The treasure is now hidden. The treasure is now covered. People don't understand God's plan for Israel unless they know the Bible. The Bible says, in Proverbs 25, verse 2, *"It is the glory of God to conceal a thing"* (Proverbs 25:2).

So God has covered it up. That's going to help you understand something. When you read the Gospel of Matthew, up to chapter 12, Jesus is doing miracles. But from chapter 12 on, Jesus doesn't do any more miracles. Now Jesus does parables. Before chapter 12, Jesus didn't do any parables; He did miracles. But after chapter 12, Jesus now is teaching parables; because before chapter 12, Jesus is uncovering—He's uncovering the treasure. He is showing. He's saying, "This is the kingdom of God." They refused it, so Jesus said, "All right, I'm going to cover it up." And now, hearing, they won't understand. It's covered. "I'll speak to you," He says, "in parables, but unto them it's not given" (Matthew 13:11). That is, it is covered.

So then, finally, Jesus is going to come again in glory, and He is going to uncover this treasure. Israel is going to come; a nation will be born in a day. The people of this world now trample this treasure, and the nations of the world are gathering themselves together against Israel, but God is not finished with the nation Israel, His peculiar treasure. He has bought the field, which is the world, and He is going to take His peculiar treasure to

Himself, and a nation will be born in a day. And you keep your eyes upon Israel if you want to know what Jesus is doing in this world today.

## **VI. Expect Jesus to Be Building His Church**

Now, here's the next thing you can expect. You can also expect Jesus, in spite of the fact that many reject the gospel, in spite of the fact that there are hypocrites in the church, in spite of the fact that there is corruption in the church, in spite of the fact that there's the rise of false cults, in spite of the fact of the persecution of Israel, you can expect Jesus to be building His Church. He said later on, in Matthew 16, "*Upon this rock I will build my church*" (Matthew 16:18).

Now, what is this parable about? Well, it's the parable of the pearl of great price. Look, if you will now, in chapter 13 and verse 45: "*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it*" (Matthew 13:45). Now some people say, "Well, the pearl of great price, that's the gospel. We sell everything that we have so that we can buy the gospel." That's insane—that's insane. The gospel is not for sale. If it were, we wouldn't have anything to sell anyway. We are bankrupt sinners. We have nothing. "In my hand no price I bring; simply to thy cross I cling."

The man seeking goodly pearls is Jesus. The pearl of great price is the Church that He loves. Israel is called a treasure, never a pearl. The pearl is formed by something, an irritant in the side of the clam or the oyster, and then it is covered with a beautiful substance called nacre, layer upon layer upon layer, until it becomes something beautiful, this pearl, more beautiful than any other pearl that is grown, with succeeding layers. A diamond can be divided; an emerald can be divided, but not a pearl. For the Church is one body indivisible in the Lord Jesus Christ; and Jesus is the One who with the silver of His tears and the gold of His blood bought the pearl of great price. And as a pearl is taken from the depth of the ocean to realms of light, Jesus has lifted us. As the pearl goes from something ugly, a grit, a grain of sand, is made into something beautiful.

That's what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for you, and that's what He's done for me. And Jesus has paid the price—the pearl of great price. And you can expect, friend, for Jesus to build His Church. I want to tell you something. We're on the winning side, and don't you let any hypocrite discourage you. Don't you let any corruption in the church discourage you. Don't you let any false doctrine discourage you. Don't you let any persecution of the Jews discourage you. Don't you let the fact that the Church seems to be ignored discourage you. Jesus is building His Church. He will build His Church. And I'm telling you, you can bank on it.

## VII. Expect God to Judge Righteousness

Now, here's the last and final thing you can expect. And, by the way, these seven parables just cover all of history. You can expect God to bring it all to judgment. You can expect God to judge righteousness. And that brings us to the last of these parables. And I can only touch on it, but look, if you will, in Matthew 13 now, beginning in verse 47: *"Again..."*—this is the one parable we've not touched on—*"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord"* (Matthew 13:47–51). Well, I hope that they did.

Now this is a picture of a dragnet. By the way, you remember that show? *Dum dum dum dum*. You know, "Just the facts, ma'am." It's a dragnet. But just as a Sergeant Friday was dragging his net through the streets of Los Angeles to catch those wicked people, God has His net going through the nations of this world to win souls.

I spent a summer one time off the coast of Georgia—had a chance to spend some time on a shrimping boat. It was a great experience to go out shrimping. This boat—these were commercial shrimpers. And they had a net that they would drag behind this trawler. This net had two great big wooden objects they called doors, bigger than household doors, and behind these doors was a big net, a pouch; and they would let these doors down very heavy. They had iron bars on them, and they would sink to the bottom there on the sea. And they would scrape along the bottom of the sea and hold the mouth of that net open. And that trawler would go back and forth over the shrimp beds; and the shrimp, the crabs, the fish, the stingrays, the eels, everything would be swept into the mouth of that big net. And after they'd gone back and forth, and back and forth, there came a time that was so exciting to me. They would take the winch and the yardarm, and they would begin to bring that net up out of the sea. And it would be full of all kinds of wiggling, squirming things. And then it had a drawstring at the bottom; and he would pull the drawstring, and out of all that stuff would come on the deck of that ship all manner of evil. It's amazing! Oh, of course, thousands of shrimp. There'd be stingrays. There'd be eels. There'd be crabs. And there'd be fish flopping, and all this stuff. And these men would put on their big rubber gloves, and they'd get out there, and they'd start throwing some things overboard; and just after they'd drawn the net, they'd sort the catch. And they'd take the good fish. They saved the fish also. They'd take the shrimp, and they'd put that on ice. But the other went overboard. And every time I read this parable, I remember just being there on that boat and working on

that boat, and thinking how much that's what it's going to be like at the end of the age. Only it's not fishermen that are going to be doing this; it's angels that are going to be separating the good from the bad.

Now, friend, what is my job? What is your job in this day and this age? Our job is to draw the net. God's job is the sort the catch. Our job is to draw the net. I know that when I preach, sometimes people come to Christ, and they're not really saved; but that's not my responsibility. I can't cause anybody to believe. I can't cause them not to believe. What I must do is preach the gospel. What you must do is preach the gospel. The kingdom of God is like a net that we just draw through the nations of this world. And then at the end of the age, God, the One who separates the wheat from the tares, the same God, is the One who is going to separate the good from the bad—and the parable of the net.

## **Conclusion**

So, what does all of this tell us? Friend, listen. Here's what it all tells us. God knows exactly, precisely, what the situation is going to be like. Do you know what God told us in Matthew 13? He told us—listen to me—He told us exactly what we see right here in March 1998 in Memphis, Tennessee. Is that not incredible? I mean, is not that incredible that Jesus, 2,000 years ago, said, "I'm going to tell you exactly what will happen"? "I'm going to tell you. Not everyone is going to hear the gospel. No. Not everybody who hears the gospel is going to be saved. No." They're not, but some will be saved. And we're here tonight, and we're saved. And He says, "Also, there are going to be hypocrites in the church, tares among the wheat." And we see that. He said, "Also, there's going to be corruption in the church, like leaven." We see that. We've heard all the scandals. We've read all of that. We know that's going to happen. And He says also that, "Israel is going to be persecuted, trampled like a treasure, buried in a field; but I'm going to come soon and uncover that treasure." He said, also, "I'm going to build my Church." And then He said, "Soon, and very soon, I'm going to come and sort the catch." And when you read this, you say, "Isn't it wonderful? It is happening exactly as God said."

Now, you see, if you have false expectations, if you think that the gospel is going to convert the world, or if you think that hypocrites prove the Bible not to be true, or if you think that false cults will never arise, you'll say, "What went wrong?" Nothing has gotten out of God's control. It is exactly, precisely, as God says it will be: seven sacred secrets that we've learned from this wonderful chapter in the Word of God.

# From Grit to Glory

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** July 20, 1980

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 13:10–11, 45–46

*“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.”*

MATTHEW 13:45–46

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## Introduction

Now, find Matthew chapter 13, and I want us to look, first of all, in verses 10 and 11, and then verse 45. Matthew chapter 13 and verse 10: *“And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given”* (Matthew 13:10–11). And now, begin reading, if you please, in verse 45: *“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it”* (Matthew 13:45–46).

Now we’ve been talking for many Sundays now about “The Strange Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven.” And what a blessing they’ve been to us, because they’ve uncovered truths and revealed to us things that we need to know to live in these last

days! Jesus called these truths “*the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven,*” and the title for this series: “The Strange Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven.” And in this day of anarchy in the streets, in this day of apostasy in the church, in this day of apathy in the hearts and lives of many of God’s children, it is so good that we can come back and review what we call the strange mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, because it is really the mystery of history; and God is telling us, in spite of all of the outward appearances of failure, that He is going to fulfill His plan: He is going to fulfill His purpose with Israel and with the Church.

And, today, we’re dealing with this parable of the pearl of great price. And the title of our message is “From Grit to Glory.” And you’ll see why I’ve used such a strange title in just a moment—“From Grit to Glory”—as we think about this parable of the pearl of great price.

Now the story is relatively simple. Here’s a merchantman, a merchant, and he’s on a journey, and he has but one purpose: he’s seeking fine pearls, “*goodly pearls.*” And one day he sees the most glorious, magnificent, beautiful gem that he’s ever seen: one perfectly formed and beautifully colored pearl. He says, “That’s it! That’s what I’ve been looking for all of my life!” That is the pearl, the one pearl of great price. And he sells everything that he has. He empties his pockets, he takes everything out of the bank, he takes all of the other pearls and sells them, that he might possess this one pearl, this pearl of great price.

Now the story is very, very simple. You remember that a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. The earthly story is quite simple. Now we want to discover, as we can together, the heavenly meaning, because the word *parable* and the word *parallel* are related words. A parable is an earthly story over here, and laid down parallel to it is a spiritual lesson. Today, the lesson is a very wonderful lesson, because it’s about you. Now you don’t want people talking about you behind your back, do you? Pay attention. It’s about you, because we’re going to see in just a moment that it is about you.

Now, let me say that the common, and perhaps the popular, interpretation of this parable is the wrong one. So many people think of the Lord Jesus Christ as the pearl of great price. And I will admit that it is a very romanticized idea to think of Jesus as the pearl of great price, because when you think of the pearl of great price, that sounds beautiful; it sounds like we speak of the Lord Jesus as “*the bright and morning star*” (Revelation 22:16). We speak of the Lord Jesus as “*the rose of Sharon*” (Song of Solomon 2:1). We speak sometimes of the Lord Jesus as “*the lily of the valleys*” (Song of Solomon 2:1). We speak of the Lord Jesus as “the fairest of ten thousand.” And certainly the pearl of great price seems a good way to speak of the Lord Jesus.

But, friend, this is not the meaning of the parable. Jesus is not this pearl of great

price. The way some people interpret it is just simply this: that Jesus is the pearl of great price; the merchant man is the sinner who is seeking God, and when he finds the Lord Jesus and all of His beauty, then he gives up everything and sells all that he has, in order that he might purchase Christ and salvation.

Now, really, if you think about that interpretation, you will understand just how foolish it is. Number one: it is foolish, because, dear friend, we are not seeking Jesus; He sought us. Now we don't seek after the Lord. Now you say, "Now, wait a minute, Brother Rogers. I believe there are people who seek God." Well, let's see who's right: you or the Bible? The Bible says, in Romans chapter 3, verse 11, "*There is none that seeketh after God...no, not one*" (Romans 3:11–12)—"*none that seeketh after God.*" You say, "Well now, wait a minute. I sought the Lord." Well, friend, if you sought the Lord, you only sought the Lord because the Lord first sought you. The Bible teaches, "*There is none that seeketh after God...no, not one.*"

You think of Adam there in the Garden of Eden after Adam sinned and the great glorious communing presence of God was withdrawn from Adam. You would have thought that Adam would have been running all over the Garden of Eden saying, "God, where are you? O God!" But he wasn't. It was God that came to the Garden and said, "Adam, where art thou?" (Genesis 3:9). Isn't that right? It was God seeking Adam. Where was Adam? He was off hiding in the bushes from the presence of the Lord. And ever since that time right up to this present time, no man has of his own initiative sought God. We only seek God because He first sought us. And I'm so glad, dear friends, as we sang "Victory in Jesus," He sought us and He bought us with His own precious blood.

I'll tell you another reason that I know this common interpretation of this parable is wrong, dear friend, is that, even if we did seek Him, when we found Him, what would we have to sell in order that we might purchase Him? What does the bankrupt sinner have to sell? He has nothing. You see, we don't have anything to sell spiritually with which we might purchase the Lord Jesus Christ. You say, "Well, I've got my own self-righteousness. I've got my own goodness." Well, the Bible tells me, in Isaiah chapter 64, verse 6, that your righteousness is as filthy rags in His sight. "*We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away*" (Isaiah 64:6). There's no goodness about us—not any! The Bible tells us, in Romans chapter 3 and verse 12, that in us is no good thing, and the Bible says in these words, "*There is none that doeth good, no, not one*" (Romans 3:12).

There are about four billion people upon the face of this earth. If you were to stand them heel to toe and put them in a line, that line of people would stretch out from the earth and go all the way around the moon, and come back to the earth standing heel

and toe, and then would go around the world; one, two, three, four, five plus times, that line would go around the world. That would be a long line. I'd hate to stand in it. Now, let's just suppose that you were to take a golden cup and start that golden cup at the head of that line, and say, "Pass it on," and each person as it passes by you, you would put all of your goodness and all of your righteousness in that cup, and you just pass that cup right one down the line past those four billion people out around the moon and back again, and around the earth one, two, three, four, five times. When it got to the end of the line, when you look in the cup, it would be empty—it would be empty.

Let me tell you something, friend. When God sees our goodness, what we call *goodness*, He says, "As filthy rags." I'm asking you a question. What would you have to pay to purchase this pearl of great price, if the pearl of great price represents Lord Jesus? You see, we have nothing to sell, but the third thing makes it the most absurd of all. Friend, you can't buy Jesus. He's not for sale. And there's no possible way that you could purchase Him, if He were the pearl of great price. And if you had something to purchase Him with, He's not for sale. "*The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*" (Romans 6:23)—Romans 6, verse 23. Salvation is a gift. And the Bible says it is "*not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us*" (Titus 3:5). Salvation is not in the merit of man, but in the mercy of God. It is blasphemous to even think about buying the Lord Jesus Christ, somehow earning salvation by our own merit.

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

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

But I want you to see, dear friend, that salvation is not for sale. So Jesus is not the pearl of great price, and the merchantman is not the sinner.

What is the pearl of great price? The pearl of great price is His Church—His Church. Jesus is the merchantman, and the pearl of great price is the Church. You remember, the last parable that we discussed together was the treasure hid in the field, and we told you that treasure was Israel. And now we're discussing the pearl of great price, which is the Church, because, you see, there are two things that are very precious to our Lord: Israel and the Church. And in the midst of all of the trouble, and the in the midst of all of the confusion, I want to tell you upon the authority of the Word of God, and with all of the emphasis and emotion and unction of my soul, that our God is going to fulfill His purpose with the nation Israel and with His Church. And what a word of comfort that is for us today!

So as we think about the pearl of great price, let me just tell you why I believe it is



the Church, and then we'll make some applications. In the Bible, Israel is called a peculiar treasure unto the Lord. Remember, in the parable before this there was a treasure hid in the field. The Church is never called, in the Bible, a treasure. Israel is called a peculiar treasure.

But, on the other hand, the pearl is not necessarily an Old Testament concept. The Jews, in the Old Testament, didn't value pearls. It's strange. You read all of the listing of all of the gems and the valuable things that they used as emblems and symbols of speech for the glory of God: the pearl was not one of them. Now you may read in the Book of Job about the pearl; but even when you read there in the Book of Job, it is a mistranslation: it should be translated the "crystal" and not the "pearl" (Job 28:18). The pearl is not an Old Testament concept; it's a New Testament one.

When we move into the New Testament, we read about not casting your pearls before swine (Matthew 7:6). We read about the pearl of great price. We read about the gates in heaven made of pearl (Revelation 21:21). It is a New Testament concept. The pearl was valued by the Gentiles, and not by the Jews in the Old Testament. And this pearl of great price is a picture, as we're going to see in just a moment, of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore it is a picture of you. Now we're going to have a very simple outline this morning, and I know it will be easy for you to follow. There are three things I want you to notice about this pearl of great price.

First of all, I want you to notice how it was wrought. Secondly, I want you to notice how it was sought. And, thirdly, I want you to notice how it was bought. Now that's a very simple outline, and we'll just follow along together as we look at this pearl of great price.

## **I. How It Was Wrought**

First of all, notice how it was wrought. You know, the formation of a pearl is a very interesting thing. I read several encyclopedias about pearls. I wanted to find out all I could about pearls since I was preaching on pearls—and very interesting reading of how a pearl is formed. That makes it a beautiful figure and a picture of the Church. And, incidentally, in the last encyclopedia I read it said that the best pearls come from the Persian Gulf, right near where the Lord Jesus Christ was there in the Middle East when He was talking about the pearl of great price. The most valued pearls come from the Persian Gulf, and they lie on the ocean floor sometimes at a depth of 150 feet. The divers go down for them, and there is a very special sea pearl oyster that produces the most beautiful of all pearls.

Well, how is a pearl formed? How is it wrought? Well, in that mollusk, or that oyster, comes a piece of irritant, some grit, some dirt, some impurity, some sand, something that comes, and it wounds the oyster. It wounds the oyster in his side. And when the

oyster is wounded, the oyster reacts to that wound by secreting a substance called nacre. And this nacre, or mother of pearl, is secreted, and it just begins to envelope that grit, that piece of sand, that dirt, and layer upon layer upon layer is built until something beautiful is made out of something ugly, and something glorious is made out of something hurtful and harmful. And, before long, there is a gloriously beautiful pearl made of the ugly thing that wounded the oyster.

And I got to thinking about these pearls, and as I was reading it said the most valuable pearls are those without any blemish at all. And it would be the pearl of greatest price, one without any blemish. Some pearls have blemishes. But a pearl that would be very valuable would be one without any blemish at all. And it also said that some gems can be divided. You can take a diamond and divide it, or you can take a ruby and split it, but not a pearl. When you divide the pearl, you spoil it and you ruin it.

### **A. The Pearl Goes from Grit to Glory**

Now, let's just think for a little bit about the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ as we're thinking of how that pearl was wrought, and then you'll understand something of why our dear Lord from eternity past even formed an oyster and formed a pearl that it might be used, I believe, as an illustration of His Church. You see, the Church, like the pearl, has gone from grit to glory. You know, what we were, dear friend? We were some impurity; we were some irritant; we were some matter of dirt and hurtfulness that wounded our dear Savior. But from the wounded side of our dear Savior poured forth, not only water and blood; but love poured forth. And our dear Lord took that which wounded Him, and that which was ugly, and that which was dirty, and that which was impure, and laid upon it a beauty not it's own. And Jesus took my life and your life, and He made something beautiful of them. We who nailed Him to the tree, and we who wounded our Savior, are the recipients of His love and of His beauty.

### **B. The Pearl Goes from Depth to Height**

And so the pearl, I think, is a symbol and an emblem of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, because the pearl has gone from grit to glory, but also the pearl has gone from depth to height. You think of this pearl lying down there in the bottom of the ocean floor in the mire and the silt of the sea, and some diver comes and he brings it up, and he opens it there; and that pearl, this beautiful pearl of greatest price, is so beautiful that it is fit for only one thing: not for the common man to handle, but for the diadem of a king. And so it rests upon the bosom of a king. That which was on the floor of the ocean, down in the mire, and down in the dirt, now rests upon the bosom of the king. Oh, again, what a beautiful picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, as we His Church, as we upon His bosom, and in the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ, will shine and flash forever, and give Him beauty and glory and pleasure!

### C. The Pearl Goes from Darkness to Light

And then, not only did the pearl come from grit to glory, not only does the pearl go from depth to height; but, dear friend, that pearl goes from darkness to light. Can you think of a darker place than being on the inside of an oyster on the ocean floor? Can you think of any? The only thing darker than that I can think of would be the minds of unsaved people, darkened, dead in trespasses and sin. But we have been delivered out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son (Colossians 1:13).

As I was studying about the pearl, I found out that the pearl is different from other gems in that other gems reflect light, but the pearl also absorbs light; it both absorbs and reflects light. Again, a wonderful picture of the Church that receives the truth of the Lord, and it comes into us. But not only does it come into us; it goes out through us and from us to give glory to our Lord. And so we have come, dear friend, from darkness to light.

*From sinking sand He lifted me,  
With tender hand He lifted me,  
From shades of night to plains of light,  
O praise His name, He lifted me!*

—CHARLES H. GABRIEL

### D. The Pearl Goes from Start to Finish

And I'll tell you another reason that I believe that the pearl is such a marvelous figure of the Church is that the pearl goes from start to finish. Now what I mean by that is this: that it starts with such an insignificant, little starting, just a little grain of sand, just a little irritant; but then layer after layer after layer after layer is laid upon it until it emerges a beautiful, glorious pearl; that in order for it to be a pearl of great price, it has to be a perfect pearl.

And, again, that's the Church. You see, the Bible speaks of the Church in Ephesians chapter 5, and the Bible says that the Lord is going to "*present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing*" (Ephesians 5:27). You see, dear friend, He's going to finish us. Oh, He's going to complete us! Layer upon layer, He's building His church.

Did you know that several more layers of that pearl were added this morning in the eight o'clock service? When I gave the invitation, here came some more beautiful substance to cover that pearl, and our Lord is building His pearl. I don't know when it will be complete. Perhaps before we finish today, someone will say yes to Jesus and God will say, "That's it; it's complete," Jesus will come, and history as we know it will be finished. I don't know when that pearl is going to be finished, but I'll tell you this: "*that he which hath begun good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ*"

(Philippians 1:6). And He is going to present it to himself a glorious Church without spot or blemish, or any such thing, hallelujah and hallelujah!

## II. How It Was Sought

And so we see how it was wrought. And even in the formation of the pearl, we see a glorious, wonderful picture of the Church of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But now, secondly, I want you to see, not only how it was wrought, but how it was sought. For, you see, here was a merchantman seeking goodly pearls, and thereby he becomes a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, for Jesus Himself said it Himself in Luke chapter 19, verse 10: *“For the Son of man”—Jesus—“is come to seek and to save that which was lost”* (Luke 19:10). Here our dear Lord is the one who is seeking us.

And isn't it amazing that He would seek us? Do you know one of the amazing verses in the Bible is Psalm 45, verse 11: *“So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty”* (Psalm 45:11)? The king desires us. He seeks us. He wants us. That's marvelous indeed. You see, I've told you before, I told you the week before last when we dealt with the treasure, and I want to tell you again—please, please get it into your heart: *He doesn't love us because we're valuable; we're valuable because He loves us*. You see, it's His love that makes us valuable. He doesn't love us for what we are, but He loves us for what He can make out of us.

And He is seeking us. He is the seeking Savior. He left heaven above to seek His Church, because, you see, the Church was in the heart and in the mind of God in eternity past. While there was no Church, there was still a Church in the heart and bosom of God. And that's why the Lord Jesus came into this world: *“to seek and to save that which was lost.”*

But I want to tell you something, friend: the dear Savior is still seeking; He's seeking today. And let me tell you, right now in this service that merchantman is seeking you; the Lord Jesus is seeking you. You say, how is He seeking me? How does the Lord seek?

### A. He Seeks Through His Spirit

Well, He seeks through His Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God speaking to your heart. The Holy Spirit never shouts. The Holy Spirit never shoves. The Holy Spirit never twists arms. But that Holy Spirit is a still, small voice saying, “I love you; I want you; come to Jesus.” Haven't you felt that in your heart? In those contemplative moments, haven't you felt the Lord Jesus speaking to you? Oh, dear friend, don't fight the Holy Spirit! That's a battle you can't afford to win. Don't trample under your feet that still, small voice saying, “I love you; I want you; you belong to me; *‘come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden’* (Matthew 11:28).”

## **B. He Seeks Through Sickness**

But not only does He seek through His Spirit; He seeks, dear friends, through sickness. Have you been sick lately? Have you been on a bed of affliction? Some of you, perhaps, are watching by television. You're there in the hospital watching, some of you are at home, and that sickness has been the messenger of God, saying, "I love you." You know, sometimes we get so busy that we think we're almost invincible. Sometimes when our health is glowing and everything is going fine, we never think about having to meet God or give an account of ourselves. But then our Lord allows sickness to come, and we see that this body is not going to last forever; and we see that sooner or later the arm of flesh will fail us, will fail us all; and then we begin to think about "*underneath are the everlasting arms*" of God (Deuteronomy 33:27). Someone has said, "Sometimes God has to put us flat on our backs in order for us to look up."

## **C. He Seeks Through Sorrows**

And then, not only does God seek through His Spirit, and not only does He seek through sickness; sometimes He seeks through sorrows. Some of you have gone through deep grief. You've been to the graveside of a mother. Perhaps a little baby was taken by the icy hands of death, and you've been with a broken and a crushed heart, and yet, even through all of that, you feel God's Holy Spirit just speaking tenderly to you, and saying, "I love you, and I'm greater than all of these sorrows, and I want to take you and turn every hurt into a hallelujah; I want to take and turn every tear into a pearl, and I want to turn every Calvary to an Easter." And God, through sorrow, is seeking you.

## **D. He Seeks Through His Servants**

Sometimes God seeks you through His servants. You know, this sermon is God seeking you. God is using me to seek. I prayed before I preached this morning that God would use me. I try not to preach a sermon until I soak it in prayer. That song, "The Old Rugged Cross," was God seeking you. The song "Victory in Jesus" was God seeking you. God seeks through His servants. You're not here by accident. God brought me here, and God brought you here, and God is telling you through me, "I love you; I want you; I'm calling you." God seeks through His servants.

## **E. God Seeks Through Scripture**

God seeks through Scripture. The Scripture is God speaking to you, saying, "Come unto me."

I was reading, interestingly, a while back about a man who was an embezzler, a dishonest man; he cared not one whit for the things of God; an ungodly, profane, self-centered, selfish man. He was in a hotel, he was shaving with a straight razor, and he

wanted something to wipe the foam and the lather from his razor blade. And there was a Gideon Bible that someone had left open on the dresser. He reached down and just snatched a page out of that Bible to use it to wipe off his razor. But when he did, his eye caught upon a verse of Scripture that said, *“The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord”* (Romans 6:23), and that arrested Him. And he began to read, and found the Lord Christ as his personal Savior, confessed his crimes, was made right with God.

I read about a deep sea diver who on the bottom of the ocean found a bottle with a cork in it submerged there, and he brought it to the surface, opened it up; and on the inside was a gospel tract with the Scripture on it. He said, “If God loves me enough to follow me to the bottom of the ocean, I’ll give my heart to Him.”

I want to tell you, dear friend, that God will follow you to the ends of the earth, saying, “I love you; I seek you; I want you.” And Jesus is standing today with nail-pierced hands and tears streaming from His eyes, saying, *“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”* (Matthew 11:28). Oh, how it was sought! *“The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”*

Dear friend, He invites you to be saved today. Don’t think He has not sought you. He has sought you. He is seeking you. He will seek you. And if you go to hell, it will not be because you cannot be saved; it will be because you refuse to be saved. As Jesus said, *“And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life”* (John 5:40).

### **III. How It Was Bought**

Now the third thing I want you to notice about this pearl: not only how it was wrought, and not only how it was sought; but I want you to notice how it was bought. Look, if you will, in verse 46. The story goes on to tell about this man who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it. Now, who was it that sold all that He had that He might purchase us? The Lord Jesus who was “rich, but for our sake became poor, that we through Him might be rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9). He bought us, not with silver and gold, but with the silver of His tears and with the gold of His blood. He bought us.

Now as I thought about a passage of Scripture that I might use to illustrate the price that the Lord Jesus gave for us, I thought, “Where would I go that would describe the price that He paid?” and it seemed as though the Holy Spirit directed me to the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, because it is there in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah that the Lord Jesus Christ is spoken of as being *“wounded for our transgressions”* (Isaiah 53:5).

Remember how the oyster was formed? Remember that? Remember where that dirt, that impurity, that irritant, comes and it wounds the oyster, and out of that wound comes forth beauty? I believe Isaiah the fifty-third chapter pictures that perhaps as

much as anything. And so, turn to Isaiah chapter 53, as we think about the price that was paid. Now, remember that the oyster, it reaches out and brings into itself and covers with something beautiful that which is ugly. It just seems to receive that which is harmful and transform it. And I want you to see what the Lord Jesus Christ did for me, and what the Lord Jesus did for you. Look, if you will, in Isaiah chapter 53, verses 5 and 6: *“But he”—Jesus—“was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him”—that is, on Jesus—“the iniquity of us all”* (Isaiah 53:5–6).

Jesus took our sins. I want you to see what happened in dark Gethsemane. Jesus is alone there praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. The city sleeps, the disciples are asleep, but Jesus’ eyes will not close in sleep until they close in death. And Jesus is praying in such agony that the minute blood vessels, the capillaries, rupture in His brow and on the backs of His hands, and His sweat is as drops of blood. And what is He praying, and what is He saying? He’s saying, “O God, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done” (Matthew 26:39).

What was the cup that He was talking about? Not mere physical death, not merely the nails in His hands and in His feet, and the spear in His side, and the lash upon His back. What was that cup of which Jesus said, “O Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me”? In that cup was the sin of the world.

I want you to imagine that line again that we were talking about, that line of four billion people going out around the moon and coming back around the earth, and around the earth, and around the earth; and then I want you to multiply that by not only the four billion that live now, but by all who have ever lived, and all who will ever live. And I want you to see that cup as it passes down that line again, and into that cup I want you to see people this time as they put their sins, they put their lying in that cup, they put their lust in that cup, they put their lasciviousness in that cup, they put their hellishness in that cup, they put their hatred in that cup, they put their hopelessness in that cup, they put their fear in that cup, they put their rape in that cup, they put their murder in that cup, they put their arson in that cup, they put their perversion in that cup, they put it in that cup one after another, after another, after another; and when it’s been all the way through the line, Jesus in Gethsemane put that cup to His lips and He drank it all.

“Him who knew no sin, God hath made to be sin for us” (2 Corinthians 5:21). *“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”* The thrice-holy Jesus became sin for us. You cannot imagine what that meant for the Lord Jesus Christ to take your sin and my sin,

but He took our sin. And that's what verses 5 and 6 tell us.

Now I want you to look at verse 7 and see what it says. It says, *"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth"* (Isaiah 53:7). Now, what does that mean? It means, not only did He take my sins; but, because He took my sins, He took my shame. Oh, the shame that sin deserves! And the Lord Jesus suffered ignominiously a shameful death.

Did you know that they said all manner of things about Him that were not true? Look in verse 3: *"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not."* Why? *"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted"* (Isaiah 53:3–4). We looked at Him, and we said, "Well, He's getting what He deserved." That's what people thought. People actually thought He was guilty. They thought He was dying as a common criminal. They accused Him of things. And Pilate said, "Are these things true?" And He didn't open His mouth (Matthew 27:12–14; Mark 15:3–5; Luke 23:9–10).

Why didn't He? Why didn't He defend Himself? Why didn't He say, "All right, Pilate, I want you to know that I am God's substitute; and because I am God's substitute I'm not really a sinner, but I'm taking these sins. I'm taking everybody else's sins, and I'm dying as though I were a sinner." Why didn't He say that? Or, why didn't He protest His innocence? He didn't. Why not? Because, dear friend, a part of the punishment of sin is shame, and Jesus took that for me.

You see, Jesus could not have proven Himself innocent without proving me guilty. Had Jesus said, "I'm just bearing Adrian's sin," then He would have acted like a hero. But He didn't die like a hero. He died like a criminal. When He took my sin, He took my shame.

You see, I'll tell you He was speechless before Pilate, because, have you ever read in the Bible about that man who came to stand before the Lord, and the Lord said, "How did you come in here without a wedding garment?" And the Bible says, "He stood speechless; he didn't have anything to say" (Matthew 22:12). And I tell you, if you stand before God without your sins pardoned, if you stand before Almighty God to be judged, you too will be speechless. You see, Jesus took my sin, and because Jesus took my sin, Jesus took my shame; and because Jesus took my sin and my shame, Jesus also took my separation.

Look, if you will, please, in verse 8 of this same chapter, as we think of the price that He paid for this pearl: *"He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken"* (Isaiah 53:8)—*"cut off."*



What does that mean? It speaks of separation. Jesus is hanging in agony and blood upon that cross. The heavens were darkened at noonday. The earth quaked and the rocks were broken in pieces; and Jesus, the darling Son of God, hung upon that cross between God and men, and the flaming fingers of lightening and fire flashed across the bosom of the sky. And that hellish crowd began to taunt Him and tease Him; and hell was having a holiday; and the devil was shouting for joy and glee that the Son of God was nailed to the cross. And Almighty God is pouring out the vials of His eternal wrath upon His own Son, and Jesus is separated even from God the Father.

He was cut off—cut off from His mother, cut off from His brethren, cut off from His disciples, cut off from His friends, cut off from His Father—and He cries, *“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”* (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34). I’ll tell you why: because God is *“of purer eyes than to behold [iniquity]”* (Habakkuk 1:13), and upon the Lord Jesus Christ was the sin of the whole world; and therefore He was cut off, because sin means separation. That’s what it means.

When David came to die, David could say, *“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me”* (Psalm 23:4). But Jesus walked that lonesome valley all by Himself—by Himself—suspended between heaven and earth. He was cut off from the land of the living. You see, He took my sins, and because He took my sins, He took my shame; and because He took my shame, He took my separation; and because He took my sin, my shame, and my separation, He then took my suffering.

Look, if you will, in verse 9 of this same chapter—look at it: *“He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death”* (Isaiah 53:9). Look at that word *death*. In the King James Version of the Bible that I have before me, it’s just the word *death*. And I’m not a Hebrew scholar, but the Hebrew scholars tell us that this word in the original is an intensive plural.

You say, “What does that mean?” Well, let me just give you a loose translation of it. He died a thousand deaths—He died a thousand deaths. It was not just a mere crucifixion. Other people have died by crucifixion. Think about it. Think what was happening in that transaction on that bloody hill that day, that hill called Calvary. How could one man bear the sins of so many men? Jesus died for all of them. He died a billion deaths upon that cross. You see, He died my death. He died your death. He died His death. He died her death. He died our death. You see, all of the sins of the world were compressed upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

And you say, “How could He suffer there on the cross in just a finite period of time my suffering, because if I die and go to hell, I’ll suffer for all eternity in hell?” I want you to pay attention. Jesus, being infinite, suffered in a finite period of time what you, being finite, would suffer in an infinite period of time. He died a thousand deaths. The sins of

the world were distilled upon Jesus, and the centuries and the ages were compressed upon Jesus.

You cannot imagine how Christ suffered on that cross. You could not suffer as Christ suffered. You don't have the capacity to suffer as Christ suffered.

Here's a graveside, and here's a little girl of three, and here's a father of twenty-seven, and the mother has died. The little girl will weep. But soon she'll be back to her toys. But not the father. She can sorrow as a little girl. He can sorrow as a man. He has a deeper capacity for sorrow.

My dear friend, I want to tell you there was no one who had a capacity for sorrow like Jesus. He said, "Look and see: there is no sorrow like my sorrow" (Lamentations 1:12). Jesus, being infinite, suffered in a finite period of time what you would suffer in an infinite period of time. The sin of the world was distilled upon Him, and the centuries were compressed upon Him, and on that cross He paid it all. And how we ought to love Him—how we ought to love Him!—because you see, the thing that hurt Him, the thing that wounded Him, He made something beautiful out of. He took it in. He took my sin. And when He took my sin, He took my shame. And when He took my shame, He took my separation. And when He took my separation, He took my sorrow and my suffering. He took it all. And because He did—glory to God!—there's a pearl of great price. It means a lot to Him. He gave all that He had that He might buy it.

## Conclusion

Think about it. Think how it was wrought. Think how it was sought. Think how it was bought. How you ought to love Him! How you ought to serve Him! How you ought to yield your life anew and afresh to such a wonderful, wonderful, Savi

# The Problem of Counterfeit Christians

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: November 14, 1982**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 13:24–309 36–43**

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## Introduction

**A**nd that's what we're going to deal with tonight: "The Problem of Counterfeit Christians." And I want us to begin reading here in Matthew chapter 13 and verse 24. The Bible says, *"Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and"—by the way, the enemy is the devil, as we're going to see in a moment—"and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field?"*

*from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn” (Matthew 13:24–30).*

Then I want you to go on down, if you will, to verse 36, and let’s begin reading in verse 36: *“Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Matthew 13:36–43).*

Not everybody talking about heaven is going there. Not everybody who claims to be a Christian is a Christian. Dr. Vance Havner said, “Many of our church members have been starched and ironed, but they’ve never been washed. They have been through the formality, but they have never met the Lord Jesus Christ.” And Jesus here has given us a parable, and you know what a parable is: it’s an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Jesus has given us a parable, and this parable is at the same time a word of comfort; it is at the same time a word of warning; and it is at the same time a word of instruction.

### **A. A Word of Comfort**

Now, how is it a word of comfort? As we’re going to see, it’s going to comfort those people who are confused and bewildered because of counterfeit Christians. I mean, there are some people who say, “If the Bible is true, and if it’s not contradictory, how come there are so many false brethren and so many counterfeit Christians? Why are there so many hypocrites in the Church?” Well, we’re going to understand it; and when we understand that God understands, and when we know that it has not taken God by surprise, then it will be a word of comfort for us.

### **B. A Word of Warning**

Number two: It ought to be a word of warning, because I’m convinced, as surely as

I'm standing here, there are a great host of people in this building tonight who are members of this church, if they should die tonight, they'd go to hell; members of this church who have never been saved. And the church, in many instances, rather than being a force for evangelism, has become a field of evangelism. And the people who are members of the church, many of them are religious but lost.

### **C. A Word of Instruction**

And then, thirdly, it is a word of instruction, because it tells those of us who are saved what our relationship is to be to those within the church who may not be saved, and how we're to handle these who are called "counterfeit Christians."

Now, what is the heavenly meaning of this earthly story? I want to get right into it. It's not a complicated story. A man went out, and he planted some wheat in his field. And then, while his servants were asleep, someone else came and planted a weed with the wheat. Now the weed is named a *tare* or *tares*—*tares*—and the people who know tell us that this weed is really darnel. And darnel looks so much like wheat that at first you cannot tell it from wheat; that is, until the time of the harvest, and then it's very obvious that it is not wheat. And, of course, it just was all mixed in together, the tares and the wheat. And then at the harvest time, the man who had the field went into the field and he separated the tares from the wheat. He put the tares in the fire and gathered the wheat into his barn. A very simple story—oh, but what a great meaning in the story!

Now, let me just remind you of some things again. The man who does the sowing, according to verse 37, is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The seed that He sows are believers—Christians, you. The field, of course, is the world—in verse 38. The enemy who put the tares, or the weeds, in the field is the devil—verse 39 tells us that. And the tares are the children of the devil, and verse 38 tells us that. The reapers who are going to reap the harvest at the end of the age are the angels—verse 39 tells us that. And the time of the harvest is the end of the age. All of these things are quite simple.

But now, let's see if we can look behind the surface, and I want to have a simple little three-point outline tonight. You know, God does things in threes; He just likes threes. So you notice a lot of my sermons have three points. But I want you to think with me tonight, first of all, about the sowing of the tares. And then I want you to think with me about the growing of the tares. Then I want you to think with me about the knowing of the tares: how God is going to deal with these tares in the end of the age.

### **I. The Sowing of the Tares**

First of all, the sowing of the tares: who did it? No ifs, ands, and buts about it, the enemy who did it is the devil. Look, if you will, in verse 39: "*The enemy that sowed them*

*is the devil*" (Matthew 13:39). Now the reason I'm bringing this message tonight is because it fits in with our message on spiritual warfare. One of the ways that the devil wars against the church is to infiltrate the church. It is the work of Satan to deceive people, as I preached this morning; but not only to deceive them, but also to dilute the Church with unsaved people. The devil is the false devil, is the chief counterfeiter. And as I said this morning, the devil is not against religion. He uses religion; he's in religion up to his ears.

### **A. Why Did He Do It?**

Now, why did he do it? Well, the Bible says, "*An enemy hath done this*" (Matthew 13:28), in this scripture. But Tyndale translates it this way: "An envious person hath done this"—"an envious person." He is an enemy by envy. The devil has a great envy of God. The devil has always said, "*I will be like the most High*" (Isaiah 14:14). That's what made him the devil. His burning unholy ambition is to dethrone God and to enthrone himself. So, why did he do it? He did it because he's an enemy. Why is he an enemy? Whose enemy is he? He's not primarily my enemy; he's primarily God's enemy. He hates me and he hates you because he hates God. You see, the devil is not all that interested in weeds or wheat; he's interested in worship. The devil wants to be worshiped, and he wants to discredit God, and he wants totally discredit the kingdom of God and hurt the kingdom of God. And since the devil cannot get directly to God or at God, then the devil works against the work of God and the children of God. And so he does it by envy.

### **B. When Did He Do It?**

When did he do it? Well, look in verse 25. The Bible says that he did it "*while men slept*." "*But while men slept, [the] enemy came and sowed [the] tares*" (Matthew 13:25). Ladies and gentlemen, this church must stay vigilant. One of the reasons, when we give an invitation, that we take people out and counsel with them carefully and quietly is to keep the enemy from sowing tares in the field. So many people are processed. We give an invitation; we preach the gospel, and we draw the net. But then we fail to sort the catch. We do not go into the counseling room and quietly and confidently lay out the salvation. And some churches are so careless about the way they receive members. They're just asleep at the switch. You know, I'm expecting some church today to start taking members in on the telephone and baptizing their photographs. They are just that interested in swelling the rolls with numbers and new members. But we need to make absolutely certain that the people who join our church—as best we can—know Christ as their personal Savior. It's done while men slept. And if we're sleeping, the devil is going to infiltrate this church with unsaved members. First Corinthians chapter 15, verse 34,

says, *“Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame”* (1 Corinthians 15:34). That is, you ought to be ashamed that there are among you those who are unsaved, and it’s because you are asleep.

### **C. What Did He Do?**

Now, let me describe the tares that the enemy sows for a moment. They are counterfeit Christians. Now the devil is the chief counterfeiter. I want you to just take your Bible and put your mark there in Matthew 13, and then I want you to turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 11. And 2 Corinthians chapter 11 is a chapter that we’re going to be dealing with quite a bit within our study on spiritual warfare; but turn to it with me—2 Corinthians chapter 11. And remember now, we’re talking about counterfeit things. We’re talking about false professors, imitation Christianity. You see, the plan of Satan is to imitate the work of God. And the best counterfeit looks the most like the original. And I want to show you what the devil has done.

#### **1. He Has a False Jesus**

The devil has a counterfeit Christ. Look in 2 Corinthians chapter 11 and verse 4: *“For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached”* (2 Corinthians 11:4). Did you know that there are a lot of churches today that say they believe in Jesus, and don’t believe in Jesus? Do you know there are a lot of churches today that talk about Christ that don’t know Christ? The Christ that they preach is another Christ; he is another Jesus. The devil has a false Jesus.

#### **2. He Has a False Spirit**

But not only does he have a false Jesus; he has a false spirit. Look again in verse 4: *“For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit”* (2 Corinthians 11:4). Now, friend, you can have a spiritual experience with the devil. You can receive a demon spirit into your heart. And that demon spirit can even give you happiness and pleasure. And that demon spirit can give you insight and knowledge. But what you’re having is fellowship with a demon spirit, not with the Holy Spirit. You say, “Brother Rogers, that’s kind of scary.” Well, I hope so—I hope so. Paul here speaks of people who name another Jesus who’s not the true Jesus; and then he speaks of people who receive another spirit who is not the Holy Spirit.

#### **3. He Has False Ministers**

Not only is there a false Christ, and a false spirit; but, friend, there are also false ministers. Look down in verses 13 and 14 of this same chapter. Paul goes on to say, *“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself [has] transformed into an angel of*

*light*” (2 Corinthians 11:13–14). And so, not only is there a false Christ, not only is there a false spirit; but, friend, there are false ministers who will preach this false religion, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And all over the world, and on television, and on radio, and from many pulpits there are men who are ministers of Satan, wearing clerical robes and called “reverend” and “doctor” and “bishop” and “pastor” who are emissaries of hell. That’s what the Bible teaches. I’m not trying to be mean, but I’m saying, dear friend, how the enemy has done a job, how he has sown the tares in the field. And there’s a Jesus which is not the true Jesus. There is a spirit which is not the Holy Spirit. There are ministers who have transformed themselves into the apostles of Christ but have not been called.

#### **4. He Has False Brethren**

But not only that: there are false brethren. Look, if you will, in chapter 11 and verse 26 of this same chapter. He goes on to say that he was *“in journeyings often,”*—that is, Paul was a traveling preacher—*“in perils of waters,”*—that is, he almost drowned—*“in perils of robbers,”*—people would pounce on him from the wayside—*“in perils by mine own countrymen,”*—the Jews turned on him because of the gospel he believed in—*“in perils by the heathen,”*—the unbelievers opposed him—*“in perils in the city,”*—he wasn’t safe when he was in the city—*“in perils in the wilderness,”*—he couldn’t escape to the country—*“in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren”* (2 Corinthians 11:26). Paul said, “Listen. Just as robbers and heathens and other people were giving me difficulty,” he says, “there were false brethren: people who said they were Christians, people who claimed to be members of a church, people who claimed to be a part of the whole missionary enterprise; but they literally put me in jeopardy.”

#### **5. He Has a False Gospel**

Notice what Paul is saying: a false Jesus, a false spirit, false ministers, and false brethren. And all of these have a false gospel, because Paul said, in Galatians chapter 1, verse 7—we’re not going to turn to it—but there is another gospel *“which is not another; but there be some that...would pervert the gospel of Christ”* (Galatians 1:7). And they have a false gospel. Now the devil is in the land today, and he’s not against preaching; he is for preaching. He’s not against spiritual farming; he is sowing seed, but he’s sowing weeds in God’s field of wheat.

Now, go back to Matthew 13, and let me just talk to you a little bit about these false brethren who believe in a false Jesus, who have received a false spirit, and who listen many times to false minister. What should we do?

##### **a. Don’t Be Discouraged**

Well, first of all, let me say that a Christian should never be too discouraged because



of a counterfeit Christian. The counterfeit only proves the worthwhileness of the real. Every counterfeit Christian that you see is a validation, not a disproof, of Christianity.

When men counterfeit money—twenty-dollar bills—why do they counterfeit twenty-dollar bills? Because twenty-dollar bills are worth something: about eight dollars. And so that's why they counterfeit twenty-dollar bills. You see, men don't counterfeit gum wrappers; they counterfeit something that has some value to it. And every counterfeit Christian is an argument for Christianity, not against Christianity.

And don't you ever let anybody tell you that Christianity is false because there are counterfeit Christians.

#### **b. Don't Stop Loving the Lord**

Now, secondly, don't you stop loving the Lord because of a counterfeit Christian.

I mean, just because there are some weeds in the field, would you say, "I'll never eat any more wheat"? Just because some money is counterfeit, would you say, "I'll never receive any more money"? Just because some doctors are quacks, would you say, "I'll never go to a doctor again"? Just because some lawyers are shysters, would you say, "I'll never go to a lawyer again"? Just because some preachers are false apostles, would you say, "I'll never have anything to do with a man of God again"? Of course not! You know better than that.

Don't be dismayed, and don't be upset because of counterfeit Christianity. False preachers and cults and hypocrites have not taken God by surprise. That's the meaning of Matthew chapter 13, this passage of Scripture. They do not disprove the Bible; they prove the Bible. And, friend, I'm going to tell you something that may shock you. There are some people who argue against Christianity, because we don't all believe and act alike. But I want to tell you, if we all did believe and act alike, and if everybody who named the name of Christ were saved, it would disprove the Bible—it would disprove the Bible—because the Bible says there's going to be these kinds of people. The Bible says they're going to be hypocrites. The Bible says there will be false brethren. The Bible says that the enemy is going to sow tares among the wheat. So these things do not disprove the Bible; they prove the Bible.

## **II. The Growing of the Tares**

Now the second thing I want you to notice: not only the sowing of the tares, but I want you to notice the growing of the tares. Look with me, if you will again, in verse 28 of this chapter—here we're back in Matthew chapter 13: *"He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them"* (Matthew 13:28–29). Don't go trying to pull the tares out of the church. Your job as a

Christian is not to be a weed killer. Never, never, never join a crusade to root out false religion: you'll do more harm than good. Jesus said, "Let the two grow together." Never join any kind of a movement to persecute somebody else because of their faith. You will make a tragic mistake if you do. And Christianity and the history of Christianity is full of people who need to read this thirteenth chapter of Matthew. And some of the saddest days in the history of the church have been those that have gone to try to root out somebody else's false faith or to persecute somebody else's faith. Friend, it is a dangerous thing, because you do not really know who's saved and who's lost.

I'll tell you, some of the very best Christians that you know, or some of the people whom you think are the best Christians, you know, are lost—are lost. When Jesus said, "One of you is going to betray me," not a one of them said, "I bet it's Judas"—not a one of them! They said, "Is it me? Who is it?" Listen. If Jesus had said, "Go in there and pick out the one who's going to betray me," one of them probably would have picked out Peter and said, "He's such a big mouth. He couldn't be saved. Get him out of here." And another one picked out Thomas, and said, "Well, that guy never did have the kind of faith that he ought to have," and would have gotten him out of there. And most of them would have left Judas. I want to tell you, Judas was the most trusted man in that group—Judas was the most trusted. You say, "How do you know?" They made him the treasurer, right? They made him the treasurer. He was the most trusted. And I want to tell you, dear friend, you would make a mistake if you were to go in this congregation and say, "Well, I know Bob Sorrell's saved. See, he looks so saved." But I want to tell you—no, he's saved—look, you don't know.

I was in a convention one time, and Dr. Gray Allison—by the way, Dr. Gray Allison has gone home from the hospital; we praise God for that—but Dr. Allison was there. And I was with some friends, and we were standing around the hall talking, and a preacher came up. And he was all hot and bothered about some liberals there in the Southern Baptist Convention. And so we were standing there, and he came up and he said to our group, said to Dr. Allison, "I want to ask you a question," said, "do you believe that man is saved?" And I was wondering what Dr. Allison was going to say. Dr. Allison said, "I don't know whether he's saved or not." He said, "I don't even know whether you're saved," said, "the only man I know is saved is me." That was a good answer, wasn't it? "The only man I know is saved is me."

And what a mistake we would make if we go around to start judging one another and trying to root out the weeds! Jesus said, "You just let them grow together." And if you go to try to stamp out some false religion, I want to tell you, friend, you're not going to stamp out that fire; what you're going to do is to scatter the embers, and you're just going to make martyrs out of them. And so our job is not to root out the tares; our job is

to preach the gospel.

“Well,” you say, “what about church discipline? Aren’t we to have some church discipline?” The purpose of church discipline is not to root out and to remove; it is to restore and reclaim. It is a different thing altogether.

### III. The Knowing of the Tares

Now, let’s notice one other thing, and I’ll be finished: not only the sowing of the tares, and not only the growing of the tares—they grow together; but I want you to notice the knowing of the tares. I want you to look, if you will now, please, in verse 40 of this same chapter: “*As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man...*”—that’s Jesus; that’s the Bible terminology for Jesus—“*The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear*” (Matthew 13:40–43). God has a harvest time that is coming, and it’s coming at the end of the age.

Well, why does God tolerate the tares? I mean, why does God wait until the end of the age? Why doesn’t God just move in right now and start to separate the weeds from the wheat? I’ll tell you why: the harvest is not yet fully ripe. At the time of the harvest: when the harvest is ripe is the time to harvest, not before. And God is waiting for the ripeness of the harvest.

There’s a verse of Scripture that you might want to jot down—Revelation chapter 14, verses 14 and 15. Here’s what God said to the Apostle John and the vision that God gave to John. John said, “*And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe*” (Revelation 14:14–15).

Now God is not going to come in judgment; the Lord Jesus is not going to put His sickle into this world and start the harvest until time is right—until the harvest is ripe. You see, goodness is not fully ripe, and evil is not fully ripe. Sometimes people ask me this question: “Adrian, do you believe the world is getting better or worse?” My answer is “yes”—“yes.” The grain is getting riper; the wheat is getting more golden and glorious. And the weeds are getting more noisome and more noxious. And so the harvest time is not yet. You see, the Bible says, “*Judge nothing before [its] time*” (1 Corinthians 4:5). But when the Lord comes, He is going to harvest His wheat. When the Lord comes, He

is going to burn the tares.

Now you can deceive me, and you can deceive your wife, and you can deceive those who sow, and you can deceive those who cultivate, and you can deceive those who water; but you cannot deceive those who reap. You will not deceive God's angels. You're not going to deceive God's workers—now, listen—or God's reapers. Some of you here tonight think, "Well, boy, nobody knows that I'm lost. Nobody knows that I'm unsaved. I look just as good as everybody else." Yes, you do. Some of you may think that you are saved, because God just lets you sit here tonight and doesn't do anything with you or to you. He will at the end of the age. How sad it's going to be for some of you who have sung in the choir to go to hell! How sad it's going to be for some of you who have served as deacons to go to hell! How sad it's going to be for some who have been preachers of the gospel to die and go to hell! Oh, what a fine-looking tare you have been! How much you've served and even sacrificed! But you have never been born again. And you think, because judgment hasn't come, it will not come. But as surely as I stand here, judgment will come.

## Conclusion

I'm going to close our message tonight, and I want to make just three applications very quickly.

### A. Make Absolutely Certain of Your Salvation

Number one: Make absolutely certain of your salvation. Are you saved? Do you know you're saved? How do you know you're saved? "Well," you say, "I walked down an aisle and shook hands with a preacher." Show me in the Bible where that saves you. Give me a verse. No, you're not saved by that. You say, "Well, I've been baptized." Show me in the Bible where that's saved. You say, "Well, I keep the Ten Commandments." That doesn't save you. Have you been saved? Have you repented of your sin? Have you trusted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior? Does God's Spirit bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God? You say, "You're trying to make me doubt my salvation." No, I'm trying to make you do what the Bible says: *"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith"* (2 Corinthians 13:5). Are you sure? Do you know you're saved? Wonderful.

### B. Don't Let a Counterfeit Christian Keep You out of Heaven

Now the second thing I want to say is this: Don't you let a counterfeit Christian keep you out of heaven. There are some of you here tonight who have a grudge against some church member, some deacon, some preacher, somebody somewhere who did you bad; and that person was a member of a church, and you're saying, "If that's

Christianity, I don't want to have anything to do with it." Well, friend, I don't blame you, but that's not Christianity—that is not Christianity. That is counterfeit Christianity, and that is false Christianity. It is not real Christianity. And there will always be hypocrites. One of the twelve disciples was a hypocrite, but the other eleven didn't quit. And hypocrites have always been aboard the good ship Zion; but onward she sails, and heaven is her port.

### **C. If You've Been an Unsaved Church Member, Become a Christian Tonight**

The third thing I want to say is this: that you can, if you've been an unsaved church member, become a Christian tonight. That doesn't mean that you've been a hypocrite; it may mean, just as I preached this morning, you've been deceived. The devil has made your medicine your poison. The devil has deceived you, and you've never been saved. Tonight, you can come and say an everlasting yes to Jesus Christ and get saved.

# The Counterfeit Christian

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: January 11, 1998**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 13:24–30; 37–40**

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## Introduction

ould you be finding Matthew chapter 13. We're in a series Sunday nights entitled "The Strange Mysteries of the Kingdom." And, tonight, we're going to be talking about "The Strange Mystery of the Counterfeit Christian." I think you know that not everybody who claims to be a Christian is a genuine Christian. There's an old Negro spiritual that says, "Everybody talking about heaven ain't going there." And that is true. Dr. Vance Havner—the late great Dr. Vance Havner—said, "Too many church members have been starched and ironed, but they've never been washed; they have never come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord."

And the study tonight will help us in a threefold way. Number one: It will give us a word of comfort. Number two: It will give us a word of warning. Number three: It will give us a word of instruction. Now it will be a word of comfort, because many people are

confused and bewildered when they see so much hypocrisy, so many false cults, so much that parades under the banner of Christendom that is not real and genuine, and they think that perhaps the whole thing has gone wrong. For them, there is comfort. There will also be a word of warning, for there are many tonight who are not true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, who perhaps think that they are saved, and they are lost. And they need to be warned; they need to be brought to a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And the third word is a word of instruction to tell us how to deal with these people, how to think about these people who are counterfeit Christians.

Now, let's look at the parable itself. Remember there are seven parables. And what is a parable? A parable is an earthly story that has a heavenly meaning. The Lord would tell a story, just a plain story; and then the Lord would give us a very special meaning, a double application—the natural story, and then the hidden meaning. Now sometimes people have the idea that parables are given to reveal. And that is true, but that's not all of the truth. These parables were not only given to reveal; they were given to conceal. This is the first time that Jesus spoke in parables, and this is the time when rebellion against Him was at its zenith. They have accused Him of having a devil, and Jesus had to warn them about an unpardonable sin; and then He began to speak with parables, because He said, "To those who have hungry hearts, unto you it is given to know. Unto them it is not given. To him that hath shall be given, and to him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath" (Matthew 13:11–12).

And so Jesus now gives these seven parables. We talked about one last Sunday night. Tonight now, the second parable, and it is the parable of the wheat and the tares, and I begin now in verse 24. Let's read together, beginning in verse 24: *"Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went His way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, there appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn"* (Matthew 13:24–30).

Now that is the story. The story is simply that a man has planted wheat in a field, an enemy came while the husbandman or the farmer was asleep, and he sowed weed seed that's called here *tares*. The scientific name, horticultural name, is darnel, and it is

a crop of weeds that look at first very similar to wheat—as a matter of fact, very hard to discern the wheat from the tares. And the enemy knew this, so he came and sowed in the field these tares.

And let's look now at the various elements. There are seven elements in here in this parable that we need to identify. And let's see what they are.

### **A. The Sower Is Jesus**

The man who does the sowing is Jesus Christ Himself. Look, if you will, in verse 37 as the Lord begins to unfold this: *“He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man”* (Matthew 13:37). May I remind you again that *the Son of man* is a term that Jesus Christ used frequently to describe Himself, so the One doing the sowing in the field is Jesus Christ Himself—verse 37.

### **B. The Seed Are True Believers**

Now the seed that He sows are true believers. Now I want to pause right here and say parenthetically, but very importantly, do not confuse the seed in this parable with the parable we just studied last Sunday night. In the parable of the sower, the first parable, the seed is the Word of God. In this parable the seed are true believers. And if you don't understand that, you may get confused. In the first parable, the soil was the hearts of men; in this parable, the soil is the world. And so our Lord is sowing seed that is true believers all over the world; everywhere He's putting His believers.

Now while the Lord is planting true believers, we're going to find out that the enemy is planting false believers. Now there are true believers that are called the seed. For example, in Genesis chapter 3, verse 15, right in the front door of the Bible, the Lord said to Satan in judgment, *“And I will put enmity...”*—that is, to Satan, the serpent—*“I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed”* (Genesis 3:15). So there's the seed of the woman, the good seed; there's the seed of the serpent. And so the good seed is what the Lord Jesus Christ plants in the world. There's going to be in this world in which we live a constant warfare between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent.

### **C. The Field Is the World**

All right, the sower is the Son of man, the Lord Jesus; the seed, true believers, those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord, those who are truly twice born. The third element is the field. The field is the world. Look, if you will, in verse 38: *“The field is the world”* (Matthew 13:38). We don't have to guess about that. We're not talking about the church now; we're talking about the world in general. In this world there are saved people and there are unsaved people, but there are some



unsaved people who appear to be saved people; there are counterfeit Christians in the world.

#### **D. The Enemy Is the Devil**

Now the enemy who has done the sowing of these false Christians alongside the true believers is the devil himself. The enemy is Satan. Notice in verse 39: *“The enemy that sowed them is the devil”* (Matthew 13:39). Now we don’t have to guess about that—very clear.

#### **E. The Tares Are the Children of the Devil**

Now the tares, therefore, are the children of the devil. Notice the enemy that sowed them is the devil, and the tares are the children of the devil. Look in verse 38: *“The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one”* (Matthew 13:38). Now sometimes people will talk to you about the universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man. We may be brothers in our humanity, but we’re not spiritual brothers, and not everybody is a child of God. Jesus said to the Pharisees, the counterfeit believers of His day, “You are of your father, the devil” (John 8:44). And so it makes it very clear. The Lord Jesus said these tares are the children of the devil. And so, today, you know that we are thought of as if we’re bigoted or somehow even un-American if we just don’t put our arms around everybody else and say, “Well, we’re all headed to the same place, and your religion is just as good as mine.”

#### **F. The Reapers Are the Angels**

All right now, the reapers that are going to reap the harvest are the angels. Notice in verse 39 He says, *“The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels”* (Matthew 13:39).

#### **G. The Time of the Reaping Is the End of the Age**

And when will the reaping be done? At the end of the age. That’s the seventh element: the time of the reaping. Verse 40: *“As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world”* (Matthew 13:40). Now that gives you a clue that these seven parables that our Lord gave span the entire history of the Christian church, because the One who sows the seed is the Lord Jesus Christ. He began His ministry sowing good seed, and it goes all the way, these seven parables, to the end of the age, so this is all-encompassing. Here our Lord is unfolding the mystery of history—religious history. These are seven sacred secrets, strange mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.

Now we’re going to look at the tares tonight under three simple headings, very easy

for you to remember, because they sound alike. We're going to talk about the sowing of the tares, the growing of the tares, and the knowing of the tares. You can remember that: the sowing of the tares, the growing of the tares, and the knowing of the tares.

## I. The Sowing of the Tares

Now, let's think a little bit about the sowing of the tares. And look in verse 39: "*The enemy that sowed them is the devil*" (Matthew 13:39). Who did it? The devil did it. It is the work of Satan. Satan is a counterfeiter; he is a pervert; he is the one, the enemy who has done this. Now, let me make it abundantly clear, I hope, that the devil, therefore, is not opposed to religion. Religion is his chief tool; it is his stock and trade. Satan is in religion up to his ears.

Who did it? The devil. Why did he do it? Well, this same verse says, "*An enemy hath done this*" (Matthew 13:28). Verse 39: "*The enemy that sowed them is the devil.*" Tyndale translates this, "An envious person has done this." Now, why would the devil do that? Do you think the devil is interested in weeds? No. Do you think the devil is interested in wheat? No. What the devil is truly interested in is not weeds, or wheat, but worship. The devil wants worship. He wants false believers. He is a counterfeiter. And let me say this about the devil, who is the chief counterfeiter of religion: he is a good one, and the best counterfeit seems most like the real; the more like the real it seems, the better the counterfeit. That's the reason our Lord, the master teacher that He was, chose this parable, because wheat and tares, especially at the first, look so much alike.

Let me point out five false things that are in the world today, and you need to look out for them. This is the work of Satan.

### A. A False Jesus

Did you know there is a false Jesus? Now if somebody comes to you and says, "Oh, we believe in Jesus"—a Jehovah's Witness or a Mormon might say, "Hey, we believe in Jesus"—you find out which Jesus they believe in; you find out if they believe in the true Jesus. Put this verse down in your margin—2 Corinthians 11 and verse 4: "*For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached,*"—"another Jesus, whom we have not preached"—"or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him" (2 Corinthians 11:4). He's saying, "You're so gullible, you may accept him." You may say, "Well, God bless you, brother." "Oh, Pastor Rogers, they were so wonderful, and I asked them if they believed in Jesus, and they said yes." Friend, there are demons that bear the name Jesus; even demons will bear the name of Jesus. And so there is a false Jesus.

## B. A False Spirit

Second Corinthians 11, verse 4—there is a false Spirit. Second Corinthians 11 and verse 4: *“For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit...”* (2 Corinthians 11:4). Somebody says, “Oh, I know it’s real, because I had a spiritual experience.” You may have had an encounter with the devil. The Bible says, *“Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits”—test the spirits—“whether they are of God”* (1 John 4:1).

## C. False Ministers

And if there’s a false Jesus, and a false Spirit, there are also false ministers. Second Corinthians 11, verses 13 through 15—Paul is describing these, and listen to him: *“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.”* That is, they haven’t been called; they have appointed themselves. *“And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works”* (2 Corinthians 11:13–15). And *when you look for the devil, never fail to look in the pulpit.*

## D. False Brothers

Satan has a false Jesus. Satan has a false Spirit. Satan has false ministers. And what does this false Jesus, and this false Spirit, and these false ministers, what do they produce? False brothers. Second Corinthians 11 and verse 26—Paul talks about the things that he endured, the suffering that he endured, and he says, in 2 Corinthians 11, verse 26, *“In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea,”*—and then now, listen to this—*“in perils among false brethren”* (2 Corinthians 11:26). Paul said, “On top of all of this—the elements, the heathen, the difficulties—I’m having to contend with counterfeit Christians, false brothers.”

## E. A False Gospel

A false Jesus. A false Spirit. False ministers. False brethren. And they have a false gospel. Galatians 1, beginning in verse 6—Paul said, *“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another;”*—what he’s saying is, “It’s another gospel, but it’s not truly the gospel. There’s only one true gospel, but it is not another”—*“but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ”* (Galatians 1:6–7). Learn this about the devil: he is a pervert. Satan is a pervert. And the thing that he wants to pervert more than anything else is the gospel of Christ. And Paul says, *“But though we, or an angel from*

*heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed”* (Galatians 1:8–9). I’ve told you before that word literally means, “let him be condemned; let him be damned.”

Now these false apostles with their false gospel may seem to do some good. They may do some good: they may clothe the naked, they may house the homeless, they may feed the hungry, they may be against abortion, they may be doing this or they may be doing that. But I want to tell you something: a counterfeit bill can do a lot of good. It can buy clothes. It can buy groceries. It can buy gasoline. But, friend, it will not pass the bank examiner. And a false Christian may do this, and this, and everybody will say, “Look what he’s doing! Look how good it is!” But there’s coming a day when he’s going to face the examination of the Lord Jesus Christ. *“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven”* (Matthew 7:21).

Now, don’t you let some counterfeit Christian keep you out of heaven. And don’t you ever let anybody use a hypocrite as an argument against Christianity. A hypocrite is not an argument against Christianity; a hypocrite is a wonderful argument in favor of Christianity. Now, why? Well, men don’t counterfeit gum wrappers; they counterfeit what? Fifty-dollar bills, a hundred-dollar bill. Why? A hundred-dollar bill is worth something—about twenty dollars—so they counterfeit money. They don’t counterfeit that which is worthless; they counterfeit that which is worthwhile. And every counterfeit Christian, every false Christian that you see, is a testimony to the good, the worth, the reality, of the real. Don’t you understand that? And so, in a backward way, it’s sort of a testimony.

And another thing: Don’t you say, “Well, I don’t want to be a Christian because of hypocrites.” How foolish! How many of you eat bread? Let me see your hand. Sometime you eat bread made of wheat—wheat bread. My wife said, “Tell them whole wheat, Adrian.” All right, you eat bread. All right, would you say, “Well, because there are some tares in the world, I’m not going to eat any more bread”? Of course not! It would be just as foolish to say, “Well, because there are some hypocritical Christians, I’m not going to go to church; I’m not going to serve the Lord.” Every now and then, somebody says, “Oh, there are some hypocrites in your church.” I say, “Do tell.” Hey, folks, one of the twelve apostles was a hypocrite. We bought a dozen eggs: one of them was a hypocrite.

Now, don’t be dismayed. Hypocrites, counterfeit Christians, a false Jesus, a false Spirit, false apostles and ministers, false brethren, and a false gospel have not taken God by surprise. That’s the whole point. These things don’t prove what we believe not

to be true; they're proof that what we believe is true, because men are counterfeiting that which is worthwhile, and also because the Bible says that's exactly what will be—not just was, but will be to the end of the age.

Now, when did he do this? When did the enemy do this? Look, if you will, in verse 25, and find out when the enemy did this. The Bible says, *“But while men slept, [the] enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat”* (Matthew 13:25). And it happens because those of us who are a part of that kingdom of the redeemed sometimes are asleep. God have mercy on us. *“While men slept.”* First Corinthians chapter 15, verse 34, says, *“Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame”* (1 Corinthians 15:34). There are those who are being led astray, and the reason they're being led astray is because we have not been awake to righteousness, and some have not the knowledge of God. *Too many sermons are like a lullaby to put people to sleep rather than an alarm clock to wake them up.* And it could be that some of your loved ones are going to be the devil's tares, because of your dullness and your drowsiness. We need to sound an alarm.

I got a letter a few days ago from a man asking my forgiveness. That man said, “I heard you preach, and you said that the Worldwide Church of God was a cult.” He said, “I was so angry at you,” he said, “because I was a member of the Worldwide Church of God. And,” he said, “lo and behold, I have understood now that the Worldwide Church of God was a cult, and I just want to thank you for being true to the Word of God.” And, by the way, there's something happening in that cult. They are now turning. It's an amazing thing, one of the great victories of our age. They're not there yet, all of the way, but they're coming; they're now believing in the Trinity; they're now believing in salvation by grace and many wonderful things. But the man said, “Thank you”—“Thank you”—said, “I had no right to be angry at you. You were telling me the truth.”

The Apostle Paul said, *“Am I therefore...your enemy, because I tell you the truth?”* (Galatians 4:16). Sometimes we're out to win popularity contests, and the enemy sows the tares among the wheat, because men are asleep; they don't sound the alarm as we should sound the alarm. So the first thing: the sowing of the tares—*“An enemy”*—an envious person—*“hath done this”* (Matthew 13:28).

## II. The Growing of the Tares

Now, here's the second thing I want you to notice: not only the sowing of the tares, but the growing of the tares. Begin now in verse 28, and look at this thirteenth chapter now and verse 28: *“He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay;”*—that's old English for “no”—*“lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.*

*Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn” (Matthew 13:28–30).*

Now our job today is not killing or rooting out weeds. Every now and then, somebody wants to go on a crusade against false religions. That is not our job. We can warn people, we can preach the truth, but it is not our job; it is not our assignment to try to root out or to stamp out false religion. If we do, we’ll do more harm than good. When you try to stamp out a fire, all you do is scatter the embers. And I want to say to you—listen very carefully: Never, *never, never join a* movement *to* persecute *someone because of their* faith! Let me say that again: Never, never, never join a movement to persecute somebody because of their faith! You’re to preach the truth. You’re to stand for the truth. But these people are accountable to God. God is the One who will judge them, not you. And if you try, you do far more damage than you will do good. And you may just root out some wheat while you’re trying to root out some tares.

I was at a Southern Baptist Convention one time, and some young preacher boys were all hot under the collar about some liberalism in the Southern Baptist Convention, and came up to Dr. Gray Allison, the immediate past president of Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary. I was standing there in the group, and they looked at Dr. Allison, and they said, “Do you believe that *da-da-da-da-da* is saved?”—talking about somebody. I looked at Dr. Allison—I wondered what he would say. He said something that greatly blessed me and instructed me. He said, “The only one I know is saved is me. I’m not even sure about you”—“The only one I know is saved is me. I’m not sure about you.”

Now, folks, don’t you put yourself up to begin to root out the weeds. Now he’s not talking here about discipline in the church. Every church is to exercise discipline. The discipline in the church is not primarily to root out and remove but to reclaim and restore. Sometimes people have to be removed from a local church fellowship. He’s not talking about that: you missed the parable. The parable here is wheat and weeds in the world. The field is the world. Our job is to preach the glorious gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I’ll tell you something else, however, though. While it’s not our job to go out and to persecute other people and start rooting out weeds, you’d better be careful you don’t spend your money to fertilize weeds. You’d better make up your mind that you’re going to put your money behind good Bible-believing, Christ-honoring work. I’m amazed at what some people will put their money into. They don’t know, they have no idea, that what they’re doing is subsidizing and underwriting the devil’s enterprise. Don’t fertilize weeds.

That’s one of the reasons why it’s always good just to do your giving through the

local church. If you think I'm being selfish about that, I'm not. Joyce and I give outside the bounds of our church also, but we do our major giving through this church. You know, "Do your giving when you're living, then you're knowing where it's going," and, "Do your giving where you're living, then you're knowing where it's going." Be a part of something that you know is real. Don't fertilize weeds.

### III. The Knowing of the Weeds

But there's the sowing of the weeds. There's the growing of the weeds. The Lord said, "Just let both grow together until the harvest." Now, here's the last thing: the knowing of the weeds. There's coming a time when these weeds and this wheat are going to be discerned, beginning in verse 40 of this same chapter. Look again: "*As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear*" (Matthew 13:40–43).

Now, what does this tell us? This tells us that a harvest time is coming. Why does God tolerate tares? Why doesn't God root them out right now? I'll tell you why: because the tares are not fully ripe—neither the wheat nor the tares are ripe—until the end of the age. You say, "Well, some of these people have been dead for a long time." They're still not ripe. Let me give you a verse to put in your margin—Revelation 14, verses 14 and 15. John, the writer of the Apocalypse of the Revelation, John, the beloved Apostle John, has given a vision of the Final Judgment, and this is what he saw: "*And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.*" You know what a sickle is? That's what you reap wheat with, and tares. "*And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap; for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe*" (Revelation 14:14–15).

You see, what does he mean by that? Well, a man's harvest doesn't come when he dies. That harvest goes on and on and on. Let's take a man like Hugh Hefner, who founded the *Playboy* empire, or the man who founded the *Hustler* magazine business, or any of these people like this. You think that I hate them? I don't. I pity them. I fear for them. But, you see, they may live high, wide, and handsome; they may flaunt decency, morality—God alone knows how many homes have been blasted, how much disease has been spread, how many babies have been murdered by unwanted pregnancies, how many lives of little children have been warped and twisted, how many minds have

been perverted, how much dirt and filth has come out of the evil recesses, the murky depths of that man's heart—but soon—and he's getting to be a senior citizen—soon he'll die. But his influence will go on and on and on and on. He will corrupt somebody, who will corrupt somebody, who will corrupt somebody, who will corrupt somebody, who will corrupt somebody, who will corrupt somebody. It won't be over until the end of the age, till God puts the last period upon the last sentence upon the last paragraph, the last page, the last book, the last volume of history. When it is over, then God gathers the evidence.

The same thing is true with a righteous person. Friend, your influence for good, for God, will go on and on and on and on after you die. As God said of Abel, *"He being dead yet speaketh"* (Hebrews 11:4). And I hope that when I'm dead and gone, if Jesus doesn't come first, that my influence will go on and on and on and on until the ripples of this ministry will touch the shores of eternity. Then the harvest is ripe—then the harvest is ripe. That's why God doesn't judge at this time, because it's too early to judge. But here's the point of this parable: Don't let the slowness of God's judgment deceive you. You may be a fine-looking tare: the judgment is coming.

Notice that the tares are gathered into bundles to be burned. That's interesting to me. I've noticed that in the world the unsaved people seem to be gathering together; they're getting amalgamated; they're all joining; they're all merging; they're all coming together; they seem to be bundling themselves up for the burning. This unity is not necessarily something that's going to be a great blessing to them.

## Conclusion

Well, it's time to wrap this up. Let me just say three things in conclusion, all right? We've talked to you about the sowing, the growing, and the knowing of the tares. Let me make three applications very quickly.

### A. Make Certain of Your Salvation

Application number one: Please, for God's sake, for your sake, make certain of your salvation. If there is a false Jesus, if there is a false Spirit, if there are false brethren, and false ministers, and a false gospel, has the devil played a trick on you? He'd just as soon—rather, really—send you to hell from the pew than from the gutter. Let me give you a verse—2 Corinthians 13:5: *"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves."*

You say, "Well, I know I'm saved, because my Sunday School teacher told me I was; my mom told me I was; my dad told me I was; my pastor told me I was." Friend, you examine yourself; prove your own faith. Do you have a Bible reason, if you were to



stand before God right now, to say that you know that you're saved? *"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"* (2 Corinthians 13:5–6). I didn't ask, do you know the plan of salvation? Do you know the man of salvation? Is Jesus Christ in you?

Somebody wrote these words:

*Ye call me Light and see me not.  
Ye call me Way and walk me not.  
Ye call me Wise and follow me not.  
Ye call me Fair and love me not.  
Ye call me Rich and ask me not.  
Ye call me Eternal and seek me not.  
Ye call me Gracious and trust me not.  
Ye call me Just and fear me not.  
If I condemn you, blame me not.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

*"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith."* That's the first thing.

### **B. Don't Let a Counterfeit Christian Keep You out of Heaven**

The second thing: If you've never yet given your heart to Jesus Christ, I beg you, don't let a counterfeit Christian keep you out of heaven. Don't hide behind some hypocrite. Don't think that the true is not real because the false is there.

### **C. If You Are a Counterfeit Christian, Repent and Receive Christ**

And number three: If you are a counterfeit Christian, I beg you in the name of Jesus, repent of that and receive Christ, Him only, as your Lord and Savior.

# The Case of the Counterfeit Christian

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: June 1, 1980**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 13:24–42**

*“Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.”*

MATTHEW 13:24–25

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## Introduction

Now, take your Bibles, please, and turn to Matthew chapter 13: the second in a series of messages on the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. Jesus gave seven parables, and these are things, mysteries, that we need to understand. A mystery, in the Bible, is a truth that you cannot know apart from divine revelation. In the Bible, a mystery is a truth that you cannot comprehend with your mind alone, something you could not learn by observation or by human study. You would have to understand it by divine revelation.

And the mystery that we're going to be talking about today is "The Case of the Counterfeit Christian." And I want to read to you from Matthew chapter 13, the second of these parables, beginning in verse 24: *"Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn"* (Matthew 13:24–30).

Now, as I said earlier, not everybody who is talking about heaven is going to heaven, according to the old spiritual—and it is certainly true. Not everyone who claims to be a Christian is a Christian. Dr. Vance Havner said, "Many church members have been starched and ironed, but they've never been washed." They have never truly been saved and born again by the Spirit of God.

Well, what about counterfeit Christians? And what is the truth that the Lord Jesus Christ is telling us in this parable that we call the parable of the wheat and the weeds, or the parable of the tares and the wheat? If you'll learn the truths that are here, you're going to find that there will be a truth to comfort you. You will find out that there will be a truth to warn you. You will find out that there will be a truth to instruct you. It will be a truth to comfort you, because when you see all of these false cults, and all of these unbelievers, and all of these people who are parading under the name of Christianity, who don't belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, you'll learn, as you study this parable, that God is still in control; and that will be a word of comfort to you. And, also, as you study this parable, you'll find out that there are some who pretend to be saved, and perhaps think they are saved, who are not. That will be a word to warn you to make absolutely certain that you know that you know that you belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. And then also there's going to be a word to instruct you; because, what should we do with these people who parade under the banner of Christianity, and who name the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, but are not truly his children? They are counterfeit Christians. There will be a word here to instruct us.

But now, let's just look at this parable from its normal sense, first of all, and just re-tell the story. It's a very simple story. Jesus tells of a farmer who went out to a farm. He was a wheat farmer, and he had wheat seed, and he sowed his field with wheat seed, and he did a good job. He was a good farmer. And then he went back home, and he

and his servants went to sleep; and while they were asleep, the enemy of this farmer came. And he had some seeds called *tares*—the modern name for that is *darnel*. It's a noxious weed that looks very much like wheat. As a matter of fact, when it first springs up, even an experienced farmer cannot tell the difference between a tare and wheat. The tares, the blade, the stalk, and everything looks so much like wheat or barley that even an experienced farmer could not tell the difference. And the enemy sowed these noxious weeds in the middle of the night.

And then the crop started to grow and grow and grow; and when it reached a certain point of maturity, then the difference was more obvious. And so the servants came to the farmer and said, "Look, I thought you had good seed." He said, "I did." Well, where did all of the tares come from? "Oh," he said, "an enemy has done this." They said, "Well, do you want us to go therefore and pull up all the weeds?" He said, "No, don't do that. If you did, you'd root up some of my wheat also. Just let them all grow together until the harvest time, and when the harvest comes, we'll bundle these tares together and cast them in the fire to be burned, and I'll gather the wheat into my barn."

That's a very simple story, but it has a rich and a deep meaning. The disciples wanted the Lord Jesus to explain this parable, and so He does. Look, if you will, in verse 37: "*He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man*" (Matthew 13:37). So the farmer, again, is the picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. *Son of man* is a term that is used to describe Jesus Christ Himself. The man who sowed the seed is Christ.

Now, who are the good seed? Well, look, if you will, in verse 38: "*The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom*" (Matthew 13:38). And so the wheat represents children of God, children of the kingdom, those who have been born again, those who know the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.

Now, what is the field? Well, verse 38 tells us the field is the world. And that is, His believers are to be out in the world representing the Lord Jesus Christ. The field is the world.

Well, who is the enemy who did the dastardly deed of sowing the tares? Well, look in verse 39: "*The enemy that sowed them is the devil*" (Matthew 13:39). And so we're going to have some more to say about him, but already the parable is beginning to make more sense to us.

What do the tares represent? The weeds? Well, look in verse 38 again, the last part: "*The tares are the children of the wicked one*" (Matthew 13:38)—the children of the devil. You see, not everybody who lives in the world today is a child of God, not even all of the religious people. It was a religious crowd that crucified the Lord Jesus Christ. And Jesus said to the unsaved Pharisees, "You are of your father, the devil" (John 8:44). And so the tares represent the children of the wicked one.

Well, who are the reapers? Well, verse 39 tells us that the reapers are the angels—the last part of verse 39. So they're the ones that are going to harvest both the wheat and the tares.

And then, what is the harvest? Well, verse 40 tells us what the harvest is: “*As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world*” (Matthew 13:40). And that literally means, “at the end of the age.” And at the end of this age is going to be the harvest time.

Now those are just the basic truths. There is the parable as it's laid out before us. Now I want us to look at four truths today for our lesson from the Word of God. The first thing I want you to see is the sowing of the tares in the wheat. The second thing I want you to see: the similarity of the tares to the wheat. The third thing I want you to see is the survival of the tares with the wheat. And the fourth and final thing: the separation of the tares from the wheat.

## **I. The Sowing of the Tares in the Wheat**

Okay now, first of all, let's notice the sowing of the tares in the wheat. Why did all of this happen?

### **A. Who Did It?**

Who did it? In the first place, we know that it was the work of Satan. And it tells us something about how Satan works. Satan works by imitation. Satan works by counterfeiting. You see, Satan's burning ambition is to be like God. Martin Luther called Satan “God's ape.” That means he mimics the Word of God. We say, “Monkey see, monkey do.” Well, Satan has made a monkey of himself indeed by trying to imitate God. And so he is the chief counterfeiter. It is the work of the devil, as he is the false farmer who has sowed the tares in God's field.

And right away we learn something. Satan is not against religion. Satan uses religion. He is in religion up to his ears. And always remember that the worst kind of deception is religious deception. Satan here is counterfeiting the Word of Almighty God. And so, remember that it was Satan who did this.

### **B. Why Did He Do It?**

Now, why did he do this? Why did he do this? Here in the parable it says, “*An enemy hath done this.*” Tyndale translates it this way: “An envious person hath done this.” And that is an apt and a good translation: “An envious person hath done this.” You see, what is Satan's motivation in it all? Satan is not all that interested in weeds or wheat. He's envious of God. And he's trying to hurt the work of God, because he's envious of God. He desires no crop at all. All he is working for is to somehow try to pull God from His throne as though that he might exalt himself. It is the work of an enemy. And you might

as well learn this: that Satan's real battle is not with you, whether you are weeds or wheat. His real battle is with God. And he will simply use you as a pawn in his war against God. He cannot get directly at God because God is God. But evil persons have always known if you can't hurt someone, hurt someone that someone loves, and you've hurt that one anyway.

### C. When Did He Do It?

Who did it? The devil. Why did he do it? Envy against God. When did he do it? Verse 25 tells us, *"But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat."* *Too many* sermons *are like* lullabies *to put people to* sleep *rather than like* reveilles *to wake them up.* I pray God that this sermon today will be God's alarm clock to scare the daylights into you. Listen, friend. We need to wake up. You know what the Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 34? *"Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame"* (1 Corinthians 15:34). Because some of us are asleep the devil is sowing tares in God's field. *"Some have not the knowledge of God,"* because we're asleep. Some of the members of your family, and some of your neighbors, and some in your Sunday School class, and some who work in your office are going to die and go to hell, because we are asleep. It was done while men sleep. Satan never sleeps.

## II. The Similarity of the Tares to the Wheat

Now there is the sowing of the tares in the wheat. Secondly, I want you to notice the similarity of the tares to the wheat. Now, remember what we've said. The darnel looks very much like wheat, so much that even an experienced farmer could not tell the difference by casual observation. The Bible says about the devil that he is so clever that he would deceive the very elect, if it were possible (Matthew 24:24).

Now, remember that the plan of Satan is to counterfeit the work of God, to imitate the work of God, and thereby to hurt and discredit the work of God. And the best counterfeit looks the most like the original. I want you to put your bookmark there in Matthew 13 and turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 11 for just a moment and I want to show you something astounding. Second Corinthians chapter 11—turn to it because we'll be there for just a moment—2 Corinthians chapter 11—and I want you to see what the counterfeiter has done.

### A. There Is a Counterfeit Jesus

It may surprise you to know that the devil has a counterfeit Jesus. Did you know that? Look, if you will, in 2 Corinthians chapter 11 and verse 4: *"For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached..."* (2 Corinthians 11:4). Notice that phrase. It's one of the most terrifying in all of the Bible: *"another Jesus."*

Did you know that there are some who will come to your doorsteps under the guise of religion? “Adrian,” you say, “now, wait a minute.” “I want to find out who you are and what you are. Tell me, do you believe in Jesus Christ?” “Oh, yes,” he’ll say, “I believe in Jesus Christ.” “Well, what do you believe about Jesus Christ?” “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God,” is what he’ll tell you. But when you get beneath the surface, when you pull away the veil of darkness, when you with the Word of God measure the beliefs of these people by the Word of God, you’ll find out that the Jesus that they’re preaching is not the Jesus of the Bible.

Did you know that there are demon spirits who have the name of Jesus, demon spirits who have been so deceptive that they have taken the name Jesus? I want to tell you that the master counterfeiter—the master counterfeiter—has people going up and down the land who are preaching Jesus, who are not preaching Jesus, but they’re preaching another Jesus, a counterfeit Jesus; and some people do not have enough of the Word of God in their mind, in their heart, to be able to discern between the two.

### **B. There Is a Counterfeit Spirit**

Not only is there a counterfeit Christ; there is a counterfeit spirit. Look again in 2 Corinthians chapter 11, verse 4. Look: *“If he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received”* (2 Corinthians 11:4). There is a counterfeit spirit. You say, “Oh, I must be a Christian, because I’ve had a spiritual experience.” A spiritual experience and making contact with the supernatural does not mean necessarily that you’re a Christian. The Bible says, *“Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false [spirits] are gone out in to the world”* (1 John 4:1). And there is one false spirit who pretends to be the Holy Spirit.

Now you’re seeing, dear friend, when you’re dealing with the devil, you’re not just dealing with something easily understood. He is a deceptive person, and the Bible speaks of him *“with all deceivableness of unrighteousness”* (2 Thessalonians 2:10). The tares look so very much like the wheat.

### **C. There Are Counterfeit Ministers**

And not only is there a counterfeit Christ, not only is there a counterfeit spirit; there are also counterfeit ministers. Look, if you will, please, also in chapter 11, verse 13. Continue to read the words and heed the words of the Apostle Paul. He speaks of some and he says, *“For such are false apostles,”*—that is, counterfeit apostles—*“deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.”* That is, they themselves say that they are apostles of Christ. *“And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.”* Don’t think that the devil is going to come wearing some long suit of red underwear with a forked tail and a pitchfork saying, “Boo! I am the devil.” That’s

not the way he's going to come. He's going to come primarily as an angel of light. And look in verse 15, if you will: *"Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works"* (2 Corinthians 11:13–15).

The devil has ministers. The devil has them in pulpits across America. And many people look at them and say, "There is a man of God and a minister of righteousness." And he is an agent of the devil. That's what Paul says. And *when you're looking for the devil, never fail to look in the pulpits of America.*

*One time I was preaching a sermon on the devil, and after I preached a little boy in the church—I think he was meaning to compliment me—said "Mr. Rogers, when you were up there preaching, I could see the devil just as plain."*

Well, let me tell you something, friend. The devil has occupied many a pulpit. It's no marvel. His ministers are transformed as ministers of righteousness.

#### **D. There Are Counterfeit Brethren**

Now, watch it. A counterfeit Christ, a counterfeit spirit, counterfeit ministers, and it goes on: there are going to be counterfeit brethren. Paul is talking about the things that he had endured as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I want you to notice, beginning in verse 24 of this same chapter, as he talks about the things that he had suffered as a servant of Christ: *"Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one."* He had thirty-nine lashes laid upon his back. It would have been enough to have killed even a strong man. *"Thrice was I beaten with rods,"*—that is, they took clubs and they clubbed him—*"once I was stoned,"*—how terrible that must have been! And they thought he was dead; they left him for dead—*"thrice I suffered shipwreck,"*—he'd been in three shipwrecks. He goes on—*"a night and a day have I been in the deep;"*—he had been pickled in the Mediterranean floating around like a bobbing cork there for at least twenty-four hours—*"in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, and perils of mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea,"*—but now, watch the climax—*"in perils among false brethren"* (2 Corinthians 11:24–26)—*"false brethren."* He's reaching the climax now. Of the terrible, horrible, things that he had to do and endure; and he's saying, "I know what it is to suffer, and I have suffered at the hands of some who claim to be Christians. But they're counterfeit brethren. They're not brethren at all. They are false brethren."

#### **E. There Is a False Gospel**

Pay attention now—listen. A false Christ, a false spirit, false ministers, and false brethren: the enemy sowing the tares among the wheat. Go to Galatians chapter 1 for a moment. Let me show you something here. You're in Corinthian—just turn right and you'll come to Galatians. All right, Galatians chapter 1. There's also a false gospel. A



man says he's preaching the gospel to you. He may not be preaching the gospel. Paul says, in Galatians chapter 1, verse 6, "*I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another;*"—that is, it only claims to be another. There is but one true gospel—"*but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.*" And then Paul says, "*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.*" And I don't mean to offend your sensibilities, but that could well be translated, "let him be damned," "let him be judged, condemned of God." "*As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed*" (Galatians 1:6–9). There is a false gospel.

Now what I'm talking about—and I hope you've caught the point—is the similarity of the tares to the wheat. There is a whole religious world out there sowed in the field called the world, and the people are not people of God. They don't know the Lord. They've never been born again. They are not true Christians. They are counterfeit Christians; they are tares among the wheat. Now they may do some seeming good. And I'm not saying that they themselves are not altruistically motivated or they don't do any good at all.

Take a counterfeit twenty-dollar bill. A counterfeit twenty-dollar bill can do some good. It can buy some milk and eggs. A counterfeit twenty-dollar bill can buy almost a tank of gasoline. A counterfeit twenty-dollar bill can do a lot of things, and it will pass here, and it will pass there, and do a lot of good/ But when it comes to the bank, the experienced bank teller will not let it pass there, and will not accept it, but reject it. And a counterfeit Christian may do some good deeds here, and do some other things there, and do a lot of things/ But when it comes to the judgment bar of God, God, like that, will see he's not the real thing.

You see, I'm not saying that counterfeit Christians don't do any good, or there's not some truth to them, or that they don't look good. I'm not saying that. I am saying, however, that they still are counterfeit. But I want to tell you something. There is a great blessing here if you if look at it for a moment. Counterfeit Christians do not disprove Christianity. Counterfeit Christians are one of the greatest confirmations of Christianity, for two reasons.

### **1. The Counterfeit Christian Is a Confirmation of the Worthwhileness of Christianity**

Number one: Every counterfeit proves the worthwhileness and the validity of the real article. Men do not counterfeit gum wrappers; they counterfeit twenty-dollar bills. Why? Because twenty's are worth something—about eight dollars. That's why they counterfeit twenty-dollar bills: because they're worth something. And every counterfeit Christian that you see is proof positive of the worthwhileness and the validity and the reality of

Christianity.

Now if you were to find a counterfeit bill, you wouldn't go to the bank, take all of the rest of the money out of the bank, would you? Would you say, "I'm not going to have any more to do with money," because some money is counterfeit? No, you would know the very fact that some money is counterfeit is proof positive of the worthwhileness of your own money. Every hypocrite, every counterfeit Christian, is a confirmation, a wonderful confirmation, of real, true, biblical Christianity.

Suppose a farmer finds some tares in his field. It would be stupid for him to say, "Would you look at those hypocrites in my field! I'll never have anything to do with wheat again!" But some people find hypocrites in the world and in the church, and they say, "Look at that! I'll never have any more to do with Christ and the church again!" That, my friend, is foolish thinking.

## **2. The Counterfeit Christian Is a Confirmation of the Inspiration of the Word of God**

I'll tell you something else. Not only is the counterfeit Christian a confirmation of the worthwhileness of Christianity; but it is also a confirmation of the inspiration of the Word of God. Now sometimes people have the idea that if everybody believed just alike, and if all people who professed the name of Christ were true Christians, that would confirm the Bible. Friend, if that happened, it would prove the Bible is not the inspired Word of God; because Jesus said there would be tares and wheat right to the end of the age. And the Bible says, "In the last days men shall depart from the faith and give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils" (1 Timothy 4:1).

Now if you did not find false believers, false prophets, false apostles, false cults, and counterfeit Christians—if you did not find them—it would be proof positive that this book did not come from God. You see, there is a confirming truth in this. I'm so glad that Jesus, in His marvelous, matchless wisdom, laid down for us here in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew this case of the counterfeit Christian, so that those of us who will come down through the ages and will be faced with these things need not panic and need not despair. We can say, "Yes, the Savior told us about that. It's the work of the enemy, and we understand it." But there is a confirmation, and there is a truth there that we need not to pass over very lightly.

## **III. The Survival of the Tares with the Wheat**

Now the third thing I want you to notice. Now we talked first about the sowing of the tares in the wheat. It's the work of the enemy, because he's envious of God. The second thing we talked about is the similarity of the tares to the wheat—but yet in a very real way, they confirmed the Word of God to us. Now the third thing I want you to understand—and the mystery deepens—is the survival—the survival—of the tares with

the wheat.

Why are the tares allowed to survive? Why didn't the farmer just say, "All right, get your hoe, get your sickle, and go out there and cut them down and burn them up"? He didn't say that. Look in Matthew chapter 13 and verse 28 again—look at it: *"He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?"* That is, the tares. *"But he said, Nay;"*—that is, no—*"lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest"* (Matthew 13:28–30). The survival—the survival—of the tares with the wheat.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, I want to make something here very clear to us. How do we deal with counterfeit Christians? How do we deal with false cults? Our job is not to kill weeds. Get that in your heart and in your mind. Crusades to root out false religion are not in the will of God. They do more harm than good. And you would make a tragic blunder. And never become a part of a movement that persecutes someone because of his faith. They are accountable to God and not to you. Never join a civil movement or an ecclesiastical movement that exists to root out unbelievers. It is unscriptural. It is unchristian, it is unwise, and it is also counterproductive. You would make some tremendous blunders.

I was at a convention one time, Southern Baptist Convention, and a young man came up; he was a young preacher. And some others of us were standing in the circle, and Dr. Gray Allison, who is the president of the Mid-America Baptist Seminary, was there. And this young preacher was disturbed about a certain man, some things he'd said or written. And he came into this little circle, and he looked Dr. Allison in the face, and he said, "Dr. Allison, do you think that man is saved?" I'll never forget what Dr. Allison said to him. Dr. Allison said, "I don't even know if you're saved." He said, "The only one I know is saved is me."

Now that's pretty good. The only one I know is saved is me. I don't know whether Tommy Lane is saved. I believe he is. But I don't know he is. He thinks I'm saved. He believes I'm saved. But he doesn't know I'm saved. Do you know who knows I'm saved? Me and Jesus: that's all. "What man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of the man that's in him?" (1 Corinthians 2:11). And, friend, were you to go in with your sickle and start to harvest the wheat from the tares, were you to go in with your hoe and start to root up the wheat from the tares, you would make some terrible blunders. And, besides that, even if you were fighting error, when you tried to stamp out the fire, you'd scatter the embers.

Now here the Lord is not talking about church discipline. He's not saying there's not to be discipline in the church. There is. But discipline is not a matter of rooting out. Discipline in the church is a matter of restoring and bringing in. Here he's talking about a crusade that goes to root out evil. How careful we must be! And not just any kind of evil:

spiritual evil. Now this doesn't mean, on the other hand, that we have to pay to fertilize weeds. It doesn't mean that either. But it does mean, dear friend, that they are answerable to God, and not to us.

#### **IV. The Separation of the Tares from the Wheat**

Now the last thing I want you to see: I want you to see the separation of the tares from the wheat; because the Lord is coming to the harvest time. Notice again in chapter 13, Matthew 13, and I want to begin reading in verse 30: *“Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn”* (Matthew 13:30). And then, notice in verse 40: *“As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world”—or the end of the age. “The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth”* (Matthew 13:40–42).

Why does God tolerate the tares? Why doesn't God burn them out? Why doesn't God zap them? Why does God tolerate a counterfeit Christianity? Why does God tolerate hypocrites? Why does God allow all of this to go on? Is it because he's powerless? No! It is because God has a divine plan, and God does not put the sickle in until the harvest is ripe.

Do you understand that? Not only the harvest of the wheat. The wheat is going to be harvested when it is ripe. But also the tares are going to be harvested when they are ripe. Turn to Revelation chapter 14, verse 14—Revelation 14, verse 14: *“And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe”* (Revelation 14:14–15)— *“the harvest of the earth is ripe.”*

You see, the end of the age is the harvest. Why does God wait till the end of the age? He is waiting for the crop to ripen. There's a good crop that is ripening, and there is an evil crop that is ripening, and, dear friend, you could not be rewarded right now, because your reward is not yet ready, because your crop is not yet ripe.

**Elmer Bailey has served here in this church twenty years, and he has done inestimable good among us. But, friends, we couldn't balance the ledger now, because he has blessed lives that will bless lives that will bless lives that will bless lives that will bless lives that will bless lives.**

Don't you see that you'll have to come to the end of the age for that harvest to ripen? And what about the ungodly? What about the false teachings? What about the blind

leader of the blind? What about the false religionists? What about that man who does not stand on the Word of God? What about the children of the wicked one? They have cursed people who will curse people who will curse people who will curse people who will curse people. They can't receive their reward yet. The harvest is not yet ripe. There's coming a time when God Almighty will place that final period upon that final sentence upon that final paragraph upon that final chapter of history and the harvest will be reaped, because the iniquity will be full (Genesis 15:16).

And so the Lord lets both grow side by side. If you're an unsaved person, whether you are a counterfeit Christian or an open infidel, let me tell you something. Don't take refuge in the fact that judgment has not yet come. It's not harvest time—it's not harvest time. You may be a proud-looking tare. You may be so fine. You may be mingled in among the wheat today. And there's not a one of us experienced enough to say, "There's a tare, there's the wheat; there are the tares, there's the wheat." But God knows. I pray God that you know whether you've been born again or not.

And you may say, "Well, I'm getting along fine. Those people sang a hymn. I sang a hymn. Those people said, 'Amen.' I said, 'Amen.' I mingle with them." But there's coming a separation time when the harvest will be ripe. It's not harvest time yet. But God does have His harvest time. You may deceive those who plant, you may deceive those who water, you may deceive those who fertilize, but you will not fool God's reapers. Both are growing together till the harvest.

Sometimes people ask me, "Brother Rogers, do you believe the world is getting better or worse?" And my answer is, "Yes, yes, it's getting better, because God's glorious wheat is ripening." I'm seeing things happening among Christians that I never dreamed I would see happen. I'm seeing people who love God, who are sacrificing, who understand this book, who are exercising spiritual gifts and doing things that are absolutely marvelous in these days. I thank God for it. The golden grain is maturing. The world is getting better. I see things happening that I cannot believe that are happening.

And the tares and the children of this wicked world are reaching maturity. Unspeakable, unmentionable, filth and degradation, and blasphemy—for even Jesus Christ is made the object of ridicule, where sodomy is made the subject of entertainment, for little babies are being murdered, and snail darters are being preserved. The crop is getting ripe.

Is the world getting worse? Yes. Is the world getting better? Yes. Thank God for a book like the Bible. Without the Bible, you wouldn't be able to understand all of this. But I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, that God has told us, as the Lord has looked down through the corridors of time, and He gave us this parable of the weeds and the wheat, and the case of the counterfeit Christians. He has told us there is coming a time

where there will be the separation of the tares from the wheat.

## Conclusion

Now, having said these things, may I make three pleas by way of conclusion—very brief, three words of admonition.

Number one: Make absolutely certain that you are saved—make absolutely certain that you are saved. Make absolutely certain that you are not a counterfeit Christian. *The devil had just as soon send you to hell from the pew as he had the gutter.* Do you know that you are saved? *Does God's Spirit bear witness with your spirit that you're a child of God?* The Bible says, in 2 Corinthians chapter 13, that a man is to examine himself whether he is in the faith (2 Corinthians 13:5). I'm not trying to get you to doubt your salvation. If you're truly saved, I don't think I could make you doubt it. But what I'm trying to say is, dear friend, do you know that you've been born again?

*Ye call me Master and obey me not,  
Ye call me Light and see me not,  
Ye call me Way and walk not,  
Ye call me Life and desire me not,  
Ye call me Wise and follow me not,  
Ye call me Fair and love me not,  
Ye call me Rich and ask me not,  
Ye call me Eternal and seek me not,  
Ye call me Gracious and trust me not,*

...

*Ye call me Just and fear me not;  
If I condemn you, blame me not.*

—ENGRAVED ON THE CATHEDRAL OF LÜBECK, GERMANY

Do you know that you are saved?

The second word of admonition: If you're not saved, don't let a counterfeit Christian keep you from going to heaven. Don't make the horrible mistake of saying, "I'm not going to have anything to do with wheat because of the weeds." That's the work of the enemy. And that's one of the reasons that he did it, is to confuse you and keep you from coming to the Lord Jesus. But *don't let a few hypocrites in the church cause you to spend eternity in hell with all of them.* Don't ever make the mistake of fastening your eyes upon the faults of someone for whom Jesus died rather than looking to Jesus. I'm not asking you to put faith in any man. I'm asking you to put faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who died in agony and blood for you upon the cross. And don't you let a counterfeit Christian keep you out of heaven.

The third admonition is this: that you may be a tare, but only God can make wheat out of tares—and He will, by repentance and faith. If you'll repent of your sin and trust Jesus, I don't care what you've been—religious or non-religious, counterfeit Christian or an open infidel, deceived or deceiver—I'll tell you this much: If you'll trust Jesus, He'll save you today. The same Lord who saved me will save you. And He'll do it

# The Mystery of the Mustard Seed

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** June 22, 1980

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 13:31–32

*“Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.”*

MATTHEW 13:31–32

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## Introduction

Take your Bibles, please now, and turn to Matthew chapter 13, as we continue in this series of Bible lessons that we have entitled “The Strange Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven.” And today the title of our message is “The Mystery of the Mustard Seed”— “The Mystery of the Mustard Seed.” Or if we want another title, we might say “The Devil’s Dirty Birds.” And you’ll understand why I say that in just a moment. Matthew chapter 13, and we begin reading in verse 31: *“Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof”* (Matthew 13:31–32).

Now, remember that in Matthew chapter 13 there are seven parables, and all of



these parables are called by the Lord Jesus Christ in this thirteenth chapter of Matthew “the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.” And a mystery is something in the Bible that you could not understand apart from divine revelation. It is something that with your human wit, wisdom, ingenuity, and learning you would never figure out. It is something that God must reveal to you in order for you to know it. And remember that a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning, and our Lord, through the use of parables, has unlocked some deep, deep mysteries, some things we need to understand. And when we understand these things, it makes it a lot easier for us to live in today’s world, because, folks, this is a confusing world in which we’re living.

For example, we ask ourselves the question, What’s wrong with the preacher; what’s wrong with the Bible; what’s wrong with the church—that people don’t get saved when they hear the message? Well, there may not be anything wrong with the preacher. Remember the parable of the sower. The seed is the Word of God—we’ve already talked about that—but some of it fell on stony ground, and some fell by the wayside, and some fell among the thorns. And there wasn’t anything wrong with the preacher, there wasn’t anything wrong with the message, but the problem was with the soil upon which the good seed fell. And that explains the question of an unconverted world.

And then we ask ourselves another question: Why are there so many hypocrites in the church? People are always asking questions about hypocrites. They say, “Well, I don’t want to be a Christian, because there are hypocrites in the church.” Do tell. Hypocrites in the church! Well, what do you know? Well, that doesn’t take us by surprise. I’m not saying that it’s not sad, because there are hypocrites in the church; but in the next parable Jesus gave the parable of the tares among the wheat, and He showed how that the devil sows tares among the wheat. The tares were weeds. And we talk about the mystery of counterfeit Christians.

But now there’s another problem, and this is the problem of what I call apostate Christianity. Friend, I’ll tell you, it is amazing the things that people believe today who parade under the banner of Christianity. As a matter of fact, you just let your mind run riot, get yourself a notebook, and write down whatever you want to believe and however you want to behave, and I can find you somewhere a church where you’ll fit in pretty well. It’s amazing. I mean, just let your mind run.

I’ll tell you, there are two things that I have been blessed with as I preach the gospel. Number one: I think it’s strange that some people will not believe the gospel. And another thing: I think, how strange what some people will believe; I mean, what they really will believe! You can take any new ism and give it a fancy name, and let people go out and preach, and, honest, folks, there are some folks who will believe it. It’s really amazing! And we see this great, wide panoply of churches and denominations that are absolutely far removed from this book. They are not preaching the Bible. They are not

honoring the Lord Jesus Christ. They are not under the blood of Christ. They are not filled with the Spirit. And yet there are thousands of people who will trudge Sunday to Sunday to these churches, come away with their heads fuller, their hearts emptier, and they're bound in the chains of a false gospel. Not only are they not helped by it, but they are literally hurt by it. And Jesus said they are twofold a child of hell because of it (Matthew 23:15).

Now, how did all of this happen—this false, apostate religion? I mean, if the Bible is true, how did all of this happen? Well, the mystery of the mustard seed will help us to understand it. So pay attention, because in this message, the mystery of the mustard seed, our Lord tells us about the apostasy that will be in the last days. And I believe we're living in the last days, as we think of the apostasy that's all around us.

Now in the mystery of the mustard seed there are three basic elements that stand out. First of all: the seed. Remember He says the kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed. And then He said it's planted in the ground, it grows to be an herb, and then becomes a tree. So the second thing: the tree. And then, thirdly, He says, "And the birds, the fowls of the air, come and roost in the branches—the birds." And so we're going to think under three headings. First of all, the seed. And as we think about the seed, I'm going to call that a strong declaration. And then we think just a little bit about the tree. And as we think about the tree, I'm going to call that a strange transformation. And then, thirdly, we'll think about the birds roosting in the branches, and we'll call that a Satanic habitation.

## **I. The Seed: A Strong Declaration**

All right, are you ready? First of all, let's just think of this strong declaration. Look again in verse 31: *"Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field."*

Now, already, we know what the seed represents. How do we know what the seed represents? Because in the other two parables we've already seen that the seed is the Word of God. The seed represents the Word of God. That much we already know. The man who is doing the sowing, we already know who He is, because the other parables have already told us the man represents the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of man, our Savior. He's the one doing the sowing of the seed. All right, so the seed is the Word of God, the gospel. The man is the Lord Jesus Christ himself. The field: we already know what the field is. The field is the world. All right, that much we've already learned in the other parables, in the parable of the sower.

### **A. The Strength of the Seed**

But now, let's look at this specific seed, and you'll see why we call it a strong

declaration. Why did the Lord say that the kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed? Because of the strength of this little seed. You see, mustard is strong. Mustard has bite. It has fire. It has pungency. And if you don't believe it, you go eat in the Chinese Restaurant I ate in last night, and get one of those egg rolls, and put some of that mustard on that egg roll, and take a big bite, and you will know what I'm talking about. Mustard is fiery. It is hot. It is pungent. It stings. It bites. It burns. It blisters—it blisters.

You know, back in the olden days, when people thought they had pneumonia, or some sort of epizootics, or whatever they had, they would—and some of you ladies may still do this—make a mustard plaster and put it on your chest. Now I don't know whether it cured pneumonia, but it will take the hide off. There's just power. You take that mustard seed and grind it up.

And what is our Lord saying when He's saying that the kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed? He's talking about the strength of the seed. It bites. It burns. It blisters. It has power. It has pungency about it.

This is not a bland message that we preach, ladies and gentlemen. You know, somebody said, "The problem is the blind leading the blind." I think the problem is the bland leading the bland. I think that we need to get back to the fiery proclamation of the Word of God and understand this is a zesty gospel that we preach. This is an exciting message that we preach. And the gospel of our Lord and Savior is a strong declaration.

### **B. The Size of the Seed**

But not only the strength of the seed; I want you to notice the size of the seed. He says here in verse 31 it's the least of the seeds. Well, how small—infinitesimally small—is this mustard seed! And what is this telling us? It's telling us that the true gospel doesn't have to have a lot of pomp and circumstance, and trappings, and all of the accoutrements that men want to add to it. Oh, the size of the seed: it's small—it's small!

### **C. The Simplicity of the Seed**

And the simplicity of the seed. Just a little seed, but oh, what power there is in that simplicity!

You know, a great theologian came to the United States, and he was known the world over for his scholarship and for his intellectual insights into the Word of God; a man who had talked with the other scholars, a man who knew the original languages, a man who knew the backgrounds of all of the books, and a man who had veritably spent his life poring over the Word of God. He was there in a theological institution, and the young preachers were there sitting at his feet. This was their big opportunity to ask him questions. And they were asking him all of these great, long, double-jointed questions, you know, and he with a furrowed brow was giving all of his wisdom to these youngsters and these young men that I call *embryonic theologues*, and he was telling them all of

these things. And then one young man raised his hand and said, “Sir, I would like to ask you a question.” He said, “In all of your learning and of all of your studies,” he said, “what is the most profound thought? What is the deepest revelation? What is the grandest truth that you have every learned?”

Well, that’s a big question. And the old man sat there for a while, and he thought, and he prayed, and he thought. He cleared his voice, and it got very quiet in that hall. He said, “Sirs, the greatest truth that I have ever learned is this: ‘Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.’” Amen?

That’s it! That’s it! Oh, the simplicity of a seed! The simplicity of a seed! “Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.”

#### **D. The Secret of the Seed**

And so, here he’s talking about a strong declaration: the gospel is like a mustard seed. But not only the strength of the seed, not only the size of the seed, not only the simplicity of the seed, but the secret of the seed is this: that a seed has life—a seed has life. And so does the gospel. Jesus said, “*The words that I speak unto you...they are life*” (John 6:63)—“*they are life.*” And therefore the Bible says we’re “*born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever*” (1 Peter 1:23).

I’m so grateful that I don’t have to preach a dead gospel. I’m so grateful that when I preach the gospel there is life. And I’m not just talking about some man’s enthusiasm. I am talking about something that is supernatural. These words are life. One of the things that has always encouraged me is that it does not really depend upon my ability but my faithfulness to the Word of God. That’s the reason I always try to give somebody something out of the Word of God that they can carry home with them.

You know, when farmers go out to sow, now there’s one man, he may just have a beautiful style scattering the seeds, you know, and another fellow just may be a clod as he puts the seeds down; but, you see, the difference is not so much in the style, but the seed, amen? I mean, if he’s planting the seed. *Others may preach the gospel better than I can, but nobody can preach a better gospel than I can.* Isn’t that wonderful? The gospel. You see, the secret of the seed is that the seed has life. “*The I words that I speak unto you...they are life.*” And Jesus said, “*The kingdom of heaven is like to a...mustard seed.*”

## **II. The Tree: A Strange Transformation**

And so, point number one: a strong declaration—a strong declaration. Point number two: a strange transformation. Look what happened. Look, if you will, in verse 32: “*Which indeed*”—the mustard seed— “*is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is*

*the greatest among herbs,*”—thus far, okay, but now, watch—*“and becometh a tree.”* What happened here? Something’s gone wrong.

Now, wait a minute. Is it an herb or is it a tree? Now, there’s a difference between an herb and a tree. An herb has no wooded tissue to it. An herb dies back, and has to be replanted and so forth; but a tree and an herb are different, and God makes a difference between a tree and an herb. And under ordinary circumstances, herbs don’t become trees.

Let’s just go back to Genesis chapter 1. Just turn back to Genesis chapter 1, verse 11, with me for a moment and see how God made this world operate—Genesis chapter 1, verse 11. All right, look. Here’s the way God made it to begin with: *“And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed...”*—just draw a circle around the word *herb*—*“herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind,”*—notice this: *“after his kind”*; that is, the tree and the herb are different—*“whose seed was in itself, upon the earth, and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good”* (Genesis 1:11–12). God made a difference between an herb and a tree. And herbs never produce trees, and trees never produce herbs. There is a difference.

But now we have a strange, weird development. Suddenly an herb becomes a tree. And, folks, that’s not meant to be. Now mustard never becomes a tree. Now you folks who have grown some mustard in your garden, you know better than that. Mustard is one of the greatest of the herbs. As a matter of fact, in the Middle East a mustard plant will grow almost seven feet tall, but it’s still an herb; it never becomes a tree. But here in this parable, the mustard seed, which grows, grows to be an herb, and then it becomes a tree.

Now something here is wrong. There is a strange development here. What our Lord is talking about here is a monstrosity: something that is not meant to be, something that is twisted, something that is perverted. And what He is talking about is the development of abnormal Christianity, the development of what I call apostate Christianity. You see, Jesus’ hearers were familiar with the Old Testament. And when Jesus talked about this tree with the birds lodging in it’s branches, I’m sure that some of his readers went back to Daniel chapter 4, verse 20. Just jot it in your margin. I want to read it to you—Daniel chapter 4, verse 20. It is the description of a Babylonian kingdom. And listen to this description: *“The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth; whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and it was [food] for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt,”*—and listen—*“and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation: it is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is*

*grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth”* (Daniel 4:20–22).

Daniel had a vision of a great lofty tree, and in that tree the fowls were roosting in its branches. Daniel said that vision is a vision of a Babylonian kingdom; and Babylon, in the Bible—pay attention—is always a symbol of apostate religion—always a symbol of apostate religion, Babylonish religion.

Now I want you to see something else, if you will turn and look in Revelation chapter 18, verse 2—Revelation 18, verse 2: *“And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird”* (Revelation 18:2). Now is the picture coming together? Now do you see what this monstrosity is? It is the development of apostate religion.

Folks, I’ve tried to tell you before; I want to tell you again: the devil is not against religion. He’s in religion up to his ears; but it is false religion, apostate religion, something that is abnormal, something that is not meant to be. The herb is not meant to be a tree. The tree speaks of pride over far-reaching branches, and becoming a habitation for beasts and birds, and all kinds of unclean and creeping things, that God never really intended. And so, point two is what I call a strange development.

This monstrous tree that Jesus told about is the final form of the false super church that will be in the last days. It is the giant corporation of the amalgamated sons of old Adam. But here’s something that ought to encourage you: the rise of false cults—and there are plenty of them in America today, and there are plenty of them in Memphis today—the rise of false cults and liberal churches that deny the Bible did not take Jesus by surprise. Now that’s a word of encouragement to me. When Jesus looked down through the corridor of time, and Jesus saw this gospel herb becoming an apostate tree, the Lord Jesus predicted it. It’s abnormal; but it wasn’t unexpected.

### **III. The Birds: A Satanic Habitation**

Now, let’s go to the final point. We’ve talked about a strong declaration: that’s the message of the mustard seed. We’ve talked about a strange transformation: that’s when an herb becomes a tree; and something grotesque, a monstrosity, happens, something that God did not plan, but something that God foreknew. Now, let’s go to the third point and deal a little bit with the birds. Look, if you will, in verse 32, and you’ll understand why I call this message, perhaps, “The Devil’s Dirty Birds.” Look. He says this seed *“is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof”* (Matthew 13:32).

Now, let me tell you what the non-thinking Bible teacher says about this. “Oh,” he

says, “isn’t it wonderful? The Church starts with just a little seed, and then it becomes an herb, and then it becomes a great big ol’ kingdom tree, and then we got all the sweetest birds; we’ve got the little blue jays, and we’ve got the red birds, and the little canaries, and the little hummingbirds, and all of these.” That’s not what it’s talking about, folks. That’s not what it’s talking about: sweet little birds roosting in the branches. Remember, this tree is a monstrosity, and these dirty birds are the devil’s demons, who take pleasure in apostate religion.

I’m going to prove to you now that the birds represent the powers of darkness and the powers of the devil. Look here in Matthew chapter 13, verses 3 and 4. Now, remember, we’ve been in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew. The way to understand scriptures: to compare scripture with scripture, and understand scripture in its context; for as you know, a text without a context is but a pretext. Now, look in chapter 13, verses 3 and 4: “*And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seed fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up*” (Matthew 13:3–4). Now, let me say that the word that is translated “fowls” here in verse 4 is exactly the same word in the Greek that is translated “birds” over here in verse 32: no difference; the same word exactly, talking about the same group of varmints. All right now, look: “*The fowls came and devoured them up.*” Now, look, if you will, please, in verse 19, and see what that represents: “*When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart*” (Matthew 13:19).

Now, what do these birds represent? These birds represent the power of the devil to steal away the Word of God. That’s what they represent. Don’t get the idea of sweet little birds. I’ll tell you the kind of birds that He’s talking about right now. He’s talking about the yellow-bellied compromiser. That’s one of them. He’s talking about the self-righteous raven. That’s another one. He’s talking about the liberal loon, and the dead-headed denominational dodo, and these kinds of birds that roost in the branches of apostate Christianity. That’s what He’s talking about: people who have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof (2 Timothy 3:5); people who are religious, but lost; and worse than being religious but lost, who are energized by the power of the devil.

Now, go back again to Revelation chapter 18 and verse 2, and look at it. If you think that I am misinterpreting this, look at it. Revelation chapter 18, verse 2: “*And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils,*”—literally in the Greek, “the habitation of demons”— “*and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird*” (Revelation 18:2).

Do you know what God’s saying? He’s saying Babylon is for the birds. That’s what He’s saying. He is saying, ladies and gentlemen, there will come a Babylonish religion

in opposition and over against the true religion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And there will be multitudes who will be religious, but lost. Their ministers will be transformed as angels of light (2 Corinthians 11:14), and these people will be caught up in this Babylonish religion in the last days. *“[Many] shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons”* (1 Timothy 4:1). That’s what the Bible says.

You see, the devil has sent more people to hell through religion than any other way. *It is not religion that people need. It was a religious crowd that crucified Jesus Christ. Men need to turn from religion to Jesus Christ.* It is a personal faith in a living Savior, someone who can come into your heart and give you a new nature and make you born again. Do you know that? Have you experienced that? Some people don’t know the difference. They wouldn’t know one of the devil’s dirty birds if he flew in their window.

Now what we need, folks, is a course in spiritual bird watching. So I’m going to help you just a little bit. You know, these birds will fool you. Why, they’ll use the Bible. The devil quotes the Bible. They’ll do good works. Jesus said, *“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity”* (Matthew 7:22–23). They may have Sunday Schools, church services, radio programs, revival meetings, Bible conferences, magazines, books, tracts, church camps, a wonderful youth program: *“in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”*

Why, they may even be able to perform miracles. In Matthew chapter 24, the Lord Jesus said, *“There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect”* (Matthew 24:24). Just because a man’s a miracle worker, that doesn’t mean the power of God is on him. Not at all! Not at all! The Bible speaks of the spirits of demons that have power to do miracles (Revelation 16:14). So we need a course in bird watching, don’t we? You see, here’s a strange development; and this strange development becomes a satanic habitation—this strange transformation to a satanic habitation. The birds, these devil’s dirty birds, come and lodge in the branches.

Let me just give you four questions that you can ask your prospective pastor if you move away from here, or four questions that you can ask any bird that pecks at your door. Find out whether or not he happens to be one of these in Babylon’s branches or whether he’s one who is a true servant, an emissary of the Lord Jesus Christ; the four tests, and then we’ll be finished. The first test is what I call the source test. The second test is what I call the Savior test. The third test is what I call the subject test. And the fourth test: the salvation test. Now these are four things that you can almost identify any bird with right away.



## A. The Source Test

All right, first of all, the source test. When you go to a church, or when somebody comes to your door, ask him, “What is the source of your information? Where do you get this?” And if he has any other source besides the Word of God, he’s one of the devil’s dirty birds: whether that source is his own ideas; or whether that source is the tradition of men; or whether that source is another book that somebody else has written that’s supposed to be a companion book to the Bible.

Let me just show you what I’m talking about. Turn to the last book of the Bible, the Book of the Revelation, and before we read this I want to ask you a question. Did you read in the paper the other day where a great religious organization says they’re going to rewrite the Bible and take all the sexist terms out of it? And so, rather than praying, “*Our Father which art in heaven*” (Matthew 6:9; Luke 11:2), we’ll pray, “*Our person which art in heaven.*” You know, that sort of an idea. Did you read that in the paper? It gave me a pain I couldn’t locate; and I think sometimes I do. Just keep that in mind, and I want you to listen to Revelation chapter 22, verse 18: “*For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book*” (Revelation 22:18–19).

So we want to ask him a question; we want to ask her a question, whoever it is: What is your source of authority? Do you believe the Bible as the inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God? Or have you taken from it, or have you added to it? The source test will help you in spiritual bird watching.

## B. The Savior Test

The second test: the Savior test. Ask him what he believes about the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. For, friend, if he is wrong about Jesus, it doesn’t matter what he’s right about, amen? Turn to 2 John for a moment. You’re in Revelation—just go left two books or three. Look in 2 John. Look in verse 9: “*Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God...*”—he’s one of the devil’s dirty birds—“*Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.*” This is 2 John 9. “*If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed:*”—and if somebody wants to come to your house and set up Bible studies in your house, you’d better find out what he believes about Jesus Christ. And, friend, if he’s wrong about Jesus Christ, don’t allow him to make your home headquarters for his studies, for the Bible says—“*for he that biddeth*

*him [even] God speed is partaker of his evil deeds” (2 John 1:9–11).*

Ask him, “What do you believe about Jesus Christ? Do you believe He’s the Son of God?” Many will say, “Yes.” “All right, do you believe He’s born of a virgin? Do you believe that He is the only begotten of the Father? Do you believe He is God in human flesh?” Jesus was not, as Nicodemus said, “*a teacher come from God*” (John 3:2); He was God come to teach. “*Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh*” (1 Timothy 3:16). And anybody who does not believe that Jesus Christ is God, very God, is of the evil one, and he that “*abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God.*” All right, so there’s the Savior test.

### **C. The Subject Test**

The source test, the Savior test; the third test is the subject test. What do you preach? What is the theme of your message? More than anything else, what are you trying to get across? Is it the gospel of Jesus Christ? And make certain he understands what the gospel is. Do you know what the gospel is? This is the gospel: Christ died for our sin. He was buried. He was raised again on the third day, according to the Scriptures. That, ladies and gentlemen, is the gospel.

Now, you find out if that is his central message. I don’t care how good his message may be. If he’s not preaching the gospel, he’s one of the devil’s dirty birds lodging in the branches of apostate Christianity. Notice what Paul said, in Galatians chapter 1—just turn to it—Galatians chapter 1, for a moment, verse 8: “*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed*” (Galatians 1:8–9).

“Sir, what is the subject that you wish to address me about? Have you come to declare the gospel?” *Let me tell you the difference between a false cult and a true Christian. A false cult will come and say, “Believe some thing”; a true Christian will come and say, “Receive someone.”* And that someone is Jesus. They will be lifting up the Lord Jesus Christ.

And you make certain, dear friend, that you put them to this source test: Do they believe the Bible? You put them to the Savior test: Do they accept Him as God, very God? You put them to the subject test: Do you preach and proclaim the gospel? And is that the driving theme and the dominate motive: to preach the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? And make certain he knows what the gospel is. Therefore you’re going to have to know what it is.

### **D. The Salvation Test**

And last: the salvation test. Find out about his own salvation. “You, sir, have you been born again? You, preacher, have you been born again? Have you been

regenerated? And are you trusting the shed blood of Jesus Christ, and God's grace, and that alone, to save you; or have you tried to mix in some of your good works? And do you think it is Jesus plus this, or Jesus plus that?" Find out if he preaches this message: *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast"* (Ephesians 2:8–9). "Have you personally received Christ as your personal Savior and Lord? Have you been born again? And does God's Spirit bear witness with your spirit that you're a child of God?"

Now that's a course in bird watching—bird watching—because, you see, the Bible says, if it were possible, the devil would deceive the very elect. Isn't it marvelous how Jesus almost 2,000 years ago saw this strange monstrous tree that would be developed in our last days? Isn't it amazing that as Jesus looked down through the tunnel of time, the Lord Jesus knew that there would come a monstrous development: an herb becomes a tree? Fowls of the air come, demon spirits, to lodge in its branches. And do you know what God said in Revelation chapter 18? *"Come out of her, my people"* (Revelation 18:4). Just come on out. You don't belong perched on one of those limbs. Just come on out. Do you know Jesus? Are you saved?

## Conclusion

I'm finished now, but there are two things you need to see in this. First of all, there's a warning—a warning. What is the warning? The warning is this: Be certain that you know Christ as your personal Savior. You can be religious, but lost. You can have a form of godliness, and not know the power thereof. Again, I want to say, it is not religion you need; it is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. You need to be born again. You need to be saved. You need for God's Spirit to bear witness with your spirit that you're a child of God.

And what a word of warning there is! But also for me there's a word of comfort. And what is that word of comfort? It means that nothing has gotten out of control. Nothing has taken God by surprise. *People say, "What's the world coming to?" I'll tell you what it's coming to: it's coming to Jesus—it's coming to Jesus.* The real question is not, what the world's coming to, but who's coming to the world. His name is Jesus. And the Bible says that all of these things are just simply signs of the last days. And false religion and all of these weird cults that we see, and these liberals who deny the Word of God and the deity of Christ, they don't disprove the Bible; friend, they confirm the Bible. It's exactly as Jesus said it would be.

So there's a word of warning; but there's a word of comfort. We're on course, and we don't have to worry about false religion. Everybody says, "Oh, the cults are going to overtake us! Apostasy is going to overtake us!" Well now, wait a minute. Truth is stronger than error. *"Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world"* (1 John

4:4). It's not them that we have to worry about; it's our ignorance and our lethargy and our failure to claim the Word of God. You put God's truth in your heart, friend, and *"greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."*

# The Mystery of the Mustard Seed and the Devil's Dirty Birds

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: January 18, 1998**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 13:31–32**

## Outline

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- II. A Small Seed
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## Introduction

**W**ould you be finding Matthew chapter 13. In Matthew chapter 13, we have seven parables, and these are the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. Our Lord calls them mysteries, and He gives us one, two, three, four, five, six, seven parables that span history from the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ until the Final Judgment. And these seven parables help us to understand what the course of this age will be like; what to expect, so we will not be taken by surprise, we'll not be disappointed, or have doubt come to us, because things may not be as rosy as we think that they ought to be. And we have looked at these parables. Remember what a parable is? A parable is an earthly story that has a heavenly meaning.

Now, first of all, we talked about the parable of the sower, and the mystery of the sower. And what did that parable teach us? Well, it taught us, among other things, that not everybody that hears the gospel is going to get saved. Don't get the idea in your head that all we need to do is just tell people how to be saved and they will be saved. The sower may be fine, and the seed may be fine, but it also depends upon the soil,

doesn't it? And some seed will not fall on good ground, but some will. And we learn—and I know, praise God—that when I preach, and when you share, people are going to come to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then, we studied next the parable of the tares. You remember the tares are weeds and wheat sown together. And what does that tell us? Well, the parable of the tares tell us that we can expect hypocrites in Christendom; in the church, and out of the church, there will be hypocrites. And so don't be surprised when a hypocrite comes along, and don't let some hypocrite keep you from giving your heart to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, tonight, we come to the story of the mustard seed. Read now in verses 31 and 32: *“Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof”* (Matthew 13:31–32). The title of the message: “The Strange Mystery of the Mustard Seed and the Devil's Dirty Birds.” You're going to learn from this why there are false cults in the world. You see, not only do you have those who reject the gospel, not only do you have those who imitate the gospel, but you have those who actually pervert the gospel. And we're going to learn that in the parable of the mustard seed. False cults did not take our Lord by surprise, and they ought not to take you by surprise, because this world and this city is full of false cults and apostate Christians. And there are many who trudge to church Sunday after Sunday whose lives are not changed, and on top of that they are twice-fold the child of hell because they are in false religion. Now this false religion may be dead and decadent, or it may be set on fire—wildfire and zeal from hell—but it is not Bible-based; it is not Christ-honoring; it is not Spirit-filled.

Now, how did all of this develop? What has happened? Our Lord looked down through the corridor of time, and He told us some things. This is the mystery of the mustard seed. Now the devil has many ways to sabotage God's work. In the parable of the sower, you remember, the devil catches away the seed that was sown. In the parable of the tares, he imitates the good seed. But in the parable of the mustard seed, he perverts and corrupts it. And you have to understand that all of these things can happen.

Now when we look at this parable of the mustard seed, we're going to look at it under four headings, all right? First of all, the sower; then, the seed; then, the shrub; and then, the shade tree. And we're going to look at all of these one at a time.

## **I. A Sacred Sower**

Now, first of all, who is this sower? Well, look again in verse 31. The Bible says,

*“Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field”* (Matthew 13:31). Well, who is the man that does this sowing in these parables? Well, go back to verse 37: *“He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man”* (Matthew 13:37). Again, we have the Lord Jesus beginning something, starting something. He’s out there planting a field. The sower is the Son of man, Jesus. And I’m glad for that, because, you see, there will be a church. Jesus said, *“I will build my church”* (Matthew 16:18). In Philippians 1, verse 6, it says, *“He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it”* (Philippians 1:6). There will be a godly crop. God has promised, and we can bank on that: that He cannot fail; He must prevail. So I’m just going to pass very quickly over the sower. The sacred sower is Jesus—the sacred sower is Jesus.

## **II. A Small Seed**

Now, secondly, not only are we going to look at the sacred sower, but we’re going to look at the small seed. Now, look in verse 31, again, of this same chapter. The Bible says, *“The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds”* (Matthew 13:31). This seed is very, very small, like a fleck of pepper that you put on your eggs this morning. So I want us to think about that. Why did Jesus say that the kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed?

### **A. The Smallness of It**

Well, first of all, obviously, the emphasis is on the size, because He’s talking here about smallness. You know, we are a little flock. We are the Master’s minority. We are the faithful few. Don’t get the idea that the gospel is something large and grand, with a lot of fanfare and so forth. In reality, it is quite small in its simplicity. And it’s not so high and lofty that you can get up to it. It’s so small that few get down to it. And Jesus is talking about something here very small.

I remember hearing a story long ago about a great theologian who was in a seminary, and he had been lecturing the students. And this man was incredibly brilliant, and they had a Question and Answer session—Q & A—and they were asking him all of these deep, convoluted questions about theology. And then one student said to him, “Sir, what is the greatest thought that you’ve ever had, the greatest theological truth that you know?” And this man paused for a while and thought, and then he said, “The greatest truth that I know is this: Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.” Oh, friend, that’s it—that is it.

## B. The Strength of It

The smallness, the simplicity, of the seed. But, oh, think of a mustard seed now, not only the smallness of it, but the strength of it. Jesus said faith like a grain of mustard seed can remove mountains (Matthew 17:20). Again, he's talking about strength in a mustard seed. You see, a mustard seed is fiery, is pungent. Do you know what mustard is? We had some in a Chinese restaurant the other day, and I put some on an egg roll—too much—and it almost blew the top of my head off. I'm telling you, folks, if you've got sinuses, that will take care of it. I mean, it will clear it out. How many of you, when you were a child, your mama used to put a mustard plaster on you? Let me see your hands. Yeah, a mustard plaster. You'd get something, and she would put a mustard plaster on your chest up here—supposed to take care of a cold. It didn't do anything for the cold, but near about turned your skin fire engine red as she put that mustard plaster on there.

As a matter of fact, there's a story about Darius the Great as he invaded Europe. He came into Europe, and Alexander the Great came to meet Darius of the Persians, and Darius sent Alexander the Great a bag of sesame seeds. And there were just thousands and thousands of sesame seeds, and he sent them by courier to Alexander the Great. And he was saying, "We're going to cover the land like these sesame seeds. There are so many of us, you'll never defeat us." Alexander the Great sent him back a bag of mustard seeds, and he said, "You are going to meet fire and power and strength like you've never known before."

## C. The Secret of It

You see, the mustard seed speaks, yes, of smallness, insignificance, in many ways, but it speaks of strength. But think not only of the smallness of this seed, and the strength of this seed, but think, friend, of the secret of it. Here's the secret. You see, the kingdom of heaven is like a seed, and a seed has life. Remember in all of these things our Lord is frequently mentioning seed. And He's saying that the Word of God is like the seed, and we who are His saints, the good seed, are believers that are sown in the world. And, again, He's using the word of a seed. Why? Because a seed has that germ of life in it, and it can reproduce. Somebody said—and I love this—"Any fool can count the seeds in an apple; but only God can count the apples in a seed." Isn't that a beautiful thought? "Only God can count the apples in a seed." I mean, because a seed can reproduce and reproduce and reproduce and reproduce.

## III. A Significant Shrub

And so you see the sacred sower, and then you see the small seed. Now, here's a third thing you see. You see a significant shrub. This seed begins to grow, and it becomes a



shrub. Look, if you will, in verse 32: *“Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs”* (Matthew 13:32). And so an herb is a bush that does not have a woody stem, but it has a pulpy stem, enough to support leaves and flowers and seeds—not a great lofty thing like a tree, but it is a significant shrub. And that represents what the gospel is supposed to be. You see, it may not seem like much compared to a great cedar of Lebanon, it may not seem like much compared to a mighty oak; but it is a shrub that can reproduce and bear whatever fruit that it is to bear, whatever flowers, whatever seeds. And not known for its prominence, not known for its loftiness, it speaks of lowliness and not prominence.

#### **IV. A Strange Shade Tree**

Now, let’s move on, and we’re going to tighten the focus a little bit. You see the sacred sower: that’s Jesus. You see the small seed: that is the pungent gospel that we preach. You see the significant shrub that comes up: that is what the gospel is supposed to do. But now, watch—watch. The fourth thing—and we’re going to slow down here—is a strange shade tree—a strange shade tree. Look in verse 32—don’t miss this now: *“And [it] becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof”* (Matthew 13:32).

Now, folks, shrubs don’t become trees—not in the natural world, they do not. What our Lord is talking about here is something that is monstrous, something that is unnatural, something that should not have developed—a strange development. Herbs don’t become trees. Put Genesis 1, verses 11 and 12, in your margin, if you don’t mind writing in your Bible. Let’s see how God created the world: *“And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, an herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good”* (Genesis 1:11–12).

Now God says there’s an herb that yields fruit after its kind and there’s a tree that yields fruit after its kind. But the herb does not produce a tree; you’d never get an herb from a tree in the natural world. Stems of herbs never develop woody tissue. What our Lord is talking about here is something that is abnormal. Now, don’t try to read something normal into this. What our Lord is talking about is strange developments, mysteries in the kingdom. For example, it is not normal to have tares among wheat. A farmer does not expect that. You would not expect an herb to become a tree. Our Lord here is talking about a strange development.

Now people who don’t think straightly about these seven mysteries get all confused. And what they say is, “Isn’t that wonderful? Lookie there! The gospel starts from a little

seed, and then it becomes a shrub, and then the shrub becomes a great big old tree, and all the sweet little songbirds come and twitter in the branches of the gospel tree. That's not what it's talking about. That's 180 degrees from what He's talking about. Friend, these are not sweet little birds that are in the limbs of this tree. Now Jesus did not explain this parable, did you notice that? He explained the parable of the sower. He explained the parable of the tares. But He didn't explain this parable. He expected the people to have enough understanding of the Old Testament to understand what this parable was about.

Put in your margin Daniel chapter 4, beginning in verses 20 through 22. Daniel is telling Nebuchadnezzar what his kingdom was like. Now Nebuchadnezzar was the king in Babylon. Babylon is the root of all false religion. It was begun by Nimrod, whose name means, "rebel." It began with the Tower of Babel in Genesis chapter 11. It is the seedbed of all apostate religion from that time to this. And Daniel says of Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom—listen to this—Nebuchadnezzar had a dream, he saw a tree, and Daniel says, *"The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth; whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was [food]"*—or "meat"—"for all;"—now, watch this—*"under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches"*—look at this now—*"the fowls of the heaven had their habitation: it is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth"* (Daniel 4:20–22). Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, is a type of Antichrist, and he typifies, this monstrous tree is typical, of the final form of apostate Christianity in the last days.

The rise of false cults and liberal churches that deny the Bible is typified by this tree. They have not taken the Lord by surprise. It is abnormal, but it is not unexpected. You say, "Well, how do you know these are not just sweet little birds?" Well, look, if you will, in verse 32 of this chapter. Verse 32 say that *"the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches"* (Matthew 13:32). Well, who are these birds? Well, these birds are the ones that in this same parable come and steal away the seed. Look in verses 3 and 4—chapter 13, verses 3 and 4: *"And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up"* (Matthew 13:3–4).

Now, remember that Daniel said that the fowls were lurking in old Nebuchadnezzar's tree, in the Babylonian tree. Now, look, if you will—go down now to verse 19 of this same chapter: *"When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart"* (Matthew 13:19). The birds represent the devil, the wicked one. They don't represent

sweet little songbirds. These are the devil's dirty birds, and they are lurking in the branches of apostate Christianity. It's so very clear.

Let me give you another scripture here that I think will clear this up almost completely—Revelation chapter 18 and verse 2: *“And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit,”*—and watch it—*“and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird”* (Revelation 18:2)—unclean and hateful birds in Babylon. Babylon stands for false religion. God said that Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon, is like a tree, and the fowls are going to lurk in the branches, the shade, of this tree. These are the devil's dirty birds that are in the shade of this apostate Christianity. Satan is not against religion. He uses religion to accomplish his purpose. In these parables the birds stand for that which steal away the seed; they stand for that which is apostate and that which is wrong. This tree is a monster tree. By the way, when I was finished this morning, one of our children came up and handed me a card. It has a drawing on it. And on this drawing—it's really a work of art; you ought to see it—it has a monster with two heads, and it says—this is what one of our children handed me this morning—it says, “Two heads are not better than one. Don't be a monster. Follow God.” That's pretty good: “Two heads are not...” You want to see that? That's real art, isn't it?

All right now, this tree is a monster tree. Shrubs don't become trees. This is an absurd development of Christianity. And what God is saying is that Babylon is for the birds—these dirty birds that lurk in the branches of apostate Christianity. You've got the yellow-bellied compromiser, and the liberal loon, and the cultic crow, and the blasphemous buzzard—they're all in the branches of this tree, all over in this city—every city—and this false religion has the power of Satan behind it. Listen again: *“Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.”*

I heard about a boy who had finished his core curriculum in college, and he wanted to coast a little bit so he could get his diploma and get out of there, so he was looking for what I called in college—and so did you—a *crip course*—that is, a course where you can just coast. And he asked his friend, “What would be a good course that I could get where I wouldn't have to do any homework, just kind of coast through?” And his friend said, “Man, you ought to take that course in bird watching,” said, “old Professor So-and-So, he's just a dopey old man.” He said, “Well, is it a hard course?” He said, “No, we never have any tests.” He said, “What do you do?” He said, “We get binoculars and walk through the woods and look at birds. It's incredible! He's an easy grader. You'll make an A in that course. You won't have to do a thing.” The guy said, “That's exactly what I want.”

He signed up for the course, and when he got there, lo and behold, the old professor had retired, and there was a new young professor just out of graduate school there who really took ornithology very seriously. And the guy said, “Oh, I hope I didn’t make a mistake.” But the man lectured for a little bit, and this boy was just kind of dawdling, not even taking notes, still hoping it was an easy course. And then he came in for the first test, and across the front of the entire classroom were about fifty birds from *here* down—just the legs; just bird legs—that’s all—from one side to the other—just bird legs. And the professor said, “Now for the test, I want you to identify the birds represented by these legs, tell of their plumage, and tell of their habitat, and their call, and their feeding habits”—just bird legs.

This boy was so disgusted. He said, “How did I ever do this?” He was so angry that he slammed his book down, threw his pencil down, and began to stalk out of the class. The professor said, “Young man, just where do you think you’re going?” He said, “I am dropping this class.” He said, “Young man, what is your name?” He pulled up the leg of his trousers and said, “You guess.”

Now what we need is a course in bird watching, and I want to give you one right now so that you can spot these dirty birds, and because the Bible says that there will be in the last days. Now, let me tell you, they’re not easily spotted, because the devil is a master of deception and a master of camouflage. And our Lord said, “*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves*” (Matthew 7:15). Now if the devil will wear wool, he’ll also wear feathers. So you need to understand.

Let me tell you what these dirty birds may do. They may use the Bible; they frequently do. Here’s a scripture—2 Peter 3, verse 16. The Bible says that, “*They that are unlearned and unstable wrest [the scriptures],*”—that is, they “turn” the scriptures—“*as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction*” (2 Peter 3:16). Just because a man says, “I believe the Bible,” doesn’t mean he’s not an apostate. They may perform miracles. Matthew 24, verse 24: “*For there shall arrive false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect*” (Matthew 24:24). They may appear to do good works. Matthew 7, verses 22 and 23: “*Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity*” (Matthew 7:22–23). They may have Sunday schools; they may have church services, radio programs, revival services, Bible conferences, magazines, books, tracts, miracle-working power, mission societies, youth activities. Counterfeits often look like the genuine thing.

How, therefore, are you going to find out whether or not these who are lurking in the branches of apostate Christianity, this monstrous tree, this herb that has become a tree—how are you going to find out whether they are genuine or whether they are one of the devil's dirty birds? I want to give you some tests. Jot these down on a piece of paper. Let's let them start with the letter S, each one.

### **A. The Source Test**

First of all, the Source Test. When a person approaches you about some kind of faith, or some kind of religion, you ask that person this question: Is the Bible, God's Holy Word, the revelation that God gave through His Word—is that the source of your information, or do you get it from some place else? Do you get it from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*? Do you get it from *The Book of Mormon*? Do you get it from the Koran? Or, do you get it from the Word of God? Revelation 22, verses 18 and 19: *"For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book"* (Revelation 22:18–19). Now, folks, I want to tell you, if they don't come from a Bible-based ministry, you know they're a false cult, but that's not enough, because some will say, "Yes, we believe the Bible is the Word of God."

### **B. The Savior Test**

So the second test: not only the Source Test, but the Savior Test. Find out what they believe about Jesus Christ. Ask, "Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God, and God the Son, co-equal and co-eternal with Almighty God?" I frequently ask Jehovah's Witnesses this question: "Do you worship Jesus?" They say, "Oh, we venerate Jesus." I say, "No, do you worship Jesus?" Because in the Bible it is obvious that He is worshiped. Now if they worship Him and He is not God, they're committing idolatry. If they don't worship Him, they're not practicing biblical faith. You see, ask them what they believe about the Lord Jesus Christ. And don't just think this is incidental. Second John chapter 1, verses 9 and 10: *"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed"* (2 John 1:9–10).

Now that doesn't mean you can't bring him in your house to witness to him. To *receive* means, to "welcome him as a brother in Christ," as it would mean, the

counterpart, to “bid him Godspeed,” and say, “God bless you. We’re all headed to the same place. You don’t believe in the full deity of Christ, you don’t believe that Jesus Christ is the virgin-born Son of God, and God the Son, co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father, but God bless you.” Oh, no.

### **C. The Subject Test**

You, friend, have the Source Test. And then, you have the Savior Test. And then, you have the Subject Test. Find out, “Is your primary task preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ?” And, by the way, if some of you get on a pulpit committee sometime, and it is your privilege and your responsibility—and it is an awesome responsibility—to help find a pastor for a church, don’t be so silly as to ask him, “Do you preach the gospel?” What do you think he’ll say? I don’t care who he is, he’ll say, “Well, sure, I preach the gospel.” You ask him to tell you what the gospel is, and then ask him if he preaches the gospel. Find out if he understands what the true gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is. Now Galatians 1, verses 8 and 9—Paul said, *“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed”* (Galatians 1:8–9).

### **D. The Salvation Test**

So there is the Source Test, the Savior Test, and the Subject Test. Is the subject the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? Next, the Salvation Test. Now we’re talking about spiritual bird watching right now. Does that individual, does that group of people, do they believe in salvation by grace through faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ and His atoning work on Calvary as the only basis for the forgiveness of sins? Now it’s not the blood of Jesus plus anything; it is not faith plus works. It is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ: the finished, the atoning, work of Calvary. Before we’re finished with the Book of Romans, I pray that you will have this so riveted upon your consciousness, what salvation is. Salvation is trusting the Lord Jesus as your Lord and Savior, receiving the gift of God—not any achievement. Ask this individual, “Are you depending on any achievement of your own for your salvation, or are you trusting exclusively in the grace of God?” The Salvation Test.

### **E. The Sanctification Test**

The last test is the Sanctification Test. Is this individual living a righteous and a holy life? Do they teach purity? Do they teach *“holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord”* (Hebrews 12:14)? Do you preach and teach and live in accordance with the standard of holiness?

Now if a person can pass these tests, in my estimation, you can say, “I have a brother, a sister, in the Lord Jesus Christ.”

## Conclusion

Now, let’s just wrap it all up. The sacred sower is the Son of Man, the Lord Jesus. And I can tell you, friend, the One who plants the good seed is going to reap the harvest. You can be sure there will be a harvest. You can be sure that the Lord is going to build His church. And then, the seed, the small seed, is the truth of God’s Word. It may be small, but it is strong, and it has a secret: it pulsates with life, and it will reproduce and reproduce and reproduce and reproduce. The shrub represents not a great lofty tree, but the true Church of the Lord Jesus Christ that can reproduce over and over again. It does not put its roots down deep, because, “This world is not our home; we’re just passing through.” The tree—the tree—represents apostate Christianity. Daniel 4 teaches us that. Revelation 18 teaches us that. The very parable itself teaches us that these dirty birds that have been stealing away the seed come and find haven and rest in the branches of this tree.

Now, what does that mean to us? Let me just wrap it up. What does it mean to you personally?

Number one, it means a word of warning—a word of warning. Don’t get carried away by some false cult, some apostate Christianity. I’m amazed at how many people who were once in Bible-believing churches and are drawn aside because they do not have the ability to be a spiritual bird watcher. They don’t understand when our Lord said over and over again, “Beware of false prophets.”

It’s also a word of comfort. Friend, we don’t have anything to fear from the cults. We don’t have anything to fear from apostate Christianity as such. Truth is stronger than error. *“Greater is he that is in [us], than he that is in the world”* (1 John 4:4). But now, listen to me. We have everything to fear from our own missionary apathy, or lethargy, and ignorance of spiritual truth. That’s what we need to fear. Every now and then, somebody will say, “Oh, such-and-such a cult and such-and-such a thing is building a church, or a center, or a temple, or a mosque in our neighborhood! Oh, oh, oh!” but they haven’t evangelized, they haven’t taught, they haven’t witnessed. We don’t have anything to fear from them. What we must fear is our own lethargy and apathy and failure to preach the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. Friend, we ought to be like Alexander the Great and say, “We’ve got a bag full of seed, and, Satan, you’re the one that ought to be afraid.”

# The Devil's Bakery

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: June 29, 1980**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 13:33**

*“Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.”*

MATTHEW 13:33

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## Introduction

Now, if you have been here for a while, you know that we have been in a series of sermons in Matthew chapter 13. They're parables, and you will remember that *a parable is an earthly story that has a heavenly meaning*. The word *parable* means “to lay alongside of.” And so, our Lord tells a lesson or a story in the physical, material world, and then He lays alongside of it a spiritual truth. Now, as we have already introduced this series of sermons, Jesus calls these spiritual truths “the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven,” and therefore we're titling this entire series of sermons “The Strange Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven.” We all love a mystery story, but now, in the Bible, a mystery is a spiritual truth that you could only know by divine revelation. It's something that you couldn't just figure out no matter how intelligent you are. It is



something that God would have to reveal to you or you would never know it. And so, these things are so important that we understand them.

And today, we're dealing with the lesson of the leaven. The sermon title that I'm going with tonight: "The Devil's Bakery." And I want you to see what happens here in this strange mystery that we're looking at here in Matthew chapter 13 and verse 33: *"Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."* (Matthew 13:33) Now, that's a mighty short text. But I'll tell you the truth: you're going to have to pray for me that I can get the message that I have on my heart unloaded in the time that we have because there's so much truth in this one verse.

Now, let me say that I suppose that, of all of these parables, this one in verse 33 is misinterpreted more than all of the others. It is the most misunderstood, more than all of the others. Now, let me tell you what the normal interpretation is that people give, that I say is the normal interpretation but the wrong interpretation. And I believe that by the time we're finished, you're going to see that it is the wrong interpretation. Most people know what leaven is; and of course you know what leaven is—that's yeast. That's what the ladies put in bread to make it rise—and those biscuits. Who was it? Dr. Lee used to talk about those biscuits, those big ones, where the first bite was a half moon and the second bite was a total eclipse. That's the kind of things that ladies know how to do with yeast to make those good tasting things. And yeast put in bread causes it to rise, and it just permeates all that lump of dough, and so forth.

And so, they say, "Well, the teaching here is quite obvious. They say that the woman is the Church; the leaven is the gospel; the three measures of meal, the world; and if the Church just presented the gospel, before long, the entire world would be Christianized. Oh, how wonderful that's going to be! How beautiful that's going to be! What a glorious age it will be where everybody and everything will just be under the sway of the gospel!" That sounds so beautiful, but, my friends, that is not the interpretation of this parable. And if you believe that it's the interpretation of this parable, you're going to be in for a long hard ride and will probably get so discouraged that you give up Christianity altogether.

Now, let me tell you, that's the wrong interpretation for two reasons. Number one: when you read the Bible and understand the Bible, you understand that the Bible doesn't teach that the world gets better and better and better. It's going to get worse and worse and worse until Jesus comes. You read the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, for example. Don't read it now, but our Lord talks of wars and rumors of wars, and men's hearts filled with hate, and false prophets deceiving many. And then, you read where Paul told young Timothy, *"In the last days perilous times shall come."* (2 Timothy 3:1) And then, he talked about all of these perils that we would face in the last

days, and he talked about people “*having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.*” (2 Timothy 3:5) No, I’d be very discouraged if I thought that the interpretation of this parable is that the gospel, like leaven, is going to permeate the whole world. It’s a wrong interpretation, number one, because the Bible doesn’t teach it.

It’s a wrong interpretation, number two, because experience has not taught it. Amen? You look around—or just read any newspaper; just see what it happening: war, crime, venereal disease, hate, false cults, disappointment, heartache—all of these things! No, we’re not headed for a golden age, not in this age. No, no, no, no! So, that isn’t what this parable teaches. I’m glad today that we don’t have to believe it that way because if we had to believe it that way, I, for one, would be mighty discouraged.

Now, there are three basic things that stand out in this verse. Here’s a lady who’s baking a loaf of bread. She has three measures of meal. So, first of all, I want you to notice the loaf. And then, I want you to notice the leaven. And then, I want you to notice the lady. And after we look at these three things, I believe we’ll have some kind of an understanding of what our Lord was talking about in this strange mystery of the kingdom of heaven, and we will understand something about Satan’s bakeshop this morning.

## I. The Loaf

First of all, what does the loaf represent? Here we read in verse 33 about three measures of meal; that is, three measures of flour that you use to bake with. What is the significance of three measures of meal? What does it stand for? Well, let me just tell you, first of all, something that will help to understand what it stands for. Let the Bible interpret itself.

Now remember, the people to whom Jesus was speaking were familiar with the Old Testament. And the first time you find three measures of meal mentioned, you’ll find it there in Genesis chapter 18 and verse 6. And in Genesis chapter 18, verse 6, Abraham, the father of the faithful, had a visitor from heaven. And when the angel of Jehovah came to speak with Abraham and to make a covenant with Abraham, we read in Genesis chapter 18, verse 6 that Sarah took three measures of meal and made some food for them, a loaf of bread for them to eat. (Genesis 18:6)

Then, later on in the Bible, you’re going to find about how Gideon, who was that man of valor that God used to deliver Israel from the Midianites, how he had an angel guest; and Gideon’s angel guest came down, and we read in Judges chapter 6 and verse 19 how Gideon prepared a meal for them to share, Gideon and the angel of the Lord, from three measures of meal. (Judges 6:19) There I believe it is called an *ephah*, which, if you go back to your charts and measurements in your Bible, you’ll find out that an *ephah* is made of three measures.

All right. Then again, as you read on down through the Bible, you’ll find out that

Hannah, who wanted God to bless her with a son and who was a godly woman, went out to worship the Lord, and as she went out to worship the Lord, Hannah, in 1 Samuel chapter 1 and verse 24, brought an offering to the Lord—again, an ephah, or three measures of meal. (1 Samuel 1:24) And Bible scholars tell us that in the Levitical offerings there was a certain offering called the “meat offering,” which literally means the “meal offering,” and that it consisted of three measures of meal—three measures.

Now, therefore, what does all of that represent? You see, from time immemorial, the breaking of bread together, the sitting down to a meal together, has always been symbolic of the most intimate of fellowship—breaking bread together. And so, three measures of meal, as we find it here in the Bible, symbolizes the fellowship of God with His people—the people with God and the people with one another. And that, ladies and gentlemen, is what all true spirituality is all about. That is what real religion is all about: fellowship with God, and because of that, fellowship with one another. It’s summed up in 1 John chapter 1, verse 3: *“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”* (1 John 1:3) And so, this—this three measures of meal, this loaf of bread—is symbolic of the people of God and God in His people.

Now, in case you have any doubt about that, I think that we could let the New Testament speak. Turn, for example, to 1 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 17. Paul picked up this. Paul understood this Old Testament terminology, and Paul said in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 17, speaking of the Church, *“For we being many are one bread”*—that is, one loaf of bread—*“and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.”* (1 Corinthians 10:17) That is, Jesus Christ is the bread that we all feed on, and we ourselves have been baked into one great big loaf of bread.

Do you know how a lot of grains become bread? Well, you see, first of all, that grain of wheat goes into the ground and it dies. And then, it sprouts and brings forth more wheat. That wheat is harvested, that wheat is ground, that wheat is baked, and there’s a loaf of bread. What are God’s people? God’s people are those who have died to themselves, who have been broken, and who have been through the fires of judgment and tribulation, who have become one loaf, where we’re all equal. There’s no upper crust; we’re just a lot of crumbs held together by the Spirit of God. We are that one loaf. Now, that’s the symbolism that Paul gives. And as you trace the idea of three measures down through the Bible, you’ll find out that it symbolizes worship and fellowship with God. So, I think that much is fairly easy to understand.

## **II. The Leaven**

The loaf, we understand that. But now, let’s move on to the next point: the leaven. And remember now that leaven is yeast, that which causes bread to rise, and so forth. What

does that symbolize? Well, dear friend, it may make things taste good, and you may like those biscuits and that light bread; but in this passage, and in all of the Bible, leaven is invariably—listen to me now—a symbol of evil and sin, and something bad, and something malevolent, and something wicked, and something that corrupts.

Do you remember there in Exodus chapter 12 where the Jews were celebrating the Feast of the Passover? And the Lord told them to celebrate this feast. And they still celebrate Passover today. And the Bible says that they were to take the Feast of Passover with what kind of bread? Exodus 12, verse 8—you know, don't you? Unleavened bread. (Exodus 12:8) And do you know what in the orthodox home they do when they're keeping Passover today? And Jews have done it from time immemorial. They'll go through the house, and they'll cast out all of the leaven. They'll just look for leaven. And they'll go through, and in the more orthodox houses they'll take a broom and sweep the house. And they'll take a feather, and they'll dust all of the crevices. And they'll take a cloth, and they'll wipe out all of the cabinets and move everything. And they don't want even a speck of leaven in the house because it's the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And they get all of the leaven out of the house because leaven, in the Bible, is symbolic of evil. I'm going to tell you why in just a moment.

Incidentally, ladies, many people believe that this is where the idea of spring housecleaning started—you see, Passover is in the springtime—as they would go through the house and sweep the house and look for even a speck of leaven. And then, you read over there in Leviticus chapter 2, verses 4 through 5, where the meat offering, which is really the meal offering—*meat*, in the Bible, doesn't mean “flesh,” necessarily; it just means “food”—this was a grain offering, and you read, again, that it was to be kept with unleavened bread.

I think we ought to just turn to that for just a moment. Let's look in Leviticus chapter 2 while we're there and let you pick up the sense of this as we read it—verse 4: *“And if thou bring an oblation of a meat offering baken in the oven, it shall be unleavened cakes of fine flour mingled with oil, or unleavened wafers anointed with oil.”* (Leviticus 2:4) No leaven, because leaven is a symbol of sin; but oil, because oil is symbolic and emblematic of the Holy Spirit of God. And so, leaven is yeast, and that causes fermentation; and fermentation is literally corruption. It speaks of that which corrupts and that which puffs up. You know, when leaven starts to work, that bread, that dough, just starts to rise, and it gets huffy and puffy and it rises and rises. Well, that may be good in bread, but it's not very good in Christians. Christians are not supposed to be puffed up.

Let me just go on while we're searching this out. And lick your fingers now and turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 5, and see what Paul said about the people who are puffed up—1 Corinthians chapter 5. In the church at Corinth, there was some horrible

immorality. Oh, we'll just read about it in verse 1, and you'll see what it was: *"It is reported commonly"*—this is 1 Corinthians 5:1—*"It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife."* (1 Corinthians 5:1) Here was a man living in an incestuous relationship with his father's wife.

Now, how do you think the church at Corinth took that? Do you think that they were brokenhearted about it? Well, look at it in verse 2: *"And ye are puffed up"*—I guess they were proud of their sense of tolerance. You know, they didn't want to discriminate against anything or anybody; and, rather than mourning, they were puffed up. He says—*"And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned."* (1 Corinthians 5:2)

But now, I want you to see this phrase "puffed up" in its proper context. Continue to read, if you will, please, in verses 6 through 8. Look: *"Your glorying"*—that is, your puffing—*"is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?"*—now, the little leaven he's talking about is the sin that was in that church—*"Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."* (1 Corinthians 5:6–8) Leaven stands for malice and wickedness. Unleavened bread stands for sincerity and truth. Don't you see it so plain there? Don't you see how puffed they were? Don't you see how full of leaven they were in this particular church? And the leaven had already started to work in the church at Corinth. Leaven is symbolic of evil.

And, incidentally, I asked my wife about this yesterday. I said, "Honey, you bake a lot of bread"—and boy, she is a good bread baker—and I said, "Honey, tell me about the yeast; tell me about the leaven." I said, "How do you do that?" And one of the things that I learned was that if you wanted to start, it works best in a lukewarm condition. Now, you let a church get lukewarm and the devil's already got his work two-thirds done, right? It's a culture that starts in a lukewarm condition. But it works quietly; it works insidiously. It continues to work and work and work.

And so, if you're going to understand this parable, you're going to have to understand, number one, that the loaf represents the fellowship of God's people from time immemorial. We are one bread, one loaf. Paul is saying that same thing again when he says, "Purge out that old leaven." Again, he's using that same symbolism. The leaven is a symbol of that which is evil.

Now, let's go on. Jesus mentioned three kinds of leaven. If you want to know what Jesus meant by leaven, well, why don't we just continue to read the Bible. You know, somebody said, "It's amazing how much light the Bible will throw on those commentaries." And that is the truth.

Friend, let's turn to Matthew 16. Now remember, we've just been in Matthew 13. It's inconceivable to me how some people can say that the leaven represents the gospel, but I would say that seven out of ten commentaries say that it does. Maybe eight out of ten will say that the leaven represents the gospel, when it doesn't. It represents sin and evil and wickedness that our Lord warns us against. Look in Matthew chapter 16 now, just a few chapters later, same book, and look in verse 6: "*Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.*" (Matthew 16:6) Now, Jesus said leaven is something that you're to be afraid of. "*Take heed...beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of [the leaven] of the Sadducees.*" (Matthew 16:6) A little bit later I'm going to show you in the book of Mark where He said, "*Beware of...the leaven of Herod.*" (Mark 8:15) There are three kinds of leaven that Jesus said to beware of, and I want to mention them.

### **A. The Leaven of the Pharisees: Legalism**

The leaven of the Pharisees was legalism. Do you want me to tell you what a Pharisee was like? Well, just keep on turning. Now, go to Matthew chapter 23 and let's just see what a Pharisee was like.

#### **1. They Were Gatekeepers**

Well, you have to feel sorry for these Pharisees. Look in verse 13: "*But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.*" (Matthew 23:13) So, they weren't saved people. They weren't in the kingdom. They call themselves the gatekeepers, but they didn't go in; and they wouldn't let other people go in.

#### **2. They Were Stumbling Blocks**

Now, rather than being gatekeepers, they were stumbling blocks; and oh, they loved to pray. Look in verse 14: "*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater condemnation.*" (Matthew 23:14) Now, isn't that strange? They were intercessors who were extortioners. Same verse. They devoured widows' houses, and they made long prayers. Oh, they would stand up in church and on Saturday—they met on Saturday—make a long prayer; and then on Sunday—which would be Monday to us—they'd be out striking up a dirty deal and doing some poor widow out of her money. Oh, Jesus knew about these Pharisees.

#### **3. They Were Soul Winners**

And then, notice again, they were soul winners. Oh, they always showed up for visitation, but they were soul winners who corrupted people rather than brought them to Jesus. Look in verse 15 of this same chapter: "*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees,*

*hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte*”—boy, on the night of visitation, if they came to the sea, that didn’t stop them; they’d get in the boat and go to the other side to make one visitor—*“and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.”* (Matthew 23:15) Every person they won they didn’t win for heaven; they won him for hell. They were evangelistic, but they were the devil’s evangelists. They would make someone else a cold, bitter, hard, bitter Pharisee. And if you’ve ever tried to win a Pharisee to Jesus, you’ll know that’s the hardest thing to do.

#### **4. They Were Hypocrites**

Well, let’s go on. I don’t have time to go into all of these things. I think we’ll pick up the real sense of a Pharisee if you’ll go to verse 25: *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess”*—now, if you’re going to wash a cup, it’s good to wash it within and without. But if you only have a choice to do one of the two, it’s far better to wash the inside than the outside because you drink out of the inside—*“Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.”* (Matthew 23:25–28)

You know, the Jews didn’t want to touch anything dead, lest they become unclean, so one way that they would keep from walking on a grave by mistake is they had whitewash, and they’d just whitewash these tombs. And they would glisten in the sun, and they were beautiful. I’ve seen them even now in the Middle East, these whitewashed tombs. But if you just scrape back the whitewash and go on the inside—rottenness and dead men’s bones. Jesus said, “That’s what you Pharisees are like. You’re like a cup that’s been washed on the outside, dirty on the inside. You’re like whitewashed sepulchers. Your religion is all external. You don’t have the real thing on the inside.” That’s what legalism is. It is profession without possession. It is laws without life. It is living by rules that are outward rather than righteousness that is inward. These Pharisees had heads full of scripture and hearts full of sin. They knew the words, but they didn’t know the music. They had never been born again. And that, my friend, is legalism. And oh, how hard legalism is to deal with!

People who are bitter, hard—Pharisees. Remember, the Pharisees were the ones who helped to crucify the Lord Jesus Christ. What a self-righteous bunch they were! Why, they even paid tithe of mint, anise, and cummin. Look, if you will here, in chapter 23, verse 23, I believe. I think it’s a good time to preach a little sermon here on the tithe, and let’s just slip this one in while we’re in the neighborhood. All right, look: *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and*

*cummin*”—listen. Let me tell you how punctilious they were, how rigid they were, how careful they were to keep even the most meticulous laws. Have you ever had a little mint plant out by your backdoor? We used to have one. Joyce would go out there and pick the leaves off and put them in the iced tea. Well, they had them back in this day, a little mint plant. And so, they’d go in there: “One leaf—that’s for me; two leaves—that’s for me; three leaves for me; four, five, six, seven, eight, nine; nine for me—one for God.” That’s really tithing, isn’t it? I mean, that’s narrowing it down. Every tenth leaf they gave to God, even their little garden herbs. But He said—“*[you] have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith*”—they didn’t know anything about this. It was all external. It was not internal. They didn’t know anything about justice, mercy, faith, these things. Jesus said—“*these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.*” (Matthew 23:23)

Jesus never said they ought not to tithe. He commended them for tithing, and He commends you for tithing. Every Christian ought to tithe. Say “amen.” Say it louder. Amen, good. All right, every Christian ought to tithe. “*These ought ye to have done.*” (Matthew 23:23) You know what? Somebody said this about tithing: “Abraham commenced it. Jacob continued it. Moses commanded it. Jesus commended it. Who am I to cancel it?” You see. But the problem wasn’t that they tithed; their problem was that they thought that they could get remission of their sins for a dime out of a dollar. And you can’t do it. You can’t buy your way to heaven; you can’t work your way to heaven. You can’t keep enough rules, you can’t keep enough laws, to make you a child of God. You’ve got to repent of your sin and receive a new nature. You’ve got to be born again.

God pity the legalist! The world is full of legalists. It is a leaven that has corrupted the church of the Lord God, people who are trying to work their way to heaven. *Most of the people in America are egomaniacs strutting their way to hell, thinking they’re too good to be damned.* Jesus said to these scribes and Pharisees, He said, “*Ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?*” (Matthew 23:33)

## **B. The Leaven of the Sadducees: Liberalism**

So, that’s one kind of leaven Jesus warned about—Matthew chapter 16, verse 6: “*Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees.*” (Matthew 16:6) Then He also said, “*Beware of the leaven...of the Sadducees.*” (Matthew 16:6)

Now, who were the Sadducees? Well, they were another political party. And what did a Sadducee believe? Well, if the Pharisee was a legalist, and Phariseeism stands for the leaven of legalism, the Sadducee stands for the leaven of liberalism. Now friend, the devil is very wise. On the one side, if he can’t make you a legalist, he’ll try and get you with liberalism. You see, that’s just opposite sides of the gospel road. And he doesn’t care which ditch he wrecks the gospel car in, whether it’s legalism or liberalism.



Now, you say, “Why do you say the Sadducees were liberals?” Well, I can prove it to you. And let’s just take our Bibles and see what a Sadducee was. Turn to Acts chapter 23 and verse 8—Acts chapter 23, verse 8—if you want to know what a Sadducee believed. Now remember, Jesus said, *“Beware of the leaven...of the Sadducees.”* (Matthew 16:6) Now, here’s what Dr. Luke, who wrote the book of Acts—he gave us a little interpretation of the Sadducee, and he said, *“For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both.”* (Acts 23:8)

Now, see, the Sadducees and the Pharisees were opposite, but they were both wrong. The Pharisee was a legalist. He believed in the Resurrection, he believed in angels, he believed in spirits and was lost as a goose. The Sadducee didn’t believe in the Resurrection, didn’t believe in angels, didn’t believe in spirits, and he was lost, too. One was a legalist, and the other was a liberal; but neither were children of God. And Jesus warned and said, *“Beware of the leaven...of the Sadducees.”* (Matthew 16:6) You see, they were the sophisticated group—no angels for them, no Resurrection for them.

And you’ll have to admit he’s done a pretty good job of permeating churches with Sadducees too, hasn’t he? We’ve got a group of preachers today, an anemic brand of preacher, who tries to explain away hell. He’s tried to remodel heaven. He’s tried to minimize sin, laugh at the ideal of the blood atonement. And he recommends culture for Calvary, and reason for revelation, and good works instead of the new birth. He’s a liberal, pure and simple. And that is the leaven of the Sadducees.

Incidentally, do you want me to tell you what makes a liberal? Do you want me to tell you why some preachers become liberals, why some seminaries go liberal? Do you want me to give you a recipe for a liberal? All right, let’s just find it right now. Turn to Matthew chapter 22—we’ve been all around those chapters—Matthew chapter 22, and look in verse 23. The Sadducees were always on Jesus’ case, always arguing with Him. *“The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him, saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die,”* (Matthew 22:23) and so forth and so on. I’m not even going to read what they ask Him because I don’t have time. But they thought they had real neat little problem. They had a little conundrum. They had a little something they thought Jesus couldn’t answer. “Boy,” they said, “we’re going to catch Him with this one.” And it dealt with the Resurrection. And they had this little argument that they had that they wanted to give Jesus about the Resurrection to prove there was no Resurrection.

And I want you to notice how Jesus answered these people, and the way Jesus answered them tells me what the recipe for a liberal is. In verse 29: *“Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err”—*that is, “You make a mistake.” Why?—*“not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.”* (Matthew 22:29) That’s the recipe for a liberal. You just take in a man who doesn’t understand the Bible and doesn’t know the power of

God, and he'll turn out a liberal. That's what a liberal is. A liberal is somebody who cannot accept the Word of God and the works of God. That's what a liberal is. He can't just say, "God said it, and I believe it; and that settles it." We've said before, *if God said it, that settles it, whether you believe or not*, amen? He just can't accept that. "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God." (Matthew 22:29)

Why does a liberal have difficulty with the miracles, and crossing the Red Sea dry shod, and a whale swallowing Jonah, and all that? He just doesn't have a great enough God, that's all. He does not understand the power of God. No wonder he's going to get in mistakes. That's what makes a liberal. That's why the Sadducees were Sadducees. And somebody said, "They don't believe in the Resurrection. That's why they're so "sad," you see. That's what makes them that way. They just don't understand the Word of God and the power of God.

### C. The Leaven of Herod: Licentiousness

And so, Jesus said, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees" (Matthew 16:6)—legalism; "Beware of the leaven...of the Sadducees" (Matthew 16:6)—liberalism. But what about "the leaven of Herod"? Look in Mark chapter 8 and verse 15. This is a third kind of leaven that Jesus told us to beware of: "And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees"—we've already dealt with that—"and of the leaven of Herod." (Mark 8:15)

Now, who was Herod? Herod was a pleasure-mad king. Herod was a profligate. He was a man who lived in worldliness and licentiousness. And if the leaven of the Pharisees is legalism, and the leaven of the Sadducees is liberalism, the leaven of Herod is licentiousness; that is, living a profligate life, not taking the things of God seriously.

And this is a leaven that has infiltrated so many churches today. America is amusing herself on to the graveyard of the nations, and *churches have forgotten to weep while the world has forgotten how to blush*. And Madison Avenue has put the leaven of Herod into the churches. We've been told by Madison Avenue that happiness is a new car, or happiness is a certain vacation trip, or happiness is wearing a certain kind of clothes, or happiness is eating a certain kind of food. We've been told by Madison Avenue that happiness comes from a pill, or comes out of the mouth of a bottle. That's all the leaven of Herod. It is a materialistic, worldly spirit that has swept into the churches.

And friend, if the devil can't get us by legalism, and if the devil can't get us by liberalism, then he'll try worldliness—amen?—to make us like this world, to so water us down that there is no difference. And we might be believing the same things, but we become so much like this world that the old spirit of King Herod, which is still alive

today, infiltrates the world. And the devil doesn't care how he destroys the work of God. Whether it be by legalism, whether it be by liberalism, whether it be by licentiousness; whether it be the leaven of the Pharisees, the Sadducees, or of Herod; it doesn't make any difference to Him. But Jesus said, "Beware of that leaven."

### **III. The Lady**

Now, let's move on. We've talked about the loaf. The loaf stands for fellowship with God and man—the people of God. We are that loaf. The leaven—a spirit of evil that works quietly, steadily, penetrating, corrupting, puffing up. All right, let's look, thirdly, at the lady. What does the lady represent? Now ladies, don't get mad at me now for what I'm going to tell you, but the lady represents the power of the devil.

Now, hold it. A woman in the Bible can represent that which is good or that which is evil, just like men in this story. In these other parables, some men represent good and some evil, just like the birds. Remember, the birds in these particular parables represented the power of the devil, but a bird doesn't always have to represent the power of the devil. The Holy Spirit descended on Jesus like a dove, right? You just have to see the context in which he's using it. In this particular passage, because of the other things that we know and the things we're about to find out, a woman represents here the power of the devil.

You see, a woman out of place in the Bible, a woman who is connected with false religion, represents the power of the devil. The Church is called the "Bride of Christ." So, there a woman is spoken of in the good sense. But the false church is spoken of as a harlot, the devil's bride, you see? Now, this woman here represents the power of Satan. I want you to notice three things that this woman did. I want you to notice the act that she did here in verse 33. (Matthew 13:33)

#### **A. It Was a Devilish Act**

The first thing I want you to notice: it was a devilish act. You know, God would never do such a thing. The devil is at work. And, as I've said, this woman, and always symbolically in the Bible, a woman out of place religiously represents the power of Satan. It was a devilish act, therefore. The devil was at work, and the devil is at work. He's always been at work to corrupt the work of God.

#### **B. It Was a Deliberate Act**

But a second thing I want you to notice is it was a deliberate act. Notice in verse 33, the Bible says she "*took, and hid.*" (Matthew 13:33) She knew what she was doing. It wasn't that it just slipped out the shelf. It wasn't that it just happened. Here was something that was planned.

Now, the devil has a scheme to ruin the work of God. The devil knows what he's

doing. You know, the Bible says in Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 11—it says, *“Put on the whole armour God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”* (Ephesians 6:11) That word *wiles* is the Greek word *methodeia*. It’s the word we get our word *methodological* from, or *methods*, or *Methodist*. Now, I’m not saying the devil is a Methodist or the Methodists are devils. Now, don’t get me on that. I’m not saying that. We love our dear Methodist brethren. But why were Methodists called Methodists? Because of dear John Wesley. Boy, I wish we had a thousand, million like him. Dear John Wesley said, “God’s work ought to be done methodically; it ought to be done decently and in order,” so these people came to call themselves Methodists.

But the devil also has methods. The Bible calls them “wiles,” but it comes from this word that means “methodical.” And, you see, the devil knows what he’s doing. The devil is systematically trying to infiltrate and thereby weaken and destroy the work of God. It was a deliberate act: she took and she hid the leaven in three measures.

Now, right away, you know then she’s not representing God. Jesus said, “That which you heard in secret, declare openly.” (Mark 4:22; Luke 8:17) We’re to publish glad tidings. Jesus said, “I’ve done nothing in secret.” (John 18:20) But here is a sneaky cook. Here is woman on the sly who is putting the leaven in the bread that’s supposed to be unleavened. Remember, this meal offering was supposed to be unleavened, but with oil. Oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit, but here in the oil, only leaven. No Spirit—only sin, only corruption, only wickedness permeating the work of God. You look around at the condition of Christendom today, and you look around at the legalism, look around at the liberalism, look around at the licentiousness, and you’ll understand the devil has done exactly what Jesus Christ said he would do. See? That’s exactly what Jesus said would happen, and that’s exactly what Jesus warned us about.

## **Conclusion**

And so, we see the loaf. We see the leaven. We see the lady. Now, what does all of this mean to us? And I’ll be finished.

### **A. A Word of Warning**

Well, first of all, there’s a word of warning. O God, help us to beware of legalism and liberalism and licentiousness! Amen? I don’t want that in this church. I don’t want it in my life. Jesus gave us this to show how the devil would destroy and corrupt us, if we’d allow him to. Now, what a word of warning there is! Friend, God put this in the Bible for us to read and to heed.

Now, as you deacons pray, you say, “Don’t let us become that kind of a church.” As you teachers teach, you say, “God, don’t let us become that kind of a church.” As this preacher preaches, I want to continue to cry out against these things and warn against these things. See? There’s a word of warning here.

## B. A Word of Comfort

But there's also a word a comfort here because as I said before, if I thought according to the common interpretation, which is a misinterpretation, that the leaven stands for the gospel that's going to permeate the whole world, frankly, folks, I'd be discouraged. But I'm not discouraged. Man, I'm encouraged! I'll tell you why I'm encouraged: because it's working out just like Jesus said it would. And that's an encouragement; that's a proof to me this book is true—when in the last days perilous times do come, when in the last days there is liberalism. I'm not saying these things are good, but I am saying, ladies and gentlemen, that nothing has gotten out of hand, and nothing has taken God by surprise, and God is not walking back and forth in heaven wringing His hands, saying, "What am I going to do? What am I going to do?" God knows what He's going to do. *There is no panic in heaven, only plans.* There's a word of comfort to be had here.

And, you see, Jesus warned of dark days and perilous days and horrible days that were going to come upon the earth, days just like we have today. But then, He said, "*When [all of] these things...come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.*" (Luke 21:28) And for the Christian, bad news is good news when he understands the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. A Christian can say, "Praise God, it's getting gloriously dark," you see, because he understands the Bible and what God is doing.†

# The Strange Case of the Sneaky Housewife

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: January 25, 1998**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 13:33**

## Outline

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  - A. The Leaven of the Pharisees
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## Introduction

Would you turn, please, to Matthew chapter 13. In Matthew chapter 13, our Lord gives a series of seven parables that are “The Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven.” And a parable, as you know, is an earthly story, but it has a heavenly meaning. That is, you see the normal, natural meaning, and then you look beneath the surface to see the deeper meaning. Now sometimes people think that Jesus taught in parable to make it simple. He also taught in parables to make it complex; not only to reveal, but to conceal. And so He says that He did it—if you’ll notice in verse 11—He does this, “*Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries*”—the mysteries—“*of the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 13:11).

And, tonight, we’re going to study the parable that is in verse 33. If you will look at it, it’s a very short parable: “*Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven...*”—now, ladies, what is leaven? Yeast—“*is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal,*”—that’s flour— “*till the whole was leavened*” (Matthew 13:33). Now this is a mystery that we’re going to entitle “The Strange Case of the Sneaky Housewife.”

Now, what is all of this about? I suppose this parable, this earthly story with a heavenly meaning, is one of the most misunderstood parables of all of these seven. Now, remember that yeast, or leaven, is what you put into bread to cause bread to rise. Now the normal, usual interpretation of this parable is wrong, and it is 180 degrees from what the Bible teaches; and I've read it in our Baptist Sunday School literature and other places. The normal, usual interpretation of this is that the leaven is the gospel, the woman is the Church, the three measures of meal is the world; and we're to take the gospel and put it into the world until all of the world knows about the Lord Jesus Christ, until the entire loaf has been leavened or permeated with the leaven. That is, it is our job, our duty, our joy, and our responsibility to just touch the whole world with the gospel of Jesus Christ—and one of these days that will be done.

Now that interpretation is wrong—and it is obviously wrong for these reasons. First of all, the Bible does not teach that the whole world is going to be reached with the gospel of Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, the Bible teaches just the opposite: that in the last days there's going to be much, much wickedness and much rebellion.

Now you're in Matthew 13—why don't you just fast-forward to Matthew 24 and see what the Lord Jesus says the last days are going to be like, in verse 3: *“And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?”* Now the Lord is going to look right down through the corridors of time to the end of the age. *“And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come”* (Matthew 24:3–14).

Now the gospel is going to be preached around the world, but the loaf is not going to be changed, the whole thing, by the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, the Apostle Paul said, *“In the last days perilous times shall come”* (2 Timothy 3:1).

Now we know it's wrong, because the Bible does not teach that the leaven is the gospel, and that the woman is the church, and that the three measures of meal is the world. The Bible doesn't teach it, and experience doesn't teach it. I mean, after 2,000 years of the preaching of the gospel, we see a tidal wave of hatred and war and violence and unbelief and false cults. Now if you don't know your Bible, if you thought that this parable taught that ultimately that we were going to Christianize the world, you'd get discouraged; you'd say something is wrong, the Bible is not true. But our Lord doesn't want us to be discouraged, because when we get discouraged, then we begin to doubt, and then we go into despair. But our Lord is telling us in this parable that nothing has gone wrong. This is not the normal, natural teaching.

And if you would think of the other parables that we've already talked about—the parable of the sower and the seed—what did our Lord clearly tell us? There's nothing wrong with the sower, and nothing wrong with the seed; but there's something desperately wrong with the ground, and not all the ground is going to bear fruit, not everybody's going to believe the gospel. Or, for example, the parable of the tares, that up until the end of time the wheat will grow, and false Christianity, the seeds of the devil, the weeds, the wicked weeds, will be right in there with God's wonderful wheat. And then, in the parable of the mustard seed—if you remember last Sunday night—that mustard seed that became a tree represents a corrupt form of Christianity; and the devil's dirty birds are sitting, roosting in the branches of that tree. It does not teach that the gospel is going to permeate the whole world. As a matter of fact, we are a little flock. We are the faithful few, we are the Master's minority; and we need to keep that in mind. And, you see, *the gospel was never given to save civilization from wreckage; the gospel is given to save men from the wreckage of civilization*. I don't want you to have the wrong interpretation of this parable; because so many people do, and when they have it, they get confused.

Now there are three basic things in this parable that I want you to understand. If you'll understand these, I think you'll understand the whole thing. Now these three measures of wheat—this woman is going to bake some bread, so I want you to think first of all about the bread that is baked. And then, there's leaven that's put in the bread—well, actually, yeast. And so think of the bread that is baked, and think of the leaven that is latent. She puts it in there, and it begins to work. And then, think of the woman that is wicked. Now, remember, the bread that's baked, the leaven that's latent, and the woman that's wicked, and you're going to understand what our Lord is teaching us and what we can look for in these last days.



## I. The Bread That Is Baked

Now, the bread that is baked. Now we're in verse 33. What is the meaning of three measures of meal? Our Lord doesn't give us the meaning. He explains the other parables; but He doesn't explain this one, nor did He really explain the parable of the mustard seed. He just gave us a running start and then gave us some way, some measure, by which we might bring our minds and engage our minds to find out what the rest of these parables mean. So what is the bread that was baked? What is the meaning of three measures of meal?

Well, if you know your Old Testament history, as these Jews would have known it, immediately they would have recognized three measures of meal. Abraham, who was the father of the faithful, the brightest star in the Hebrew heavens, was one day under a place called the oaks of Mamre. I've visited this spot as I've visited the Holy Land. And there were three angels that came to visit Abraham, to talk with him; and God was going to make a covenant with Abraham; and, when Abraham realized that he had three angel guests, he said to Sarah—and take your Bibles and turn to Genesis 18 and verse 6, and see what Abraham said to Sarah—Genesis 18 and verse 6: *“And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah,”*—now Sarah was his wife—*“and said, Make ready three measures of fine meal, knead it,”*—that is, you know, do what women do when they squeeze it together—*“and make cakes upon the hearth”* (Genesis 18:6). That is, “Sarah, we've got angels for our guests, and I want you to take three measures of meal, I want you to make three cakes for these.”

Now the word *unleavened* is not mentioned here, but just simply three measures of meal. There was, again, a man who had an angel for a guest. His name was Gideon. Turn to Judges chapter 6 and verse 19. In Judges chapter 6 and verse 19, the Bible says, Gideon, when he saw this angel, and this angel said to him, “Hail, thou mighty man of valour” (Judges 6:12). Gideon was hiding from Midianites, and when he realized that he was hosting an angel, the Bible says, *“And Gideon went in, and made ready a kid, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour”* (Judges 6:19). So here is Gideon again baking bread for angels.

Now, with Abraham, it was three measures. With Gideon, it was unleavened bread. In the Old Testament, in the Levitical law, the Jews made an offering to the Lord; and the offering to the Lord was made of three measures. For example, let me give you a couple of verses here that would point that out. Numbers 15, verse 9—it speaks there of *“a meat offering,”* and the word *meat* does not mean, “flesh,” but it means, “food”—*“a [food] offering of three tenth deals of flour mingled with half an hin of oil”* (Numbers 15:9). Oil is an emblem of the Holy Spirit. But they take three measures to offer to the Lord, and these three measures that are to be offered to the Lord are unleavened bread. Put also Leviticus

chapter 2, verses 4 and 5: *“And if thou bring an oblation of meat offering baken in the oven, it shall be unleavened cakes of fine flour mingled with oil”* (Leviticus 2:4–5).

Now, what are we getting here? We’re getting that this, this blessed bread, is something to satisfy the heart, the mind, of God. And when Jesus is talking to these Jews about three measures of meal, immediately they would go back to Abraham as he entertained guests from heaven. They would go back to the meal offering that is in the Old Testament that is three measures of meal. And I think Jesus picked this same thing up when in the New Testament—remember the parable of the man that had a visitor that came at nighttime, and he didn’t have anything to set before him, and so he went next door to his friend and said, “Friend, lend me”—what?—“three loaves. I need three loaves of bread, because I have a guest that’s set before me” (Luke 11:5–6). And what did those three loaves of bread represent? They represented the Holy Spirit. He says later on in that same parable, “If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall God give the Holy Ghost to them that ask him?” (Luke 11:13).

So the idea of this bread is this bread is blessed bread. This bread represents that which satisfies the heart and mind of God. And what it really speaks of is communion and fellowship with God and man, because the breaking of bread, unleavened bread, has been an emblem of fellowship with God from the Passover Feast right on down to the Lord’s Supper.

And when we get to the Lord’s Supper, put this verse down—1 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 17—here’s what the Bible says of all of us: *“For we being many are one bread...”*—he’s talking about us. We’re many, but we’re—*“one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread”* (1 Corinthians 10:17). We feast on that bread, and we are that bread. We feast on Him, and He feasts on us. It speaks of communion, whether it be angel food, or whether it be us as that which is consumed by heaven. How is bread made? Remember, in the parable of the wheat and the tares, the wheat is what? The children of God, the good seed. Well, what is bread? It’s just wheat. It’s wheat that has gone through death; it is wheat that has gone through brokenness; it is wheat that has gone through fire; and it is wheat that has been mingled together with every other grain of wheat until it makes one loaf. That’s what we are tonight. We’re one loaf. We’re God’s wheat. We’re God’s seed. We have been harvested. We’ve died. We’ve been crushed. We’ve been broken. We’ve been through the fire. We’re fused together. We’re one loaf.

So think, first of all, about the three measures, and just put in your mind bread that is baked, blessed bread. It pictures the Church. It pictures fellowship with God. It pictures communion with God, in so many symbols.

## II. The Leaven That Is Latent

Now, let's move to the second thing here in verse 33. There's the bread that is baked—three measures. There is also the leaven that is latent. Now it is hidden there. This sneaky housewife comes into the kitchen, and she just slips in. The Bible says she hides leaven in these three measures. Now leaven, in the Bible, is not a symbol of that which is good; leaven is a symbol, in the Bible, of that which is evil. It stands for evil, that which is hidden, that which is latent, that which works slowly, that which works surely. You see, leaven works quietly; it's undetected. It's symbolic of evil. What leaven really does, what yeast really does, it causes fermentation, it causes corruption, it causes things to swell up, things to puff up; and therefore it's a symbol of evil. And, by the way, it works best in lukewarm conditions. That's what leaven is.

The ordinary hearer of Jesus, when he heard Jesus talking about three measures of meal, he would think about Abraham's offering; he would think about the meal offering in the Old Testament. When the ordinary hearer heard Jesus talk about leaven, he would think of that which is evil and that which corrupts. Why? Because they knew about the Passover. And how was the Passover to be taken? Put in your margin Exodus 12 and verse 8: *"And they shall eat flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread"* (Exodus 12:8). The Passover Feast was to be with unleavened bread. Why? Because leaven is an emblem, a symbol, of evil. As a matter of fact, from that time on, the Jews began to go through a ritual before they would have the Passover Feast. The mother would go through the house and remove every bit of leaven from the house. She would go into the cabinets and look in the crannies of the kitchen cabinets and anywhere in the utensils before the Passover would be kept, and take away any leaven. As a matter of fact, the little Jewish children, as a part of the ceremony, would get a feather and a dustbin to go through the house to try to find some leaven, to get the leaven out of the house, because they were going to keep the Passover. Now, remember again that the meal offering in the Old Testament was to be without leaven—Leviticus 2, verses 4 and 5: *"And if thou bring an oblation of meat offering baken in the oven, it shall be unleavened cakes of fine flour"* (Leviticus 2:4).

Now you might understand, with this in mind, why the Apostle Paul was speaking to a very worldly church, the church at Corinth. They had allowed sin in the church, and they were kind of proud about the fact that they were one of these kinds of open-minded churches. And they were glorying in that fact—glorying in that fact—and here's what Paul said, in 1 Corinthians chapter 5, verses 6 to 8. He said to these carnal Corinthians, *"Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast,"*—he's talking to Christians

now—*“not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth”* (1 Corinthians 5:6–8). Unleavened bread stands for sincerity and truth; leavened bread speaks of malice and wickedness. And that helps us to understand 1 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 2, when he says, “You’re puffed up, and have not rather mourned” (1 Corinthians 5:2). What does leaven do? It just puffs you up. You see, Jesus humbles us. Sin puffs us up. And so a little sin had puffed them up.

Now I want to say that I personally believe that, every time leaven is used in the Bible, it is used as an emblem of sin. Now some say, “Oh, no, there are one or two incidences where leaven is not spoken of as that which is evil.” And the classic one—and I want to give you this just for your information if you’re a Sunday School teacher—is Amos 4, verses 4 and 5, where it seems like leaven is an emblem of that which is good. But be careful. Looking at this text will show just the opposite. Here’s what Amos says: *“Come to Bethel, and transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes after three years: and offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven, and proclaim and publish the free offerings: for this liketh you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord GOD”* (Amos 4:4–5). And they say, “There it is, pastor: *‘offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven.’*”

Friend, this is bitter irony; this is bitter sarcasm. He’s not praising them for offering a sacrifice with leaven. Listen to it. Listen to what he’s saying. He’s saying to these worldly people who were trying to have one foot in the world and the other in the service of God, *“Come to Bethel, and transgress.”* Now Bethel was where the house of the Lord was. He says, “You come there, but you’ve sinned; at Gilgal, multiplied transgressions. Bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithe after three years, and offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven.” He’s saying all of that is sin: “You’re hypocrites!” He’s not saying that’s good; he’s saying, “You’re transgressing! You’re sinning! Your worship is corrupt!” That’s what he’s saying. When you understand this text, folks, the bread that is baked is blessed bread, but the leaven that is latent is that which corrupts that which is good and wonderful, and that which is holy.

Now Jesus warned against leaven. If you want to understand what Jesus thought about leaven, Jesus warned about three kinds of leaven. Now you’re in Matthew 13—just turn over to Matthew 16 for a moment, and look, if you will, in verse 11—Matthew 16. This is a key verse, so I’ll wait for you to turn to it. Jesus said to them, *“How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?”* (Matthew 16:11). Now He’s saying, “It’s not just literal bread that I’m talking about. There is leaven. Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.”

Now I want us to think about leaven. Actually, Jesus warned about three types of leaven.

### A. The Leaven of the Pharisees

He warned about the leaven of the Pharisees. Who were the Pharisees? Well, the Pharisees were very religious people. They had heads full of Scripture, but they had hearts full of sin. Their religion was external, not internal. They had profession, but they didn't have possession. They had laws, but they didn't have life. Now you're in Matthew 16—just turn to Matthew 23, and see how Jesus describes these Pharisees. And you have to ask yourself is there some Phariseeism in you. Look, if you will, in Matthew chapter 23, verse 13. Look at it: *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in”* (Matthew 23:13). In verse 13, they pretend to be gatekeepers, but what they really are is roadblocks. And then, look in verse 14—they pretend to be intercessors, but they are extortionists: *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation”* (Matthew 23:14)—or “greater condemnation.” Look, if you will, in verse 15. They pretend to be converters, but they're really corrupters: *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves”* (Matthew 23:15).

Every one of their converts is doubly damned. And why is this? Because the legalist who's never been born again, the religionist, doesn't think he needs Jesus. The hardest people to win are self-righteous Pharisees. Look, if you will, in verses 16 and 17—they pretend to be guides, but they're blind: *“Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor.”* Do you see how carefully they use their words? Remind you of anyone? *“Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?”* (Matthew 23:16–17). They claim to be guides, but they were blind. They pretend to be givers, but they were takers. Look, if you will, in verses 23 and 24. The Bible says, *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anis and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone”* (Matthew 23:23–24). They were selfish and self-centered, devouring widows' houses, and yet they were so careful to tithe. Look in verses 25 through 28—they pretend to cleanse, but they themselves were filthy: *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you,*

*scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres,*”—that is, graves; they would whitewash their graves lest they touch them, back in that time. He says, “You’re like a whited”—a whitewashed—“tomb”—“*which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness.*” They pretend to cleanse, but they themselves. Look in verse 28: “*Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity*” (Matthew 23:25–28). They pretended to cleanse, but they were filthy. They pretended to be mourners, but they were murderers. Look, if you will, in verses 29 through 32: “*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers*” (Matthew 23:29–32).

## **B. The Leaven of the Sadducees**

Now we could spend a month here just talking about what Phariseeism is; but I’m trying to give you some idea of what leaven is. Jesus said, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees.” What was the leaven of the Pharisees? It was legalism. But Jesus also said—go back to Matthew 16, verse 11—Jesus also said, “Beware of the leaven of the Sadducees.” Now if the leaven of the Pharisees was legalism, the leaven of the Sadducees was liberalism. May I tell you that liberalism and legalism are heads and tails of the same false religion. The Sadducees were liberals. Put this in your margin—Acts 23, verse 8: “*For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both*” (Acts 23:8). Now the Pharisees were the fundamentalists, and the Sadducees were the liberals; but neither one of them had the true Spirit of God in their hearts. The Sadducees said, “We don’t believe in angels, we don’t believe in spirits, and we sure don’t believe in the Resurrection.” They were the sophisticated crowd. And Jesus said, “Beware of that,” because not only is legalism going to penetrate God’s loaf—remember the church is the loaf, the bread—not only is legalism going to penetrate the loaf like leaven, but also liberalism.

I don’t know which I’m more afraid of: liberalism or legalism? Both are deadly. By the way, you want me to give you a recipe for a liberal? You know what a liberal is? I’m talking about a theological liberal. We’re in the Book of Matthew—go to Matthew 22, and look, if you will, in verse 23: “*The same day there came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him, saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left*

*his wife to his brother: likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. And last of all the women died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her.”* And, by the way, I don’t think I’d want to be married to her. It would be dangerous. Now, watch this: *“Jesus answered and said unto them,”*—here’s what makes a liberal, right here; watch it—*“Ye do err,”*—that is, “You do make a mistake”—*“not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God”* (Matthew 22:23–29). That’s the recipe for a liberal right there. What was wrong with these Sadducees? They did not understand the works and the Word of God. And Jesus said, “Beware of legalism. Beware of liberalism.”

### **C. The Leaven of Herod**

Now there’s another kind of leaven that Jesus said to beware of, and you find that in Mark chapter 8 and verse 15: *“And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod”* (Mark 8:15). Now, what was the leaven of Herod? The leaven of the Pharisees was what? That was legalism. The leaven of the Sadducees was what? That was liberalism. And the leaven of Herod was licentiousness, or license. You see, Herod was a pleasure-mad king. He lived in opulence. He really didn’t care much for legalism or liberalism; he just simply cared for himself. He was living in pleasure. He was a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God (2 Timothy 3:4).

Now I want to ask you a question. Has not the devil today injected those three things into the church? Legalism, liberalism, and license—has he not? Those are the things that Jesus said beware of—beware of. And when He said there was a woman who hid leaven—yeast—in three measures of meal, He went on in His further teaching, so there would be no misunderstanding, to teach them what leaven stood for. Remember that Paul said, “Purge out the leaven; get it out of the church. A little leaven will leaven the whole lump” (1 Corinthians 5:6–7).

### **III. The Woman That Is Wicked**

So let’s move on to the final and third thing now, as we’re coming in to the home stretch. We think about the bread that’s baked. That represents fellowship with God and man. We are that loaf; we keep the feast with unleavened bread. Then, we think about the leaven that is latent. It comes in; it works quietly, stealthily; and it begins to infuse the whole thing, and puff it up. And, today, rather than being unleavened, we have the church in modern society that is full of legalism, liberalism, and license. Now, here’s the third thing, and let’s talk about the woman that is wicked. Here was a woman that hid in three measures of meal leaven. Now she represents devilish deception.

Now you say, “Why is that?”

### **A. A Deliberate Act**

Well, first of all, notice what she did. It was a deliberate act. Look, if you will, in verse 33—go back, if you will, to Matthew 13, and look in verse 33, if you will, and see this. It's not done accidentally. He said, *"The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid three in measures of meal"* (Matthew 13:33). That is, she knows exactly what she is doing. She took it. She's not doing it by chance. This woman who's doing this dastardly act does it of her own volition. It is a deliberate act. And may I say that Satan knows what he is doing. Satan is out to sabotage the work of God.

### **B. A Deceitful Act**

But, not only was it a deliberate act; it was a deceitful act. Notice it said she hid it. She's not doing this openly. This is something that is done stealthily. Now Jesus said, "I've done nothing in secret" (John 18:20). And we're not out to hide the gospel. Don't try to make this leaven the gospel, and the three loaves the world. We're not out to hide the gospel. We're out to make the gospel known; we're out to shout it from the rooftops. But it is Satan working beneath the surface. He is the master of deception.

### **C. A Devilish Act**

And so it is a deliberate act: she took it. It is a deceitful act. And because it was deliberate, and deceitful, it was a devilish act. It doesn't take much to see the power of Satan behind all of this, putting that leaven in that which is to be unleavened.

Now you say, "Pastor, why was this a woman?" Well, because the Church, the bride of Christ, is called a woman. We are the Church; we are the bride of Christ. Now all you ladies that are sick and tired of all the male references in the Bible, the most classic and grand reference to mankind, and the most ennobling, is that we're all a bride. So you're having your day right now. I'm going to tell you, ladies, the Church is a bride, and the Bible speaks of the Church as the bride of Christ. But what does the Bible speak of the false church as being? A harlot—a harlot. Whenever you see a woman doing something wrong, something wicked, in the Bible, that speaks of that which is wicked and deleterious and harmful and hurtful. As over in the Book of the Revelation: *"Thou sufferest that woman Jezebel...to teach and to seduce my servants to [do things that are evil]"* (Revelation 2:20). You see, this woman, this woman in the kitchen, this sneaky housewife, is the bride of the devil. She represents the false church, not the true Church. She is representing Satan's work in these last days to infiltrate the Church of the Lord God with legalism, liberalism, and license. Therefore, friend, you listening on radio, before you go to church to worship, it would be good to check out the kitchen, be good to see who's in the kitchen. Don't go by the taste test



alone. Read the ingredients, and see what is there, because the devil wants to infiltrate—and he does it many ways.

Now the devil doesn't have just one way to work. Remember there in the parable of the sower, how does he work there? He catches away the seed. Remember there in the parable of the tares, how does he work there? He imitates the seed. You remember in the parable of the mustard seed, how does he work there? He corrupts the seed. In the parable of the leaven, he infiltrates the Church. Now, why is the Lord doing this? Folks, what the Lord is doing is showing us what is going to happen; and these parables go from the time when Jesus began to sow the seed until the end of the world at the Final Judgment, as we're going to see, as he separates the wheat and the tares, and we're going to see later, the good fish from the bad fish. So I hope this is just opening your eyes a little bit.

## **Conclusion**

We've got some more wonderful parables coming up now: the parable of the treasure hid in the field, the parable of the pearl of great price, the parable of the net and the great draw of fish. And when we're finished, do you know what you're going to do? You're going to sit back and say, "You know, the Bible is a wonderful book; and everything is tracking exactly, precisely, as God said it would." You're not going to have false expectations. Therefore you're not going to be discouraged. And therefore you're not going to doubt. And therefore you're not going to be in despair. But you're going to say, "Hallelujah," because our same God who's taught us all of these things has also taught there is a true Church. And the Lord Jesus said, *"I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"* (Matthew 16:18).

# The Mystery of Israel's History

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** July 6, 1980

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 13:44

*“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.”*

MATTHEW 13:44

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Israel Was Sovereignly Blessed
- II. Israel Was Sadly Buried
- III. Israel Was Sacrificially Bought
  - A. Jesus Revealed the Treasure
  - B. Jesus Redeemed the Treasure
  - C. Jesus Will Reclaim the Treasure

Conclusion

## Introduction

All right, take your Bibles, please, now, and turn, if you will, to Matthew chapter 13, verse 44. Emily, that was just beautiful. Thank you for reminding us one more time of the liberty that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. “If the Son”—that is, Jesus—“shall make you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36). I have enjoyed the parables in Matthew 13. There are seven parables that are called “the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.” These are truths that you could never learn from schoolbooks, things that you could never figure out by human ingenuity or deduction, but things that you must learn by divine revelation. And so parables were given by the Lord Jesus to conceal and to reveal: to conceal from those who are unspiritual, but to reveal to those who want to know.

And one of the great truths that we’re going to learn today is the truth of the treasure hid in a field. And I’m reading here Matthew chapter 13, verse 44: *“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth the field”* (Matthew 13:44). That’s just one verse, and a very simple parable.

Now, remember, a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. What is the

earthly story? It's a very simple story. Here's a man out in a field. Maybe he's plowing, maybe he's walking; but somehow he discovers that in that field is a very precious treasure. He uncovers it, because it's a buried treasure. He looks at it for a while. He marvels in its beauty and its worth. And then he covers it back up. And he goes off and finds who owns that field, and he says, "Say, I'd like to buy your field." And he purchases the field, not for the field's sake, but for the treasure's sake, because he intends to come back and get the treasure; for he knows, when he buys the field, he'll have the treasure also.

Now that's the earthly story. What is the heavenly meaning? Well, like all of these parables in Matthew 13, they're so easily misunderstood. Let me tell you what the common interpretation is; it's so wrong, but this is the interpretation that you'll find in the majority of the commentaries, and quarterlies, and so forth, and taught so many times erroneously in Sunday School lessons. People say that the treasure hid in the field is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the great treasure. And, also, there's a parable that follows this one, the parable of the pearl of great price. And Jesus is often called the pearl of great price. Often, Brother Lane, in gospel music, Jesus is called the pearl of great price, and Jesus is called that hidden treasure.

And so people have the idea that Jesus is the treasure hid in a field. The man who finds the treasure is the sinner who's been awakened to the riches of the gospel; and when he sees just how wonderful Jesus is, then he goes and sells all that he has, buys the field, so that he can have Jesus, and now he's a Christian.

Now, doesn't that sound sweet? Friend, that's so wrong—that's so wrong. It couldn't be more wrong. All right now, listen. Why is that wrong? Well, in the first place, these parables were given in sequence, and they're all linked together. And so Jesus has already given us the keys to the interpretation of the parable. And what does the field represent? We don't have to guess what the field represents. The field is not the Scriptures where the gospel is hidden; but look in verse 38 and you'll see what the field is. The field is the world. And so don't say that Jesus is hidden in the Scriptures, as some people erroneously think that this parable teaches. He may be tucked away in the Scriptures; but that's not what this parable teaches. For in these parables the field is the world.

And who is the man that finds the treasure? The man is not a sinner man. The man is Jesus Himself. Look in verse 37: "*He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man*" (Matthew 13:37). Now almost every time in the parables there's a man who does something, and that man consistently is Christ, the Son of man. He's not some sinner or something; but the man is the Lord Jesus Christ. And so we know that the treasure hid in the field is not Christ; He's the one who discovers the treasure. And, by the way, Jesus is not hidden in the world. If you were to

look for Jesus, that's the one place you'd not look for Him. And remember the field is the world. The field is the world. And so Jesus is not hidden in the world.

In the next place, if this treasure represents Jesus, notice what this man did. He found the treasure, and then he hid it again. Now, is a Christian supposed to hide Christ once he finds Him? Of course not! We're supposed to proclaim Christ. But then it gets even more absurd if you make this treasure hid in a field the Lord Jesus Christ. Here the man, after he discovers Christ, so they say, he goes and sells all that he has to buy the field so to possess the treasure. Do you think Jesus Christ is for sale? Do you think that you can buy salvation? Of course not! Thank God, thank God, thank God, *"the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"* (Romans 6:23). I want to tell you, sirs; I want to tell you, ladies: The gospel and Christ is not for sale; and you can't buy Him with anything.

Now the next thing I want to tell you: If you could buy Him, what would you buy Him with? I mean the sinner is absolutely, totally, completely bankrupt in the sight of a righteous and holy God. An unsaved sinner has nothing to sell with which to buy Christ. The interpretation that makes the treasure hid in the field of Christ is obviously, patently erroneous.

Okay, what is the true interpretation? Well, a part of the key to understanding the true interpretation of this is to understand when Jesus gave this parable. Look, if you will, please, in verse 36: *"Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field"* (Matthew 13:36); that is, "Make known to us the parable of the tares in the field." You see, Jesus had already given four parables, and He gave four parables out in public, what we call the Sermon by the Sea. And all of the people were there, the saved and the lost, the disciples and the Pharisees; all of them were there, and Jesus gave four parables.

Remember what He gave. We have the parable of the stubborn soil, the soil that wouldn't bring forth. And there was nothing wrong with the seed, but there was something wrong with the soil. And what a discouraging parable that must have been: the parable of the stubborn soil! And then, remember, He gave the parable of the treacherous tares, these old hypocrites sown in the field. The Son of man sowed the good seed, and then an enemy came and sowed the tares. How discouraging that must have been to the disciples! And, then again, Jesus gave the story of that mustard seed: that monstrous mustard seed, that maverick mustard seed, that mustard seed that was supposed to be an herb and became a tree. And what a revolting development there was of this apostate Christianity and Christendom that was going to come out of the pure gospel! Oh, how discouraging that must have been to the disciples!

And then, Jesus gave the parable of the loaf and the leaven. Remember the story of

the leaven that we talked about last Sunday, how this leaven just permeated everything, and leaven is a symbol of evil. Why, I imagine after Jesus gave those four parables, the disciples were so low they could have sat on the curb and dangled their feet. I mean, it was just discouraging. Here Jesus is showing what's going to happen, as He's looking down through the tunnel of time, and He's showing all of these kinds of developments. And we say, "Oh, no, that's terrible! That's awful! All of these things that are going to happen!" How discouraged they must have been as Jesus foretold apostasy in the church, and anarchy in the world, and apathy in the pew!

Jesus told it all. But now He brings his disciples aside after these first four parables. The parables are divided into four and three: four, the earth number; three, the divine number. Now He's going to give three more parables. And now He brings His disciples aside. He starts to talk to them about two things that are very precious to Him: number one, a treasure hid in a field; number two, a pearl of great price. I'm going to show you that the treasure hid in the field is the nation Israel. And I'm going to show you next week that the pearl of great price is the Church. I'm going to show you that Jesus Christ is the One who has purchased these with His own blood. Jesus, who gave all, that He might find this treasure and bring this treasure to Himself; and Jesus, who gave all, that He might possess this pearl and bring it to Himself.

Now you may doubt that the treasure represents Israel, but I don't think you will if you'll just stay with me for just a little bit and understand how the Lord Jesus is saying to his disciples, "Look, in spite of all that seems to be going on that's getting out of hand, I want you to know that I have purposed to do two things: number one, I'm going to keep the solemn promises to Israel; and, number two, I'm going to bring my Church on through. *"I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"* (Matthew 16:18). And if you understand what Jesus is saying today, my, what an encouragement it is going to be to you who live in these terrible and troublesome times!

There are three things I want you to notice about this treasure that is hidden in the field. And remember, the field is the world, this treasure that's tucked away in the world of humanity that I call the nation of Israel. Three things I want you to notice. First of all, I want you to notice that Israel was sovereignly blessed. Secondly, I want you to see that Israel was sadly buried. But I want you to see, thirdly, that Israel has been sacrificially bought. That's what this parable teaches.

## **I. Israel Was Sovereignly Blessed**

Israel was sovereignly blessed—sovereignly blessed. God is the great God, the King, the Lord, the Sovereign. He can do no wrong. And God chose the nation Israel. God chose the Jewish people. Now you may not agree with it. You may not like it. You may not understand it. But, friend, you can't change it. God chose the Jews. Somebody said,

“How odd of God to choose the Jews.” But He did—He did.

I want you to look with me in Exodus chapter 19 and verse 5 for a moment. And I want you to turn to these verses because they’re worth seeing now. Exodus chapter 19, verse 5—here’s what God says to Israel: *“Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me...”*—just underscore that phrase—*“a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine”* (Exodus 19:5). *“A peculiar treasure unto me above all people”*: that’s what God said to Israel. “You are a peculiar treasure.”

Look in Deuteronomy chapter 14 and verse 2 and you’ll get the same idea. Just keep on going right there—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy—all right, Deuteronomy chapter 14 and verse 2. God speaks again to Israel: *“For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth”* (Deuteronomy 14:2). God chose them to be a peculiar people, different from any other people upon the face of the earth.

And then I want you to see Psalm 135. Just turn to Psalm 135 and look at verse 4 with me: *“For the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure”* (Psalm 135:4)—*“Israel for his peculiar treasure.”* Now, you see, these people who were listening to Him knew this Old Testament, and they knew that God said that Israel was a treasure, and they knew that God said that Israel was a peculiar treasure.

Now you say, “Brother Rogers, why, though, does this speak of Israel? How do you know it doesn’t speak of the Church?” Because nowhere in the Bible is the Church ever called the treasure. The Church is called the body of Christ, the bride of Christ. The Church is called the pearl of great price. The Bible calls the Church many things, but the Bible never calls the Church a treasure. And, incidentally, the Bible never calls Israel a pearl. That’s a New Testament term. The Old Testament Jews didn’t value pearls. They were not listed among their gems and things that they valued.

You see, the treasure is uniquely Israel, and Israel was sovereignly chosen by Almighty God. God set His affection upon them. They are the chosen people. You say, “Well, why does God want to bless the Jews and not everybody else?” Well, friend, that’s not it. He wants to bless everybody else through the Jews. Now understand this: God did not choose the Jews to be a reservoir into which He would pour His blessings; God chose the Jews to be a pipeline through which He would send His blessings to all of the world.

You see, when God made His covenant to Abraham, what did God say to Abraham? God said to Abraham, “Through you shall all the nations of the world be blessed” (Genesis 12:3). See? That’s why God chose these people: as a kingdom of priests to minister the message and love of God to all of the world. And I thank God that the Bible

came from the Jews, and I thank God that my Savior, my Messiah, the Lord Jesus, came from the stock of Abraham, a descendant of David. Yes, thank God that God chose this nation to be a blessing to all of the world. But they are the chosen people, a peculiar treasure.

And if you want to know what God is up to, you keep your eye upon the Jews. Ladies and gentlemen, as the Jew goes, so goes the world. And God's yardstick, and God's blueprint, and God's outline, and God's program of what He is up to, is going to be measured by the Jews. Do you want to know what's going on? Don't keep your eyes on Washington. Don't keep your eyes on Moscow. Don't keep your eyes on Paris or Tokyo. Keep your eyes on the Middle East. As the Jew goes, so goes the world.

But the point I'm making right now is that Israel was sovereignly blessed—sovereignly blessed. The great sovereign God, of his own free will and volition, decided that He was going to choose the Jewish nation. All right, they are a peculiar treasure, a peculiar treasure—no other treasure just like them. That's the first point: Israel sovereignly blessed.

## **II. Israel Was Sadly Buried**

The second point: Israel was sadly buried. You see, here was a treasure, but now it's hid in a field. It's not in a bank vault somewhere. It's not on display. It's not bringing glory to anybody or anything, but here it is hidden in a field. When Jesus Christ came into this world, He found this treasure, and found that it was lost for its plan and its purpose.

For 400 years, Israel had been buried in the field, which is the world. For 400 years, the nation Israel had had no prophet. For 400 years, the nation Israel had known no power. For 400 years, the nation had exercised no purpose. They were lost years. Here was a nation in disgrace and despair: buried, as it were, in the field of the world, crushed under the iron boot of Rome. Oh, the temple was going on, but it was filled with moneychangers. The priests were corrupt. The scribes and the Pharisees were tainted with greed and hatred and all of these things. Israel was a nation in poverty, and Israel was a nation in misery, and Israel was a nation ripe for judgment. And Israel was a nation that was not fulfilling her destiny. She wasn't being a blessing to anybody, not even herself. Yet God said, "Through these shall all of the nations of the world be blessed." They were sovereignly blessed, but then they were sadly buried.

And look, if you will, in Matthew 15. We're in Matthew 13, but look, if you will, please, in Matthew 15 and you'll get the idea of what I'm talking about. The nation Israel was lost, like a treasure lost in the field. In Matthew 15 and verse 24, Jesus answered and said, "*I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel*" (Matthew 15:24). A nation buried, a nation lost: those are the ones to whom Jesus came.

### III. Israel Was Sacrificially Bought

Now the third thing I want you to notice: not only was Israel sovereignly blessed, not only was Israel sadly buried; but Israel was sacrificially bought. You know, what did the man do in the parable? He covered the treasure back up and he went and bought the entire field. And how much did it cost? It cost him everything that he had. Now we're going to slow down on this last point just a little bit. I want you to notice three things about the fact that Israel was sacrificially bought. I want you to notice, first of all, that Jesus revealed the treasure. And then Jesus redeemed the treasure, in order that Jesus might reclaim the treasure. That's what the parable shows us now.

#### A. Jesus Revealed the Treasure

First of all, that Jesus revealed the treasure. It was hid in the field, but Jesus found it, Jesus uncovered it, Jesus displayed it. And for a brief glimpse in the earthly ministry of Jesus that is exactly what the Lord Jesus Christ did. Jesus Christ came and performed miracles, and taught lessons, and made statements, to give them just for a moment a flicker, a glimpse, into glory, to show them what this treasure really was. Jesus uncovered it.

Now, remember we're in Matthew chapter 13. Just go back to Matthew chapter 12 and you'll see this. You see, chapter 13, I'm going to tell you something very profound—pay attention: chapter 13 follows chapter 12. Have you got that? Okay now, that sounds facetious, but pay attention. In chapter 12, the Pharisees had accused Jesus Christ of casting out demons by the prince of demons, by Beelzebub. Jesus had just healed a man who was blind and dumb, and Jesus had performed a miracle that only God could perform. Jesus had taught as only God could teach. Jesus had loved as only God could love.

And what was the truth of that? What was the emphasis of that? What was it all about? Well, look in verse 28: *“But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you”* (Matthew 12:28). Just underscore that. For a brief moment, the kingdom of God was there. For a brief moment, the kingdom that God had planned and purposed was uncovered. Jesus came and He pulled away the dirt; and Jesus came and pushed away the rocks; and Jesus, for a moment, in all of His glory, revealed the kingdom of God.

All right, He uncovered it, He revealed it, and it was glorious. But what was their response to it? Look, if you will, in Matthew 13 now. Why did Jesus speak in parables? Why did Jesus give the parable of the treasure hid in the field? Listen to Matthew 13, verse 13: *“Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing*



*ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them"* (Matthew 13:13–15).

Oh, friends, what did they do when the King was there, and the kingdom of God was there, and the miracles of God were there? They said He was casting out devils by the prince of devils. So blind were they, so deaf were they, so dumb, so stupid, they could not understand, they could not see. And so the treasure is uncovered for just a moment. But now Jesus just covers it back up with parables and stories hard to understand. He's covering it all back up. Before, He was uncovering; but now he starts to cover it back up. He starts to hide it back. And in chapter 21 of Matthew He says, "The kingdom is taken from you now, and it's going to be given to a nation that will bring forth fruit" (Matthew 21:43). He's talking there about the Church, a holy nation.

And then Jesus stood upon the Mount of Olives with salty tears—and I want you to look in Matthew 23, verse 37, and see what the Lord Jesus said. Look now—it's all right here in this part of the Gospel of Matthew. In Matthew chapter 23, verse 37, Jesus, from the Mount of Olives, looks down upon Jerusalem and says, "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!*" Then I can see Jesus as He looks down upon that temple from the Mount of Olives and He says, "*Behold, your house is left unto you desolate*" (Matthew 23:37–38)—covered over, buried again, desolated.

## **B. Jesus Redeemed the Treasure**

Jesus, for a moment, gave them a glimpse of glory. Jesus, for a moment, pulled back the muck, the mire, and let that kingdom shine through. It was revealed by Jesus. But then, dear friend, not only did Jesus reveal the treasure, but Jesus redeemed the treasure. Go back to Matthew chapter 13 and look again in verse 44: "*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth,*"—that is, he hides it again. Why? Well, he has a plan—"and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field" (Matthew 13:44).

Now, what is the field? The field is the world. Who bought the world? The Lord Jesus. And how did he buy it? First Peter tells us, "*[For] ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold...but with the...blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot*" (1 Peter 1:18–19). What did he buy this field with? The Bible says this man gave all that he had. Friend, that's what Jesus gave on the cross. He purchased Israel, and He purchased the Church, with the silver of His tears and with the gold of His blood. "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that*

*whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*" (John 3:16).

Jesus gave it all. You cannot even begin in your wildest imagination to understand the price that was paid for Israel and the price paid for the pearl of great price. One great preacher said, "Tongue cannot tell, throat cannot sing, hand cannot paint the tragedy that was enacted on the hill called Calvary. Gather the wail of the icy winds that howl through the frozen north; extract the heart despair of a mother watching wild beasts tear at the throat of her baby; capture all of the hopeless shrieks of the damned and the land of shadows and unending doom—and with all of this at your command, you will still be unable to paint the picture that is Calvary." Only the damned in hell can begin to know the price Jesus paid.

### **C. Jesus Will Reclaim the Treasure**

This man in the parable gave all—He gave all. He was rich, became poor, that through His poverty, we might be rich. Jesus revealed the treasure. Jesus redeemed the treasure. And why? Because Jesus is going to reclaim the treasure. Now, just pay attention: here's where it gets good. Why did that man buy that field? Why did he cover the treasure up and go off? Because he was going to forget the treasure forever? No, he was coming back for that treasure. And I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, God is not finished with the nation Israel. And that's what Jesus was talking about, and that's what Jesus was prophesying. He bought the field in order to return for the treasure.

Now, listen. I read Matthew 23 about how Jesus wept over Jerusalem. But I want you to go back to Matthew 23. There's a verse I left out and I want to read it now. Matthew 23, beginning in verse 37 again: "*O Jerusalem,*"—Jesus said—"*Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which were sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.*" I'm glad it doesn't end there. I'm glad there's another verse. Look in verse 39: "*For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord*" (Matthew 23:37–39)—not, "if you say," but, "till ye say."

Did you know they're going to say that? Did you know that? One of these days—one of these days—Israel will know her King. One of these days, they're going to say of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah, "*Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*" This One who bought this treasure is coming back to receive this treasure unto Himself.

The Apostle Paul knew that. You turn to Romans chapter 11—see what Paul said. Look in verse 1. Romans chapter 11, verse 1: "*I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid*" (Romans 11:1)—"*God forbid.*" Do you think that God is going to forget the Jew? Paul says it is absolutely unthinkable: "*God forbid*"—"God forbid." God has not cast away His people. Go on and see what God says is going to happen. Look

in verse 25—Romans 11:25: *“For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery...”*—remember now we’re talking about the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven— *“For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.”* There’s a period of time known as “the fullness of the Gentiles.” The Bible calls it *“the fulness of the Gentiles.”* We’re living in the times of the Gentiles. It’s the time when that treasure that was uncovered is covered over again.

But then notice in verse 26: *“And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins”* (Romans 11:26). Hallelujah! Glory to God! Did you know there’s coming a time when multiplied millions of our precious Jewish friends are going to receive Christ as their Lord and Messiah? Did you know that? *“Blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.”* God has not forgotten that treasure covered in that field. Jesus paid too great a price for that treasure to forget it, and to walk off and leave it forever. He’s coming back, ladies and gentlemen, to receive this treasure unto Himself.

Now I want you to turn to Psalm 89. You know, some of my amillennial friends—if you don’t know what an amillennialist is, I’m not even going to tell you, because I don’t want to mess you up—but some of my amillennial friends tell me that God is finished with the Jew, and that He’s not dealing with the Jew anymore, and that the Church is spiritual Israel, and all of that. But I want you to see what God says here in Psalm 89, verse 27. He’s speaking about David. Let’s get the thought in verse 20: *“I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him”* (Psalm 89:20). And then, notice in verse 27: *“[And] I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to endure for ever,”*—that means there will always be a Jewish people. Listen—*“and his throne as the days of heaven. If his children forsake my law,”*—and they have—*“and walk not in my judgments;”*—and they haven’t—*“if they break my statutes,”*—they have—*“and keep not my commandments;”*—they haven’t; then God says this—*“then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes”* (Psalm 89:27–32)—and He has.

The Jews have known unmentionable persecution and heartbreak and atrocities under Pharaoh, and Nebuchadnezzar, and Alexander the Great, and Nero, and the Turks, and under Hitler, and under Russia today, and some of the Arab nations today. And some who name the name of Christ and who call themselves Christians—God forbid—have persecuted Israel. I spoke with Menachem Begin here a few months ago, and I said, “You may feel that Christians are not a friend to Israel, because Jews have

suffered at the hands of some who call themselves Christians, but,” I said, “not real Christians—not real Christians.” Just as there are some who say they are Jews who are not real Jews, there are some who say they are Christians but not real Christians. But these Jews have suffered, and they have suffered.

Listen to what God says. God says, *“If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.”* But you put a big star by verse 33: *“Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that has gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven”* (Psalm 89:33–37).

That’s what God says. God says that the Jewish nation is indestructible. God prophesied that the Jew would be disobedient. God prophesied that the Jew would be dispersed. God prophesied that the Jew would be discredited. But God also prophesied that the Jew would not be destroyed. He is coming to receive that treasure hid in a field. The king of Egypt could not exterminate him. The Red Sea could not drown him. Jonah’s whale could not digest him. The fiery furnace could not devour him. The gallows of Haman could not hang him. The nations of the earth have not been able to assimilate him. And the dictators of this world cannot annihilate him. He is God’s treasure hidden in a field bought with a great price, and the One who purchased that treasure is coming back to reclaim it, and don’t you forget it.

Oh, Israel is going through some sorrow; Israel is going through some heartache, because there’s coming—and he’s right on the horizon right now—a false Christ, an antichrist, that many of the Jews will believe is the Messiah. And he will betray them and turn on them. Jesus said, “I’ve come in my Father’s name, and you’ll not receive me; but if another shall come in his name, him ye shall receive” (John 5:43). But they’re going to see that they’ve been betrayed.

And God says in the Book of Zechariah that He’s going to “pour out upon them the spirit of supplication, and they’re going to look upon me whom they have pierced, and they’re going to mourn for Him as one mourneth for his only begotten son” (Zechariah 12:10). And a nation shall be born in a day, and they shall proclaim Christ as their Lord and Savior—the mystery of Israel’s history—for Jesus revealed the treasure, Jesus redeemed the treasure, and one of these days, Jesus is coming—glory hallelujah!—to reclaim that treasure. And it fills my heart—it just fills my heart—to know that God has not cast away His people, that God will keep His word. And when Jesus told this parable, after He’d been so rejected by this people, Jesus gave us an insight, and Jesus told us, here’s a nation, sovereignly blessed, sadly buried, but, my dear friend,

sacrificially bought; and He bought the field that He might come back and reclaim the treasure.

## Conclusion

Now, let me make just three little applications and I'll be finished—just three applications. You say, “What does this have to me? I'm a Christian; I'm not a Jew.” Well, there are some Jewish Christians. But you say, “I'm part of the Church; I'm not a part of Israel. What does this have to do with me?” Three things—many other things, but three I'm going to mention today.

Number one: I just want you to refuse to worry, because everything's on schedule—everything's on schedule. Worry is a sin. You take worry and turn it around: you have faith. You take faith and turn it around: you have worry. Jesus gave us these parables of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven so that, when it looks like things have gone wrong, we'll be able to understand that God knows what He's doing, and God is keeping His promises with the nation Israel even sometimes when it looks like He isn't. Everything is on schedule. God's taking care of it, friend. As I said last week, He's not walking up and down in heaven wringing His hands, saying, “What am I'm going to do? What am I'm going to do?” “There's no panic in heaven, only plans,” is what Corrie Ten Boom said—and I agree. “No panic in heaven, only plans.” And so, dear friend, things are in God's hands, and everything is on schedule.

The second application I want to make is this: that if God is going to keep His word to Abraham. And He will: that same God will keep His word to you. God's not going to break His word. God said, in Psalm 89, “I will not alter the thing that has gone out of my lips” (Psalm 89:34). And just as God is a covenant-keeping God with Israel, God is a covenant-keeping God to the new Israel, the Church—those who trust Him, those who believe in Him. And I want to tell you today that, if you'll give your heart to Jesus Christ, if you will enter into a covenant of faith with Jesus Christ, if you will receive today Christ as your Lord and your Messiah, on the authority of the Word of God, the God who cannot lie, He will save you today, and He'll keep you. He will! He will! He will! God cannot lie! He cannot!

The third thing I want to say, just by way of application, friend, from my viewpoint, and from the things that I know about the Bible, I believe Jesus is about to come back for His treasure. I believe that. The One who revealed it, the One who redeemed it, is about to come and reclaim it. *Soon and very soon I believe that God is going to put the final period upon the final sentence upon the final paragraph upon the final page of history, and history as we know it will have come to an end, and the trumpet will sound, and the dead in Christ will rise, and we which remain in our life will be caught up to meet our Lord in the air* (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

But I want to ask you a question. If that were today—and it may well be—would you be saved? Do you know that you're saved? Does God Spirit bear witness with your spirit that you're a child of God? If not, you need today to receive Christ. And you can receive Christ by faith. You are not saved by good works. You are not saved by joining a church. You're not saved by getting baptized. You are saved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible says, *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved"* (Acts 16:31).

I'm glad the Bible doesn't say, "Everybody that wants to be saved, run around the block." Some crippled children can't run. I'm glad the Bible doesn't say, "Everybody that wants to be saved, give a hundred dollars." Some don't have a hundred dollars. I'm glad the Bible didn't say, "Everybody that wants to be saved, read a chapter in the book." There are some who can't read. But there's something everyone can do, and that's to receive Christ as his personal Savior and Lord. *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."* It's simply glorious; it's gloriously simple.

Have you done it? Will you do it? Will you say to this great covenant-keeping God today, "O God, I'm a sinner, and I'm lost, and I need to be saved, and I want to be saved; and, Jesus, you died to save me on the cross, and you promised to save me if I would only trust you; I do trust you now, Jesus; now I trust you with all my heart forever; I trust you, Jesus"? And He'll save you today, and you can go home a child of God. You can go home with your sins forgiven. You can go home with heaven as your destiny.

# The Strange Mystery of the Buried Treasure

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: February 8, 1998**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 13:44**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Israel Is a Treasure Sovereignly Chosen
- II. Israel Is a Treasure Sadly Covered
- III. Israel Is a Treasure Sovereignly Claimed

Conclusion

## Introduction

**W**e've been studying seven parables. Jesus called them "The Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven." They're all in Matthew chapter 13. Turn to Matthew chapter 13, and in just a moment we're going to study about "The Strange Mystery of the Buried Treasure."

There's not a boy, not a red-blooded American boy, I do not believe, who has not dreamed of finding a buried treasure somewhere. Maybe you dug for it in your backyard. Maybe you still fantasize about finding somewhere a treasure chest, a trove of treasure. Well, our Lord tells us a parable about that. It's a very short parable. As a matter of fact, it's one verse—verse 44: *"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth the field"* (Matthew 13:44). A man, going through a field, finds a treasure in the field. He uncovers it. There it is. He knows it's not his, because the field is not his. So he covers the treasures, goes and buys the field, and, lo, with the field he has the treasure.

Now, what is the interpretation of this parable? Remember that a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. What is the interpretation? What is the meaning of this very earthly story? What does it tell us? May I say that the usual interpretation is the wrong interpretation; and I've heard it over and over again, and it is definitely wrong.

People say, "Well, the treasure: that is the gospel. The field: that's the Bible where the gospel is hidden. The man is a sinner who goes into the Bible and finds the treasure. And then he gives up everything in order to be a Christian. He sells all that he has in order to be a Christian." Of course, this could not be the proper interpretation. We read in these

parables that the field is not the Scripture, but the field is the world. Look in verse 38: *“The field is the world”* (Matthew 13:38). The man in this parable is not the lost sinner seeking heaven, but the man in these parables is Jesus. Look again in verse 37: *“He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man”* (Matthew 13:37). All right, what is the treasure? It couldn't be Christ. It couldn't be the gospel, because Christ or the gospel is not hid in this world. This world is not a friend to the Lord Jesus Christ. And who would be able to hide Jesus once he found Him? And why, once he found the Lord Jesus, would he hide the Lord Jesus? And, again, Christ is not for sale. *“In my hand no price I bring.”* We can't buy the field, or the treasure in the field. Salvation is the free gift of God. And if we could buy it, what would a bankrupt sinner have to buy it with? It's obvious that that's not the right interpretation, albeit that is the normal interpretation. The gospel is not for sale.

The key to understanding all of this is that Jesus is speaking to His disciples in private, and He's saying to them, *“It's not given to them to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to you it is given”* (Matthew 13:11).

Now in the first part of these parables—remember there are seven of them—if you read the first part, they're kind of discouraging. For example, in the first part, you have the parable of the stubborn soil. Remember the stony soil, and the thorny soil, and all of those things? So there's the parable of the stubborn soil. That's kind of a negative parable. And then, the next parable, you have the parable of the treacherous tares, these weeds that are sown among God's good wheat, the hypocrites in the church. And then, in the next parable, you have that story of the monstrous mustard tree, this malevolent monstrous tree in which the fowls of the heavens, these birds that want to steal away the seed, are in that tree—and that tells us about the rise of false cults. And then, in the next parable, you have the parable of the lethal leaven, where that woman hid that leaven in that loaf of bread, you remember, and it permeated the whole thing; and we showed you that leaven is an emblem, a symbol, of evil, and it speaks of Satan's insidious work as he tries to infiltrate the church with the leaven of sin.

Well, by now, I guess they had their chin on their chest. And our Lord now is going to give them something that's going to encourage them—and not only encourage them, but to encourage us. Now we're going to get a little lesson in history and prophecy, and we're going to find out that the treasure is the nation Israel. The treasure hid in the field is the nation Israel.



## **I. Israel Is a Treasure Sovereignly Chosen**

First point, if you make these points and write them down: Israel is a treasure sovereignly chosen. Now I thought a while before I wrote that sentence, so I hope it gets in your head. Israel is a treasure sovereignly chosen.

Now, let me give you some Scripture to back that up. For example, in Exodus chapter 19, verse 5: *“Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine”* (Exodus 19:5). Now God calls Israel His peculiar treasure. Then, in Deuteronomy chapter 14, verse 2: *“For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth”* (Deuteronomy 14:2). Israel is God’s chosen, and they’re God’s chosen treasure. Psalm 135 and verse 4: *“For the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure”* (Psalm 135:4).

God keeps saying that Israel is chosen, and Israel is a treasure. Nowhere in the Bible can I ever find where the Church is called a treasure. Nowhere in the Bible can I ever find where Israel is called a pearl. But in these next two parables we’re going to see a picture of the nation Israel and the Church in the last days. Israel is the treasure, and the Church is the pearl. Israel is God’s chosen nation, and Israel is a treasure unto Almighty God. Don’t argue with God about Israel. If you don’t understand why God chose the Jews, that’s none of your business. Somebody said, “How odd of God to choose the Jews.” But He did. And they are a treasure unto the Lord. And if you want to know what’s going on in the world, study the Jew, because the Jew is God’s yardstick, the Jew is God’s blueprint, the Jew is God’s outline, the Jew is God’s program. As Israel goes, so goes the world. Study the Bible, and you won’t find much about America in it; but you will find over and over again about God’s peculiar treasure, which is Israel.

## **II. Israel Is a Treasure Sadly Covered**

First point—brief point: Israel is a treasure sovereignly chosen. Second point: Israel is a treasure sadly covered. Now this is God’s treasure, but this treasure was covered in the field, in the world. When Jesus came into this world, Israel, for all practical purposes, was lost unto her original plan and purpose. The kingdom that God had promised to His people, the kingdom of heaven, was languishing. Israel was under the iron boot of Rome. They had gone for 400 years as a little, obscure, insignificant nation, being subjected to Rome, the temple itself overrun with moneychangers. As a matter of fact, Jesus called them the lost sheep of Israel. When Jesus came, in Matthew 15, verse 24—you can just see it a few chapters later—He said, “I have not come but to the lost sheep—the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 15:24).

### III. Israel Is a Treasure Sovereignly Claimed

A treasure chosen. A treasure covered. But Israel is also a treasure sovereignly claimed. Now, listen. It was chosen, covered, and claimed. Now our Lord came to this earth—and what did He do? That treasure that He had hid in the field—and the field is the world—He uncovered it. When our Lord came to this earth, He displayed for three and a half years the kingdom of heaven, and He said, “I came to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 15:24). He revealed the treasure.

Now you’re in chapter 13—if you go back to chapter 12, look in verse 28. And they were criticizing Jesus for casting out demons, and they said, “Well, the only way He cast out demons is by Beelzebub, the prince of demons.” But Jesus said, in verse 28, *“But if I cast out devils”—or demons—“by the Spirit of God,”*—now, watch this—*“then the kingdom of God is come unto you”* (Matthew 12:28). There was the Lord, the King of the kingdom, right in their midst. And what did they do when they saw the King? They refused Him. They spurned Him. They were blind to spiritual reality. They said, “He has a demon.” So what was His response to that? Well, that’s in chapter 12. Look in chapter 13, beginning in verse 13: *“Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of [Isaiah], which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive”* (Matthew 13:13–14).

The kingdom is uncovered. There is a glimpse of glory. There is the very King doing miracles in their midst. But they’re blind to that reality, and the kingdom is buried again. And Jesus is now speaking to them in parables, not only to reveal, but also to conceal. This is the first time Jesus spoke in parables—in this thirteenth chapter, the first time. Why? Because as He came to reveal the kingdom of heaven, that kingdom was spurned, neglected, refused, lied on; and the Lord that had chosen the treasure uncovered the treasure and then covers it back again.

But now Jesus is going to reveal. He revealed the treasure, covered it back up again, and went to redeem that treasure. He’s the One who paid the price to buy the field. First Peter 1, verses 18 and 19: *“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot”* (1 Peter 1:18–19). Jesus purchased the field with His own blood. *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son”* (John 3:16). And He is the One who chose that treasure, covered that treasure. He’s the One who’s coming to reveal the treasure, to redeem the treasure, and to reclaim the treasure. The Lord Jesus is going to come back to this earth, and He has

bought Israel with His own blood. And He's going to come back to this earth to reclaim the treasure that He has redeemed. He bought the field in order to return for the treasure.

Now, here's the point I want you to get in your heart and mind, because things are beginning to boil in the Middle East again, and we see foregleams of Armageddon. Listen to me. God is not finished with the nation Israel. I want to give you some scriptures.

Matthew chapter 23, verses 37 to 39—Jesus, coming down the Mount of Olives, going into that Eastern Gate, stopped at a point where I love to stop when I go to Israel, a spot where Jesus wept great salty, copious tears—and here's what He said: *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."* That is, the treasure's covered. But watch this: *"For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord"* (Matthew 23:37-39).

One day, friend, the scales will fall from Israel's eyes, as they fell from the eyes of the Apostle Paul, and when they see Him, they'll say, "Blessed"—"Blessed"—"is He that comes in the name of the Lord." The Apostle Paul said the same thing in Romans 11, verses 25 to 29. He said, *"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery..."*—remember now, he's talking about a mystery; this is the strange mystery of a buried treasure—*"that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel,"*—that is, the treasure's covered—*"until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:"*—sometimes people say, "Oh, he's talking about spiritual Israel." God never calls spiritual Israel Jacob. That's a name for fleshly Jews: Jacob—*"for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes:"*—that is, they turn away from the gospel; you Gentiles got saved—*"but as touching the election, they are beloved for the father's sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance"* (Romans 11:25-29). Do you know what that means? God never changes His mind when He makes a solemn promise. *"The gifts and calling of God are without repentance."* God says, "I'm coming back for my treasure."

Let me give you another verse concerning God's solemn promise to Israel—Psalm 89, and I'm going to read 10 whole verses here, verses 27 through 37. And he's speaking now of David—King David, who epitomizes the highest and most noble king that Israel ever knew: *"Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. If his children forsake my*

*law,”—and I say they have—“and walk not in my judgments;”—and they have not—“if they break my statutes,”—and they have—“and keep not my commandments;”—and they have not kept them—“then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.” And God has done that. But now, watch this: “Nevertheless...”—nevertheless. Friend, underscore that—“nevertheless, my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven.” And then he says, “Selah” (Psalm 89:27–37). That means, “Think about that.” That’s what *Selah* means.*

God prophesied that the Jew would be disobedient, dispersed, discredited, but not destroyed. Even to this very day there are madmen like Saddam Hussein who want to destroy Israel. The King of Egypt could not do it. The Red Sea could not drown Israel. Jonah's whale could not digest Israel. The fiery furnace could not devour Israel. The gallows of Haman could not hang Israel. And the nations of the world have not been able to assimilate Israel. And the dictators cannot annihilate Israel. Israel is God’s chosen people. And God prophesied in the last days He would bring Israel back.

When I was playing high school football, May 14 and 15, 1948, Israel became a nation—a nation born in a day, after eighteen centuries. And now they are back in the land, speaking the same kind of Hebrew that Amos preached with. Other nations get assimilated. They’re dispersed. They can’t be found. When was the last time you had a conversation with an Amalekite?

But Israel is like the Gulf Stream that meanders about three miles off my hometown of West Palm Beach, Florida. It is a river that flows in the ocean. And you wonder, how can a river flow in the ocean? But if you ever have the privilege—and I hope one day you’re so blessed that you can get in a boat; that’s where I’d love to be tomorrow—get in a boat, and go out and go across that water that’s about the color of this carpet that I’m standing on until you come to the Gulf Stream. And it’s like somebody has poured a bottle of blue ink, indigo ink, right there, and there’s that river flowing. And you say, “How does that happen?” Why doesn’t it get dispersed? Israel is like a Gulf Stream, flowing in the ocean of the nations; and she maintains her identity, and God has kept this people as His peculiar treasure.

Yes, she’s been buried in the field, and Israel has suffered unspeakable atrocities and persecution under Pharaoh, and under Nebuchadnezzar, and under Alexander the Great, and under Nero, and under the Turks, and under Hitler, and under some who call themselves Christians—and may God have mercy have mercy on us for that—and under

Russia, and today under the Arab nations. But I want to tell you that Israel is God's treasure. Jesus came. First of all, God chose the treasure. Then the treasure is covered. And then the treasure is purchased by our Lord. And He's going to come back and redeem His treasure. You could no more destroy the Jews than you could remove God from His throne.

Let me give you another verse from Jeremiah chapter 31—verses 35 to 37—listen to this: *“Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name: if those ordinances...”*—now, what ordinances is he taking about? The sun, the moon, the stars, the mighty oceans, the tides. He says—*“if those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured,”*—if you can tell me how high is up—*“and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath,”*—if you can find something this earth is resting on—*“I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD”* (Jeremiah 31:35–37). God says, “You want me to cast off Israel? I’ll do it when you can pull down the sun, moon, and the stars, and tell me how high is up and show me something the earth is resting on.” God will keep His word to Israel. Israel is His treasure. And every Jew you see in Memphis, or in Israel, or in Poland, or wherever you see one, is a testimony to the faithfulness of God.

Now He's going to come back for His peculiar treasure. He came. There was a treasure chosen, a treasure covered, and a treasured purchased. But He's coming back for His treasure one day. Let me give you a couple more scriptures, and we're going to come to a conclusion. Malachi 3 speaks of the Second Coming of our Lord—verses 3 and 4: *“And he”—*that is, Jesus—*“shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver:”*—now, what is silver? It's a treasure—*“and he shall purify the sons of Levi,”*—who are the sons of Levi? That's the Jews—*“and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years”* (Malachi 3:3–4). And now Malachi 3, verses 17 and 18: *“And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels...”*—they'll be mine—*“in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not”* (Malachi 3:17–18). When our Lord comes, He's going to separate the sheep from the goats.

And then, let me give you these two verses, and then I'll just come to a conclusion. There's coming a time, folks—and my heart yearns for that time when God's beloved treasure, Israel, will recognize their King. Zechariah 13, verse 1: *“In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for*

*uncleanness*” (Zechariah 13:1). “There’s a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Emmanuel’s veins.” And then Zechariah 13, verse 9: “*And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God*” (Zechariah 13:9). He’s coming, friend, for His treasure.

## **Conclusion**

Now, what does that mean to us? Well, it means, number one, that everything’s on schedule. It means, number two, if God kept His word to Abraham, that same God will keep His word to us, amen? If God has sovereignly kept His word to Israel, we know that He’ll keep His word to us. Number three, I believe, strongly believe, that the signs of the times are telling us that our Lord is just about to step out of the glory and uncover the treasure that He’s bought. Don’t you believe that? Now Israel is the treasure. Next week we’re going to talk about the Church, which is the pearl.

# The Strange Mystery of the Precious Pearl

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: March 15, 1998**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 13:45–46**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. How the Pearl Was Wrought
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Conclusion

## Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn to Matthew chapter 13. And we are continuing a series on “The Strange Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven.” And we’ve seen the mystery of the fruitless farmer who put his seed in the soil—and stubborn soil and rocky soil and thorny soil didn’t bring forth fruit. We’ve seen the mystery of the treacherous tares and the wild weed that was sown among the true seed. We’ve seen the strange mystery of the monstrous mustard, about the mustard plant that became a monstrous tree, a monstrosity. We have seen the parable of the leaven and the sneaky housewife who hid leaven in three measures of meal. And it’s time for some good news. And there’s good news in these seven parables also. And, tonight, we’re going to see some good news: “The Strange Mystery of the Precious Pearl.”

Look, if you will, in Matthew 13, verse 45: *“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it”* (Matthew 13:45–46). A very short parable. Now, remember that a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. And these parables explain mysteries. Go back to verses 10 and 11 of this same chapter and you’ll understand what I’m talking about. It’s the reason why I call them mysteries: *“And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto*

*them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them...*”—that is, the ones to whom the parables are not given—“*but to them it is not given*” (Matthew 13:10–11). So these are wonderful mysteries, mystery stories, sacred secrets that God is letting us in on.

And this is the story of a priceless pearl; a man, a merchantman, who loves pearls, traveling the world around; then he finds that one great, priceless, precious pearl, sells everything that he has in order to purchase that one pearl—and Jesus said this is a parable of the kingdom of heaven.

Now I’ve been thinking about this message for a long time, and I, some years ago, clipped from the newspaper a story about a pearl. I was astounded when I saw it. It was in *The Commercial Appeal*. The title of the article was “Monstrous Pearl is a Gem of a Deal,” and it tells about a pearl—you’re going to be surprised when you hear this—this pearl, as big as a football, weighed fourteen pounds—the world’s largest known pearl. “A football-sized gem that weighs fourteen pounds will soon go on the block in Los Angeles for ten million. Listed in the Guinness Book of Records, the pearl comes with a history almost as rich as its price tag. An estimated 6,000 years old, the gargantuan gem was reportedly found in the Philippines in 1934 by a diver who drowned while trying to retrieve it from the shell of a giant clam. The ten-million asking price is considered a bargain, for some have valued it much higher.” Well, I tore that out. I said, “That just reminds me of this parable of a pearl of great, great price.”

I don’t suppose there’s any parable in these seven that has been more misinterpreted than this parable of the pearl of great price. Let me tell you how it is misinterpreted, and then let me tell you what I believe is the truth concerning the pearl of great price.

Now the average interpretation—and I’ve seen it in our Sunday Baptist Sunday School literature—is that the merchantman is the lost sinner who is seeking the Lord Jesus Christ. He’s on a search for God. That’s the merchantman who’s looking for lost pearls. They say, “That just pictures a lost sinner trying to find salvation, trying to find God.” That is so obviously wrong, because the sinner is never on a search for God. To the contrary, the sinner never takes the initiative. God must take the initiative. Let me give you a scripture that will prove that. Romans chapter 3, verse 11, says, “*There is none that seeketh after God*” (Romans 3:11). So this merchantman cannot picture a lost man seeking God. And, as a matter of fact, just the opposite: God seeks man. Adam hid from God in the Garden of Eden. And had not God taken the initiative and gone after him, and said, “Adam, Adam, where art thou?” (Genesis 3:9) Adam never would have come to the Lord. Put it down big, put it down plain, put it down straight: If you sought Him, it was because He first sought you, amen?



Now, secondly, the way this is often interpreted is, the merchantman represents the sinner seeking Christ, and when he finds Christ, he sells all that he has in order to buy Christ. Well, that's ridiculous. A sinner is bankrupt. He has nothing in the sight of God. What can he sell? What can he give? He has nothing at all. He has no riches of his own to buy Christ with. There are almost six billion people on the face of this earth. If you would put them heel to toe, they'd make a line so long it would go out around the moon and circle back to the earth and then go around the earth a number of times. If you were to take that line of people, all six billion people, standing heel to toe, and take a golden cup, and pass it down the line, and say for each person to put his goodness in that cup, when you got to the end of the line, the cup would be empty—the cup would be empty. There is in us, in our flesh, no good thing.

Again, let me give you another scripture—Romans chapter 3, verse 12: *"They are all gone out of the way,"*—talking about sinners—*"they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one"* (Romans 3:12). Isaiah 64:6: *"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."*

What would a lost sinner buy Christ with? Number one: We're not seeking Christ by nature. Number two: If we were, we didn't have anything to buy Him with. And, number three—and you listen very carefully: Jesus Christ is not for sale—Jesus Christ is not for sale. That's blasphemy to say that you could buy the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation is not something that you earn, that you can buy. Titus 3:5 says it is *"not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us."* And the Bible says again, in Romans chapter 6, verse 23, *"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"* (Romans 6:23). You will never buy the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so, what is the pearl of great price? The pearl of great price is not Jesus. I've often heard Jesus called the pearl of great price. But He is not the pearl of great price. The pearl of great price is the Church—the Church. The merchantman is the Lord Jesus who has purchased the Church with His own precious blood.

Now the last time we talked together, we talked about a treasure that was hid in the field. Israel is called God's peculiar treasure. That's the treasure hid in the field. The Church is never called a peculiar treasure, and Israel is never called a pearl. The pearl represents the Church purchased by the Lord Jesus Christ. And there are three things tonight I want you to see about this precious pearl and "The Strange Mystery of the Precious Pearl." I want you to see how this pearl was wrought; I want you to see how it was sought; and I want you to see how it was bought. And then you'll thank God for the wonderful salvation that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **I. How the Pearl Was Wrought**

How is a pearl formed? How is a pearl wrought? The formation of a pearl is a wonderful picture of the Church. I did some research. I got the encyclopedia and read about pearls, and I found out that the best pearls come from the Persian Gulf. They come from a depth of about 150 feet beneath the water. They come from an oyster known as the seed pearl oyster. And the way the pearl is formed is that inside the oyster, or inside the clam, there comes some impurity, some bit of dirt, some grit, some irritation, and it imbeds itself in that living being beneath the ocean. And then the oyster or the clam begins to exude a substance known as nacre, and it begins layer by layer by layer to cover that hideous, that ugly thing, that gritty thing, that filthy thing; and it covers it and covers it and covers it until something beautiful has been made. And this pearl begins to grow and grow and grow. I also found out that a pearl is not like any other gem, because a pearl is made of something living. And, also, a pearl cannot be divided. An emerald can be divided. A diamond can be divided. An opal can be divided. But you can't divide a pearl without destroying it.

And so now I want you to notice how the pearl represents the Church.

### **A. It Goes from Grit to Glory**

First of all, it goes from grit to glory. I love the song that we just heard. God can't remember our sin anymore. Why? Because it has been covered by His grace. He has taken that grit, that grime, that is there, and, layer by layer, He has covered it. He was wounded for our transgressions, and He has taken our guilt, and He has clothed it with His glory. The Church has gone from grit to glory like the pearl.

### **B. It Goes from Depth to Height**

The Church has gone from depth to height like a pearl. The pearl down in the bottom of the ocean has come now and has been brought up out of the troubled sea, and has been made fit to be worn in the bosom of the King to be on display in the glory. And we will shine forever in the glory. Having come from great depth, the Church is going to great height.

### **C. It Goes from Darkness to Light**

The Church has been taken from darkness to light. You'll never find a darker place than inside an oyster at the bottom of the sea. But that pearl is taken from darkness to light. And the pearl is a gem that not only absorbs light, but it reflects light, and therefore it is a picture of the Church. As a matter of fact, perhaps the writer of the hymn had this in mind when he wrote,

*From sinking sand He lifted me,  
With tender hand He lifted me;  
From shades of night to plains of light,  
Oh, praise His name, He lifted me!*

—CHARLES H. GABRIEL

#### **D. It Is Formed from Start to Finish**

Like the Church, the pearl has gone from grit to glory, from depth to height. The pearl has gone from darkness to light. And the pearl, like the Church, is formed from start to finish. You see, the pearl grows layer by layer by layer. It is grown gradually, indivisibly, with no blemish if it is a perfect pearl. A cannot be divided. It cannot be carved. There are not two Churches, there are not Churches, but in the end there is one Church without spot or wrinkle, any blemish whatsoever. So this pearl of great price represents the Church, and you see how it was wrought.

## **II. How the Pearl Was Sought**

Now I want you to see how it was sought. Look again at the Scripture. The Bible says, when this merchantman has found this pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. Now I'm talking now on how it was sought. Wonder of wonders that Jesus was seeking me and He was seeking you. Wonder of wonders that He loves us. Psalm 45, verse 11, says, *"So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty"* (Psalm 45:11). You are very precious to Him. You are a beautiful thing to Him. You were in His heart before the foundation of this world. He is the seeking Savior. Luke 19:10: *"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."* Jesus is the merchantman. Jesus is the One seeking the pearl.

How does He seek? Well, He seeks through the Holy Spirit. Before I came out here tonight, I got on my knees and prayed. Before I preached this morning, I got on my knees and prayed, because I am dependent upon the Holy Spirit of God to seek you out, because it is the Holy Spirit of God that puts His finger on your heart and convicts you of sin. And if the Holy Spirit of God is speaking to you tonight, don't trifle with Him. God speaks through His Spirit.

God speaks through suffering and sickness. Have you been sick? Have you been in pain? Has some bad message come from the doctor? Well, that's God that's seeking you. Sometimes a man has to be put flat on his back in order to look up. Sometimes God seeks through sorrows. Many a time at a funeral I've been able to lead somebody to Jesus that otherwise, from my estimation, would not have come to Him.

God seeks through the Scriptures and through songs. So many ways God is seeking you. And you might think that you're here tonight just by your own will, but I believe perhaps

God has engineered your being here tonight, because God wants you to understand that He loves you, He desires you, and He wants to save you.

### III. How the Pearl was Bought

So you see how the pearl was wrought, and God made something beautiful out of something ugly. You see how the pearl was sought: the Lord desires us. And I've said it before: God doesn't love us because we're valuable; we're valuable because He loves us. He set His attention on us. Now, here's the third thing I want you to see: how this pearl was bought. The Bible says the merchantman sold all that he had and bought this pearl. That's the reason why I know that the pearl is an illustration, a picture, of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me give you a verse for your margin—2 Corinthians 8:9: *"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."* When a man sells all that he has, do you know what he is at that moment? He's bankrupt—he's bankrupt. Jesus left heaven.

Think of the price that the Lord Jesus Christ paid. He became a pauper. Jesus came to a manger that I might go to a mansion. I was thinking again this afternoon about the suffering of Jesus, thinking about the fearful price He paid to buy the pearl of great price. It is a pearl of great price.

Think of the anticipatory sufferings of the Lord Jesus. Do you know what it is to anticipate trouble? My brother and I would get in a fight. My mother would say, "You boys are going to get it when your dad gets home." Well, friend, that was worse than the whipping. All afternoon I lived in anticipation of my dad coming home.

And you know that many times the anticipatory suffering is terrible in itself. Jesus, from the moment that He was aware of Himself as a youth, was living in the shadow of a cross. Psalm 88:15 speaks of the Lord Jesus in prophecy, and it says, *"I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up."* When Jesus, the little lad, was playing with the shavings of Joseph's carpenter shop, every beam that He saw reminded Him of the crossbeams that He would be nailed upon. Every nail that He saw would remind the Lord Jesus of those nails that would be put in His quivering palms. The Lord Jesus, when He would go to the temple, every sacrifice in the temple He would see, every lamb that was slain, would remind Him that He was the Lamb of God that would take the sin of the world. Every rose that others may see the flower, Jesus had to see the thorns: it would remind Him that He would be crowned with thorns.

I think of the sufferings of Jesus in dark Gethsemane. Gethsemane deeply moves my heart. Gethsemane was where the Lord Jesus Christ drank that bitter cup, where Jesus prayed—and it was a sincere prayer, not a mock prayer: *"Father, if it be possible, let this cup*

*pass from me*" (Matthew 26:39). Oh, the agonies of Gethsemane! Jesus knew that He must become sin. Jesus knew that the wrath of Almighty God, the fires of God's wrath, would burn themselves out upon the Lord Jesus Christ. He asked His disciples to watch and pray, but their eyes closed in sleep, and the city slept. But from that time on Jesus would not close His eyes until He closes His eyes in death—dark Gethsemane.

I think of the price that Jesus paid when He stood before Pilate and had a mock trial and lost an election to a common criminal.

I think of the indecencies that they put upon the Lord Jesus when they stripped Him naked, when they beat Him with clubs, when they spat in His face, when they put a wilted reed in His hand. They crowned Him with a crown of thorns. Why? Why? Because He was purchasing the pearl of great price.

The Bible says that He gave all that He had, this merchantman did. I see, as they flayed His back to ribbons of flesh that are hanging down because of some psychopathic dungeon keeper who flailed Him with a cat of nine tails. Men would often die of this. And then, they laid Him down on that splintery wood, nailed Him to that cross, and dropped that cross in a hole with a thud. Then, the heavens are black, the sun refuses to shine. God the Father turns His back upon God the Son. And God the Son cries out, *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"* (Psalm 22:1; Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34).

Of course, the answer is in the next verse: *"But thou art holy"* (Psalm 22:3). God is a holy God, and a holy God cannot look upon sin. And the Lord Jesus now is hanging upon that cross, a mangled form on a rough-hewn cross, and every nerve is a pathway for the feet of pain to tread upon. But, oh, only the damned in hell can begin to know the anguish, the suffering, the utter midnight of His heart as God, the mighty maker, died for man, the creature of sin. He could have called 10,000 angels, but He didn't do it. He died alone on Calvary.

## **Conclusion**

So, what does all of this tell us? Well, very simply and very plainly, here's what it tells us: that we cannot buy Him. He is not for sale. We are not seeking Him. He sought us. And Jesus took my sin, your sin. He covered it with the glory of His grace. He made something beautiful out of something that wounded His side. We are that pearl of great price.

# How to Be an Unsinkable Saint

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** May 28, 2003

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 14:22–33

*“But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.”*

MATTHEW 14:30

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Problem of the Storm
  - A. The Distance from the Shore
  - B. The Direction of the Wind
  - C. The Darkness of Night
- II. The Performance of the Savior
  - A. A Declaration of Deity
  - B. A Proclamation of Presence
  - C. An Announcement of Abundance
- III. The Program for the Saints
  - A. The Vision
  - B. The Voice
  - C. The Venture
  - D. The Victory
  - E. The Value

Conclusion

## Introduction

Open, if you will, to Matthew chapter 14 tonight, and I want to talk to you a little bit about “How to be an Unsinkable Saint.” We all love the story of Peter and Jesus, where Peter walked on the water to come to Jesus. Now, some have ridiculed that story. They don’t believe it’s possible for a person to walk on water. We live in a generation that takes for granted that man can fly through space and have difficulty believing that God can walk on water.

We believe the miracles of the Word of God. But why this story? Why is it included in the Word of God? Because there is a sense—listen—there is a sense in which all of us need to learn to walk on water. In this particular story, we’re going to see in a moment Jesus seemed to have a special purpose in sending the disciples out on the Sea of

Galilee when a storm was brewing. He knew all things. The winds and the waves obeyed Him. So they certainly did not trick Him. He knew that a storm was brewing. And the Bible tells us that *“Jesus constrained his disciples to get [in the] ship, and...go [to] the other side.”* (Matthew 14:22)

So, we’re in Matthew chapter 14, and let’s begin reading in verse 22: *“And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a [boat], and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away”*—“the other side” is the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which, by the way, is one of the most beautiful bodies of water on the face of the earth, and a place that I have visited many times and love very much—*“And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone”*—but now, notice verse 24—*“But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves.”* (Matthew 14:22–24)

## **I. The Problem of the Storm**

Let’s think a little bit here about the problem of the storm. Here was a storm. And the ship here, now, is in the middle of the sea. It’s being tossed like a cork on the waves, and the wind is in their face. Actually, if you look at it, this is a threefold problem and may be very much like the problem that you have right now.

### **A. The Distance from the Shore**

First of all, the distance from the shore. They’re smack dab in the middle. The Bible says they were *“in the midst of the sea.”* (Matthew 14:24) That is, it is as far from one shore as it is to the other. You might as well go forward as to go back. Do you find yourself now in the middle of a problem?

### **B. The Direction of the Wind**

Think not only about the distance from the shore, but think about the direction of the wind. The wind was contrary. I can see them now with their backs bent to the oars, perspiration on their brow, fear on their face, their backs aching, because the wind is contrary. Does it seem not only are you in the middle of a problem but that the winds of life are in your face?

### **C. The Darkness of Night**

And then, not only the distance from the shore and the direction of the wind, but the darkness of night. The Bible says it was *“the fourth watch of the night.”* (Matthew 14:25) And I’ve done a little study on this. That’s the darkest hour of the night. So, evidently, it was pitch black. They could hardly see anything, maybe could hardly see their hand before their face. Have you ever been there? Not only are you in the middle of a

problem; not only are the winds against you, but you're in darkness. You don't know what's what, know where is where, who is who. It doesn't seem to make sense.

## II. The Performance of the Savior

That's the problem of the storm. Now, here's the second thing: I want you to see the performance of the Savior. I want you to see what Jesus did now in the midst of the storm. Look, if you will, in verses 25 through 27: *"And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit"—plain English: they thought it was a ghost—"and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid."* (Matthew 14:25–27)

Now, they saw Jesus in the midst of their storm, and Jesus was undismayed and unafraid. Now, you know that I am from Florida. I was Florida-born, Florida-bred, and when I died, I thought I'd be Florida-dead. But I got captured and brought up here, for which I am very grateful. But one thing I miss is the ocean. I miss the water. People tell me, "Well, you can go look at the Mississippi River." I say, "Send up a flare." I love the wind. I love the waves. I love the sea. And I would have loved to have seen the Lord Jesus Christ doing a lot of His miracles, teaching and preaching and healing the sick, and even raising the dead; but, other than seeing Jesus on the cross, or walking out of that tomb, if I could have seen Him in His flesh—just had a chance—I think I would have loved to have seen Jesus walking on the water.

And just think about it: to see His robes just flowing in the winds; to see the wind in His hair, the foam on His beard. Just see Jesus now planting His footsteps on the sea in the midst of that storm. Just conjure that up. What a picture that is! And notice what Jesus says to them, in verse 27: *"But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid."* (Matthew 14:27)

Now, look at the little phrase there: *"It is I."* (Matthew 14:27) Do you see that? Nod your head. Do you see it? You don't see it? You're not looking. Look! *"Be of good cheer; it is I."* (Matthew 14:27) Now, it's very important. Why do I want you to see that? I'm not playing games with you. What He literally says is, "Be of good cheer. I am." Now, He didn't mean, "I am of good cheer." He's saying, "Don't be afraid. Cheer up. I am the Great I AM." That's literally what this word says in the Greek: "I am." "Well," you say, "what does that mean?" That's the most sacred name for God in the entire Bible. When Moses said, "Who shall I say sent me?" Yahweh said, "You tell them I AM sent you" (Exodus 3:14)—the sacred name for God; the Great I AM. Now, when He said that, here's the reason they should be of good cheer:



### **A. A Declaration of Deity**

Number one: that was a declaration of deity. There are certain “I am’s” in the Gospel of John. “I am the way. I am the truth. I am the life.” (John 14:6) “*I am the bread of life.*” (John 6:35) “*I am the light of the world.*” (John 8:12; 9:5) “*I am the door.*” (John 10:7,9) “*I am the good shepherd.*” (John 10:11,14) “I am.” “I am.” “I am.” He keeps using this phrase: “I am.” Here in the midst of this storm, He says, “Be of good cheer. I am.” It was a declaration of deity. And what He was saying is, “Look, don’t get spooked; don’t get frightened. I was in existence before this thing was even a vapor. I am in control.” It was a declaration of deity.

### **B. A Proclamation of Presence**

But what else it was is this: it was a proclamation of presence. “Here I am!”—I AM. You see, when Moses said, “Who shall I say sent me?” God said, “Tell Pharaoh I AM sent you.” (Exodus 3:13–14) Now, what does that mean? It means that there never was a time when He was not. There never will be a time when He will not be. He never came into existence. He’s never going out of existence. He always was, always is. He is the I AM.

Now, what does that mean to you right now? If He was the I AM to them, He is the I AM to you. He’s always present. He is the I AM. There never was a time when He was not, never was a time when He will not be. I heard a great preacher one time—Shadrach Meshach were his first two names, Lockridge his last name; S. M. Lockridge. Shadrach Meshach Lockridge was preaching on the Twenty-third Psalm. I was sitting in the congregation. He started out saying, “‘The Lord is my shepherd.’ I just want to take the first three words, ‘The Lord is.’” And that’s as far as he got. He preached all night on “The Lord is.” He always has been *is*; He always will be *is*. He just is. And I thought, “You know, amen!” He is the Great I AM.

### **C. An Announcement of Abundance**

Do you have a problem tonight? He is the God in the midst of your problem. A declaration of deity, a proclamation of presence, and—listen—an announcement of abundance. Now, why do I call it an announcement of abundance? Because “I AM” is an unfinished sentence. I AM what? Well, what do you need? Fill in the blank. Now, in Him we’re complete. (Colossians 2:10) You may not believe this, but I’m telling the truth now: Jesus is all you really need. You don’t need anything else but Jesus. And not only is He necessary; He is enough. He is the great I AM.

I found this: “To the artist, He’s altogether lovely. To the architect, He’s the Chief Cornerstone. To the banker, He’s the Hidden Treasure. To the baker, He’s the Living Bread. To the biologist, He is the Life. To the builder, He is the Sure Foundation. To the doctor, He is the Great Physician. To the educator, He’s the Great Teacher. To the

farmer, He's the Lord of the Harvest. To the florist, He's the Rose of Sharon. To the geologist, He's the Rock of Ages. To the jurist, He's the Righteous Judge. To the jeweler, He's the Pearl of Great Price. To the lawyer, He's the Advocate. To the publisher, He's the Good Tidings of Great Joy. To the philosopher, He's the Wisdom of God. To the preacher, He's the Word of God. To the sculptor, He's the Living Stone. To the statesman, He's the desire of all nations. To the theologian, He is the Author and Finisher of our faith. To the traveler, He is the New and Living Way. To the sinner"—that's us, folks—"He's the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. To the Christian, He's the Son of the Living God, the Savior, the Redeemer and Lord." He is the Great I AM.

### III. The Program for the Saints

Now, we've seen the problem of the storm. We've seen the performance of the Savior: He's walking on the water. Question: Why? Just to fill up a place in the Bible? No. There is a program for the saints. Here's the third thing I want you to see. Now, this is what deals with you, with me. This is not just what God taught Simon Peter; it's what He's teaching all of us. Here's God's way for you to walk on water. Notice in verses 28 and 29: *"And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And He said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus."* (Matthew 14:28–29)

Now, would you like to walk on the water? Now, remember here that our Lord is teaching a spiritual lesson, and the spiritual lesson is that whatever your problem, whatever it looks like is going to sink your ship, is no problem to God. Let me give you some steps for walking on the water.

#### A. The Vision

Step number one: We'll call it "vision." You must see Jesus. Look again, if you will, in verse 27 and 28: *"But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I!"*—literally, "I AM"—*"be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water."* (Matthew 14:27–28) They saw Him walking on the water. Faith is looking to Jesus and keeping on looking. What did Peter see when He saw Jesus? Don't miss this because this is the heart of the whole thing. When Peter saw Jesus walking on the water, Peter saw that what looked like it would be over Peter's head was already under Jesus' feet. That's very important that you see this. What Peter thought was going to be over his head was under Jesus' feet.

John 16, verse 33: Jesus said, *"In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33) You have tribulation? Jesus has overcome. No matter what it is, take your problem and double it, and double it again,

and—listen to your pastor—Jesus has overcome it. *“In [this] world [you] shall have tribulation...I have overcome the world.”* (John 16:33) What you think is about to sink your ship is under His feet. Why did Peter say, “Lord, if it be you, bid me come to you on the water”? (Matthew 14:28) Do you think that Peter was just seeking a thrill? Do you think he just wanted to go back and say, “Guess what I did”? No. There was something about Jesus walking on the water, and Peter seeing that that drew the heart of Peter like a magnet to Jesus. Now, what Peter was saying is, “Lord Jesus, I want to put my feet where you have put yours. I want to walk in victory with you. I want to be one with you, Lord, walking on the water.” That’s what I pray you will see tonight, what I’ll see tonight: a vision of Jesus conquering, superior, overcoming. Have you seen this?

## B. The Voice

Now, first of all, there is the vision. You must see Jesus. Number two: There is the voice. You must hear Jesus. Now look, if you will now, in verse 28: *“And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And He said, Come”*—*“Come.”* (Matthew 14:28–29) Have you ever heard Him say that to you? “Come.” If you listen, you’ll hear Him saying that.

Now, Peter did not start out of that boat until he was ordered out of that boat, until he was invited. Peter didn’t name it and claim it. All faith is based on a word from God. That’s what we’ve been talking about in our series in Hebrews chapter 11, “Champions of the Faith.” We’ve given you Romans 10:17 over and over again: *“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* (Romans 10:17) And the Word of God reveals the will of God. When Peter got out of that boat after Jesus said, *“Come,”* (Matthew 14:29) he was not really walking on the water as much as he was walking on the Word. He is supported by the Word of God.

## C. The Venture

How do you walk on water? You see Jesus. Understand who He is, that He has overcome the world. Then, you hear Jesus. There is the vision. Then, there is the voice. And then, there is the venture: He obeyed Jesus. Now, most of us here believe that Jesus can walk on water. Most of us believe that, theoretically, we could. I’m talking about over our problems. But that’s all: it gets not much further than our notebooks, and therefore it never really is faith. I’ve told you many times the difference between the belief and faith: *faith is belief with legs on it*. Faith is obeying. Matthew 14, verse 29: *“And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water.”* (Matthew 14:29) Faith is venturing everything in God’s faithfulness. It is committing yourself to the Word and then to the waves. That’s very hard for me to do.

## D. The Victory

Faith's vision: you see Jesus. Faith's voice: you hear Jesus. Faith's venture: you obey Jesus. And then, notice the victory. He walked on the water. You must prove Jesus. Now, notice again verses 29 and following: *"And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased."* (Matthew 14:29–32)

Use your imagination. What was it like for Peter? What was the sea like? Was it like concrete, or was it like Jell-O? Was it slippery? I don't know. But here's Peter out there. Now he's a fisherman. He's made his living on that water. And he steps over the gunnel of that boat and puts his feet down on something solid. And he begins to walk. He says, "This is wonderful! Look at this! Look! Look at this! I'm walking on the water!" About that time, he sees some boisterous wave; maybe it slaps him in the face. He looks around, and he sees the howling wind; and he stops saying, "This is wonderful!" and he says, "This is impossible! I can't do this!" And he begins to sink.

He takes his eyes off of Jesus and puts them back on the storm. And when he does, he begins to sink. You're saying to me, "That's right, Adrian. You're telling me to get out of the boat and walk on the water. You see what happened to Peter? You see how Peter sank?" Yep. I wish that wasn't in the Bible. That's one of the saddest things in the Bible, you know—when old Peter sank and drowned there and John dragged him back in the boat and said, "That fool should have never gotten out of the boat to begin with. Now we've got to go tell his family. We've got to have a funeral." That was a sad funeral, Peter's funeral; oh, it was a sad funeral. And the disciples were criticizing one another for ever letting Peter get out of the boat. And Jesus was there, saying, "Oh boy, did I make a mistake! Inviting that man to get out of that boat—that was just a tragic thing! What a sad funeral that was, right?"

Now, listen to me. I'd rather walk a little way on the water with Jesus than not to get out of the boat at all. You may have a sinking spell, but you will not drown. And though we deny Him, He cannot deny Himself. (2 Timothy 2:13) You know, the Bible says, *"The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD... Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand."* (Psalms 37:23–24) Well, friend, you can trust the Lord. I'll tell you one thing about Peter: he may have had a sinking spell, but he walked further on the water than anyone else there that day did. Don't be afraid to trust the Lord.

And I want to ask you another question: How did Peter get back into that boat? One of two ways: either he walked back on the water or he came back in the arms of Jesus.

Either way sounds pretty good to me. He did not drown. He either walked back to that boat or he came back in the arms of Jesus. And so, that is faith's venture. You must get out of the boat.

### **E. The Value**

Now, let's move on and think of faith's value—the value. You must worship Jesus. This is the whole point. The idea was not that Jesus was showing up or doing some magical trick. No. Go down to Matthew 14, verses 32 and 33: *“And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.”* (Matthew 14:32–33) All of this brought about the worship of the Lord Jesus Christ. You see Jesus. You hear Jesus. You obey Jesus. You worship the Lord Jesus Christ. You see what He can do.

### **Conclusion**

You know, I thank God for storms. I don't know what songs they sang back in Peter's time, but they just may have been singing that song by Andrae Crouch:

*Through it all, through it all,  
I've learned to trust in Jesus.  
I've learned to trust...His Word.*

—ANDRAE CROUCH

Now, you may want to stay in the comparative safety and comfort of the boat, but I sincerely believe this: you're safer on the waves with Jesus than you are in the boat without Him. I believe that. Sometimes we're afraid to send our children overseas to be missionaries. If our children are in the will of God, I'd rather have them overseas. I'd feel safer about them there than I would in the back bedroom out of the will of God. You can trust them to our Lord. If He says, “Come”; just get out of the boat with both feet.

Now, God is not calling us to walk on the water literally. He may, but that's not what the point of this story is. What God is calling us to do is to see whatever we think is a great problem as already under His feet. And if we will see Him, if we will hear Him, if we will obey Him and worship Him, we're going to be walking on the water.

You know what? One of these days the trumpet's going to sound. Jesus was up on the mount of the glory, up there alone, praying. And they were down there in the midst of the sea, pulling on the oars. They didn't see Him, but He saw them. You say, “Well, it was nighttime.” The night and the dark are alike to Him. He saw them. He knew they were there. He sent them there. He constrained them to go over to the other side. He didn't tell them to go under; He told them to go over. He sent them into a storm to teach them a lesson. And He came down from the mountain where He was there praying, and came down to help them out of that problem.

Do you know where Jesus is right now? In the mountain of His glory. Do you know what He's doing right now? He's praying for us. Do you know He has His eye on you? He knows about you this very moment. And I believe soon He's going to step off the mountain of His glory and come, this time not walking on the water but stepping on the clouds. And He's going to say, "Come!" and we're going to rise to meet Him in the air. What a day that will be!

# How to Get on Top of Your Troubles

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: October 10, 1993**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 14:22–33**

*“And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?”*

MATTHEW 14:31

## Outline

Introduction

A. Jesus Is the Great I AM

1. A Declaration of Deity
2. A Proclamation of Presence
3. An Announcement of Abundance

I. You Must See Jesus

II. You Must Hear Jesus

III. You Must Obey Jesus

IV. You Can Prove Jesus

V. You Worship Jesus

Conclusion

## Introduction

I want you to take God’s Word and find, if you would, Matthew chapter 14, as we prepare our hearts to take the Lord’s Supper. An incredible story here in Matthew chapter 14. We’re going to begin reading in verse 22. It’s the story of Jesus walking on water. Now, this story has been ridiculed. Modern man often ridicules this story. And I have thought, “How ridiculous that puny man, who can walk in space, has difficulty believing that God can walk on water!” But this is the story, and I want you to listen to it—verse 22: *“And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit”* and they cried out for fear. But straightway

*Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.”* (Matthew 14:22–33) What a wonderful story this is! And it has a very wonderful lesson for us, and I’ll tell you what the lesson is: the lesson is to teach you how to get on top of your troubles. And that’s what we’re going to be talking about tonight: “How to Get on Top of Your Troubles.”

Now, you know that all of us have troubles in this world. And our Lord here was not showing off when He walked on water. It certainly wasn’t a publicity stunt. He wasn’t merely demonstrating His power. But, you know, every miracle that Jesus gave, every miracle that Jesus performed, had a deeper lesson than the miracle itself. It was not only a demonstration of His power, but it was a declaration of His wisdom and His plan for us. I think it was G. Campbell Morgan that said, “Every parable that Jesus taught was a miracle of instruction, and every miracle that Jesus performed was a parable for our instruction.” Now, that does not mean, when I say that the miracle was a parable, that I believe the miracle did not happen. Indeed, it happened. But there is a lesson in this miracle for us to learn. And that’s what I want us to see tonight as we look at this particular message: “How to Get On Top of Your Troubles.”

Now, as I began to read, the Bible says that Jesus constrained them to get in a ship and to go across the sea. (Matthew 14:22) That is, they were there in a storm, not because they were out of the will of God; they were in a storm because they were in the will of God. Now, the storm did not take Jesus by chance or by surprise. If Dave Brown can forecast the weather, I can tell you that Jesus had no difficulty knowing that a storm was coming. He’s the master of the winds and the waves. And, knowing this, the Lord Jesus constrained them to get in a boat, and He sent them into the teeth of a gale and a storm. Why? Because He wanted them to learn a lesson.

Now, Jesus is a different teacher than many teachers. Many teachers give the lesson and then the test. But Jesus gave the test and then the lesson. And He wanted them to learn a very wonderful lesson. And, of course, there are many, many things that are in this particular passage of Scripture; but what I want us to see tonight, and what I’ve drawn out of it, is God’s plan for us to learn how to get on top of our troubles.

Now, these people literally had troubles. They had a problem. There was a threefold problem. First of all, they were right, the Bible says, in the midst of the sea, the Sea of



Galilee. Many of you have been there and seen it—a beautiful body of water. The old rabbis used to say that God made all of the seas and oceans for various reasons but He made the Sea of Galilee just for Himself. It is an incredibly beautiful sea, and it's there like a topaz some days, nestling there in those Galilean hills and mountains round about it. And as they were there in the midst of that sea, about five miles across, they're a great distance from the shore.

And then, not only was there the distance from the shore, but there were boisterous winds. The winds were contrary. And so, there they are, bending their backs to the oars and getting nowhere fast, perspiration on their brow, their faces white with fear. These were seasoned fishermen, but they were terrified; so it must have been some incredible storm. And then, the Bible says, when Jesus came walking on the water, it was the fourth watch of the night. That is, it was the fourth watch; it was about three in the morning. That is, it is the darkest part of the night.

So, there they are, out there in the middle of this sea, monstrous waves all around them, and they're thinking to themselves, "We are going under." Jesus said, "Go over." But it looked like they were going to go under.

Now, doubtless, some who are listening to me tonight by radio, some who are in this building, and some who may listen later by tape know something of how those disciples felt because tonight, like they were in the middle of the Sea of Galilee, you're right in the middle of a problem. And it seems like everything is against you. You cannot make progress. The winds are boisterous, and it is so dark that you can't see your hand in front of your face. There are some tonight who are in a domestic storm, and your home is going through great turmoil. There are some of you who are in a financial storm, and you feel that you're just about to sink. There are some of you who are in a physical storm. You've been to the doctor, and you've gotten a bad report; and there is some greedy malady that is gnawing away at your body. Some of you are in some dilemma, some situation, some problem, some heartache, some storm; you're right now in the middle of that storm. And I believe that Jesus Christ performed this miracle not merely to rescue His disciples—He could have rescued them by not letting them get in the storm to begin with—but He performed this miracle that it might be a lesson to those of us who live today.

Now look, if you will, in verse 25. Right in the midst of that storm, in verse 25, it says, "*And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.*" (Matthew 14:25) There was the Lord Jesus walking on the sea—not running on the sea, not crawling on the sea, but walking on the sea. That is, He's undismayed. He is unafraid. There He is walking.

Now, I am from Florida. I was born in West Palm Beach, Florida. I love the ocean. As a matter of fact, this afternoon, I've been looking at a lovely book that somebody

gave me about Palm Beach, Florida, and I was just going through that book and looking at those places that were scenes of my boyhood memory. I've always had some kind of an old ragtag boat and spent most of my years growing up recreationally out on the water. I love the ocean. I love the strength of the ocean, the smell of it, the beauty of it, the excitement of it, the intrigue of the ocean. And there are many times that I would have loved to have seen the Lord Jesus Christ. I mean, I would have loved to have seen Jesus as He healed the paralytic. I would have loved to have seen Jesus as He fed the five thousand. I would have loved to have seen Jesus—yes, I would—when He came out of that grave. I would love to have seen Jesus—and I will see Him—when He comes again. But, you know, there is one scene I just think, if I could pick it out, that I'd just really like to see more than any other: I'd like to see Jesus walking on the water in the midst of that storm. I can just see Him there with the foam on His beard. I can see Him there with the wind in His hair. I can see His garments flowing there. And I see those waves. And the waves, you see, were still tempestuous, so He'd have to go up one wave and down another. He's walking on the water. There is that kingly form striding across that troubled sea.

Now, when the disciples saw Him at first, they didn't recognize Him. They thought it was some sort of a spirit, a ghost. And Jesus, recognizing their fear, spoke to them, and Jesus said—and I want you to look at it because there's a wonderful lesson here in what the Lord Jesus said—verse 27: *“But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.”* (Matthew 14:27) Now, that's what the King James says, and that is a proper translation. But let me tell you how it also may be translated. “It is I” may be translated this way: “I AM”—not “I am afraid,” but “I AM.”

### **A. Jesus Is the Great I AM**

Now, what Jesus is saying to them is “I am the great I AM.” “Well,” you say, “you sound like you don't know how to talk right, preacher.” No, I AM is the most sacred name for deity that God gave to the Jews in the Old Testament. When Moses endeavored to lead the Jews out of the land of Egypt into the Promised Land, He said, “They won't believe me. I need some credentials. I need to tell them under whose authority I'm operating. I need to tell them who sent me.” And God the Father said, “You tell them I AM sent you” (Exodus 3:11–14)—not “I WAS,” not “I WILL BE”; just simply “I AM.” There never was a time when He was not. There never will be a time when He will not be. He is the great, eternal, self-existing Almighty God. He is I AM. And Jesus, in the gospels, took that name and He applied it to Himself. Jesus is the great I AM.

#### **1. A Declaration of Deity**

Now, when He said that, He was declaring, first of all, that He was Deity, that He is God. And it spoke of His power. That sacred name says, “Don't worry about this storm. I am

greater than this storm. You see these waves? The great I AM was in existence when this wasn't even a vapor. And the wind and the waves must obey me." And so, Jesus showed, first of all, a declaration of deity. He showed His power.

## **2. A Proclamation of Presence**

But then, also, I like I AM because not only does it speak of His power, but it speaks of His presence. You see, He didn't say, "I was," or He didn't say, "I will be"; He just simply said, "I am." Now, what does that mean to you today? Well, the Jesus who was the I AM in the midst of their storm then is the same Jesus who is the I AM in the midst of your storm. I mean, He doesn't change. When so many times we wish we could have been back there when all this good stuff was taking place, friend, a lot of good stuff is taking place today. He does not change. He is the I AM in the midst of your storm. There's a declaration of deity. There's a proclamation of presence. He is the great I AM.

One time many, many years ago, I heard a famous black preacher, Shadrach Meshach Lockridge. Shadrach Meshach Lockridge preached on the Twenty-third Psalm. He was going to preach on the Twenty-third Psalm, but he never hardly got past the first verse. As a matter of fact, he hardly got past the first two words. And he got there and he bogged down and thrilled me. He started out preaching this way: "The Lord is"—and he couldn't get any further; just "the Lord is..." And he said, "You know, the Lord always has been, is, and the Lord always will be is." I like that: "The Lord always has been, is, and the Lord always will be is." The Lord Jesus said, "I am," and He is. Friend, He is very real to you today. He is God. And He's God in the midst of your storm, and He is God with you right now.

## **3. An Announcement of Abundance**

But not only was it a declaration of deity, not only was it a proclamation of presence, but, you see, it was an announcement of abundance. You know what I AM is? It's an unfinished sentence—it's an unfinished sentence. I AM what? You fill it in. What you need, He is! You see, the Bible says, "In Him we are complete." (Colossians 2:10) Jesus is not only necessary; He's enough. To the artist, He's altogether lovely. To the architect, He's the Chief Cornerstone. To the banker, He is the Treasure. To the baker, He is the Living Bread. To the biologist, He's the Life. To the builder, He's the Sure Foundation. To the doctor, He's the Great Physician. To the educator, He's the Great Teacher. To the farmer, He's the Lord of the harvest. To the florist, He's the Rose of Sharon. To the geologist, He's the Rock of Ages. To the jurist, He's the Righteous Judge. To the jeweler, He's the Pearl of great price. To the lawyer, He is the Advocate. To the publisher, He's good tidings of great joy. To the philosopher, He is the wisdom of God. To the preacher, He's the Word of God. To the sculptor, He is the Living Stone. To the statesman, He is the desire of all nations. To the theologian, He is the Author and Finisher of our faith. To the traveler, He is the new and living way. To the sinner, He is

*“the Lamb of God [that] taketh away the sin of the world.”* (John 1:29) And to me, to you, and to every believer, He’s the Son of the living God, our Savior, our Redeemer, our Lord. He is the I AM. All that we’ll ever need, friend, is in Jesus. And if He is in you, in Him you’re complete. (Colossians 2:10)

And so, here comes the Lord Jesus out there in the midst of their storm, and He says, “Don’t be afraid.” Why? “Because I am the great I AM.” Tonight, if you’ve got a storm, I want you to get your eyes off the waves, your attention away from the winds and the darkness of the night, and I want you to see the Lord Jesus Christ walking on the water.

Now, how are you going to get above your problems? I want you to see what they did then. And this is what you must do.

## **I. You Must See Jesus**

Number one: You must see Jesus. Look, if you will, in verses 27 and 28: *“But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.”* (Matthew 14:27–28) Now, what Peter was simply saying is, “Lord, I have seen what you can do. I have seen, Lord, what looked like it was going to be over my head is already under your feet.” Peter had a vision of Christ, who is absolutely, totally victorious.

Now, if you’ve got a problem tonight, I want you somehow—through the Word of God, through this message, by whatever means that God ordains for you—to get a glimpse of Jesus. Now, most all of us need in the midst of our storm to see Jesus. You see, that storm was what was about to engulf them. But the very thing that was about to engulf them was what brought Jesus to them. The storm they thought was going to drown them was for Jesus a forty-eight-lane superhighway. The very thing that looked like it was going to be over their head was under His feet. It was the storm. It was the wind, the waves, and the water that brought Jesus to them.

Now Peter, when he said, “Lord, if this is you, let me come and walk with you on that water,” I don’t think Peter was saying, “Boy, I’d just like the thrill of walking on water,” just like some people want to bungee jump. That’s not what he’s talking about. He’s just not saying, “Man, I want to go back and tell all my friends that I walked on water.” That’s not what he’s talking about. I don’t think Jesus would have ever fulfilled a carnal desire like that. What Peter was saying is, “Lord, I want to share that victory with you. I want to put my feet where your feet are. I want to become one with you. I want victory in Jesus. I want to share that victory.”

Now, the Lord Jesus wants you to share victory with Him. He wants you to learn that whatever is about to be over your head is really under His feet. But you have to see that. You have to see Jesus as the victor. You have to see Jesus as the overcomer.

You see, Jesus said, in John 16:33: *“These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace”*—now, do you need peace? Listen to it—*“In the world ye shall have tribulation”*—that is what? Storms—*“but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”* (John 16:33) Now, He said, “That’s the way you can have peace. My victory, my overcoming, is your overcoming.” So, first of all, you must see Him.

## II. You Must Hear Jesus

Now, secondly, not only did they see Him, but they heard Him. You must hear Him. *“Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come.”* (Matthew 14:28–29) *“Come.”* (Matthew 14:29) Now, Peter did not start out until he was ordered. Had he just jumped out of the boat to go to Jesus, he would have sunk. That would not have been faith; that is presumption. And right here you learn the difference between faith and presumption. Presumption is going before you’re bidden, taking matters in your own hand. Today we call it “name it and claim it.” You think it, you’ll sink it! *Faith is getting a word from God and acting on it.* Now, Jesus said to Peter, *“Come.”* (Matthew 14:29) Now, had he not stepped out then, it would have been disobedience and absolute unbelief.

Now, in your problem, whatever it is, you need to hear Jesus speaking to you. You need to get a word from God. And that’s why you have to listen carefully. That’s why you have to develop that kind of a relationship where, not only can you see Jesus, but you can hear Jesus.

## III. You Must Obey Jesus

Now, if you would get on top of your troubles, you must see Jesus, you must hear Jesus, and you must obey Jesus. Look in verse 29: *“And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.”* (Matthew 14:29)

Now, what is faith? Faith is not believing that God can get you out of your problems. Almost anyone can do that—just believe that He can. Faith is trusting the Lord and obeying the Lord. Do you know the difference between faith and belief? *Faith is belief with legs on it.* Faith is getting out of the boat, as it were, to go to Jesus.

Now, when you see Jesus and you hear Jesus, He’s going to tell you what to do; He’s going to speak to you. Now, He didn’t tell all the disciples to get out of the boat; He only told Peter to. But He had a plan for every one of them, and He has a plan for you. And you must learn to obey the Lord Jesus.

## IV. You Can Prove Jesus

You must see Jesus. You must hear Jesus. You must obey Jesus. And then, you can prove Jesus. Look, if you will, in verses 29 and 30: *“He walked on the water, to go to*

*Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.” (Matthew 14:29–30)*

Now, next to seeing Jesus walk on the water, I'd like to have seen Peter walk on the water. I'd like to have seen this whole thing. I mean, I've often wondered—haven't you?—what it was like. I mean, was it hard like this platform? Or was it soft like Jell-O? What was it like? What did it feel like walking on the water? Was it kind of bouncy like a trampoline? What was it like? I don't know. The Bible doesn't tell us. But there he is, walking on the water. I can see the big fisherman. He's been on that water many times. He puts one foot out. Feels pretty good. Another foot out. That feels pretty good. There's Jesus. "Here I come, Lord." And he's walking. He's saying, "This is wonderful. This is absolutely incredible. This is fantastic." Then he sees the waves. He says, "This is impossible. This is impossible. What am I doing out here?" And when he takes his eyes from Jesus and he puts his eyes on the circumstances, he begins to sink.

Now, that's exactly what the devil is trying to get you to do right now. You've got a problem, and you were going with me for a while. But you say, "Now, wait a minute, pastor. If I do what you tell me to do, I'm going to be just like Simon Peter. I'm going to sink." Well, you know, I've thought about that, too. And maybe I ought not to tell you to do this, because boy, it sure was a sad funeral when they buried old Simon Peter after he'd drowned that day. I mean, you know, the Lord was there, and said, "You know, it's a shame Peter drowned, being such a young man." Oh, they cried over him. Jesus said, "I never should have asked him to do that—to get out of the boat and risk so much like that." And John said, "You know, we knew better than to let that fool out of the boat. Why did we let him get out there like that?" It was a sad, sad funeral when old Peter drowned like that.

No, he didn't drown, and neither will you! *"The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and...though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand."* (Psalms 37:23–24) I don't know how far Peter walked on that water, but he walked a lot further than I ever have and you ever have. And, you know, sometimes, if doubts come, that doesn't mean that the whole thing has been a failure. And if sometimes we have sinking spells, our Lord knows our humanity. But we've got to trust Him. We've got to obey Him. We've got to see Him. We've got to hear Him. We obey Him, and then we'll prove Him. I'll tell you one thing: Peter did not drown. I don't know how he got back to the boat. I don't know whether he swam back. I don't know whether he walked back. Or I don't know whether he came back in the arms of Jesus. But he came back to the boat. He got back in the boat.

Now, the point, the whole matter, is this: that you will never know what God can do for you, and through you, until you begin to live by faith. Many of us don't live by faith. I mean, we want to see it all clear before we'll get out of the boat and trust the Lord. Now,

don't jump out of the boat until you hear God. But put yourself in a position where you see Him, where you hear Him, where you obey Him, and where you prove Him. I don't know, Brother Jim, what Peter was singing when he walked back to that boat, but I think he was singing:

*Through it all, through it all,  
I've learned to trust in Jesus,  
I've learned to trust in God.*

You see,

*If I'd never had a problem,  
I wouldn't know [He] could solve them.*

—ANDRAE CROUCH

## **V. You Worship Jesus**

So, first of all, you see Jesus. Learn that He is victorious. Then, you hear Jesus. Then, you obey Jesus. Then, you prove Jesus. And here's the wonderful thing: then, you worship Jesus. The next verse says they worshipped Him. (Matthew 14:33) That's what it's all about.

Do you know what your problems are? They're just God's way to bring you to Him just to cause you to trust Him, to depend upon Him, to see how wonderful He is. And without the problems, many of us would never truly see Him and let Him deliver us and worship Him as we ought to worship Him.

## **Conclusion**

You know what I want to ask myself and ask you tonight? What is there about my life that cannot be explained apart from Jesus? And what is there that Jesus is doing for me that causes me to worship Him and give Him praise? I tell you, in the last three or four years, God has been so real to me that sometimes I just lift my hands to Him in praise, and I say, "Oh, you are a God of might and miracle! How I praise you for the storms you've brought me through!"

We need to learn to trust Jesus—not just to walk on water physically, but to get on top of our problems and to know that everything that looks like it's about over our head is already under His feet.†

# The Church of Jesus Christ

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: October 14, 1990**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 16:13–18**

## Outline

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## Introduction

I want you to open your Bibles, if you would, please, to Matthew chapter 16—Matthew chapter 16, and I want to talk to you about “The Church of Jesus Christ.” If you are looking for a cause, if you are looking for excitement, if you are looking for a thrill, if you are looking for meaning and worth in your life, may I commend to you the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Now if that sounds dull, just hang on for a moment. I want to say that the grandest organization and organism that this world has ever known is the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. I begin reading here in Matthew chapter 16, verse 13: *“When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the*



*keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven”* (Matthew 16:13–18).

Now there are some today who say that the Church is on her way out. And they are absolutely correct—they are absolutely correct. May I tell you, dear friend, Jesus has called the Church out of this world. And Jesus has sent the Church out back into this world to witness to this world, and soon He’s coming to take His Church out of this world altogether at His Second Coming. Thank God the Church is on its way out and up and on forever.

And so I want to talk to you about the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I’m not just talking about Bellevue Baptist Church, but His Church. I thank God for this church, but sometimes we get in trouble when we compare ourselves with other people. We look around and we say our church is better than their church. And we compare this particular church with some other particular church, or this denomination with some other denomination. Comparisons are always dangerous.

I heard of a two brothers who were thieves, rascals, drunkards, extortionists, strong-armed men, and they were just terrible. Anything you could say about them was not bad enough, hardly. And one of the brothers died, and the other came to a preacher and said, “I’ll give you a thousand dollars if you’ll preach my brother’s funeral and call him a saint.” The preacher said, “You’ve got a deal. Give me the thousand. And there was the funeral, and there was this rapsallion there in the casket; and this minister stood up and said, “The man in this casket is a liar, a thief, a pervert, a murderer, an adulterer, a wicked man; but, compared to his brother, he’s a saint.”

We can compare and make ourselves feel pretty good, can’t we? Comparisons all depend on where you start. But, dear friend, I think it’s time that we got out the Bible and compared our church to God’s standard right here, and just say what the Lord Jesus says, and see what the Lord Jesus declares here in His Word about what a church ought to be. And I want you to look with me at six very wonderful things about a church that I pray God He’ll make true about this church and your church, whoever you are and wherever you are.

## **I. The Saving Faith of the Church**

The very first thing I want you to see is what I am going to call the saving faith of the Church—the saving faith of the Church. Now Jesus was there at a very beautiful place, Caesarea Philippi. I’ve been there on a number of occasions. There’s beautiful Mount Hermon up there in the sky with its snowcap, and Jesus is standing there, and He’s asking His disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” And they said, “Well, some say

you're Elijah, some say you're John the Baptist, and others say that you're one of the prophets." And then Jesus looks at them, and He says, "But who do you say that I am?" And, oh, what a question that is! And Simon Peter, who was always so quick to speak, opened his mouth and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus said, "That's right, Simon Peter. But don't get puffed up about it. You didn't figure it out yourself. Flesh and blood didn't reveal it to you, but my Father which is in heaven showed you that." And then Jesus said, "You're Peter,"—that word *Peter* means, "a small rock"—"but upon this rock"—and He used another word for *rock* which meant, "a rock ledge"—"I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

What is the saving belief of the Church? What is the saving faith of the Church?

### **A. A Personal Conviction About Christ**

First of all, it is a personal conviction about Christ—a personal conviction about Christ. Jesus said, "Who do you say that I am?" And may I ask you that question, those of you in that balcony, those of you down here, those of you here in the front row: Who is Jesus Christ to you? I'm not asking who He is to Adrian Rogers. I'm not asking not what Bellevue Baptist Church believes about Jesus Christ. I want to ask you the most penetrating question today that I could possibly ask you: What do you think about Jesus Christ? Who is Jesus?

Now the saving faith of the Church is based in a personal conviction about Christ. Simon Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus said, "That's right, Simon. But don't get puffed up; you didn't figure it out. My Father showed that to you." And I want to say to any of you right now, if you want to know who Jesus Christ is, you lay your intellectual pride in the dust and ask God to show you—and God will speak to you. It does not come by education. I want you to understand this. Simon Peter had spent three years in the presence of the Son of God. He had heard Jesus Christ teach. And yet with all of that, that was not enough to convince him; God had to show him. My preaching will never convince you that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Only the Holy Spirit can show you that.

### **B. A Personal Confession of Christ**

All right, a personal conviction about Christ: who do you say He is? Secondly, a person confession of Christ. Listen. Simon Peter not only believed it, but He confessed it. He said it openly and publicly: "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*" (Matthew 16:16). My dear friend, your conviction must be followed by confession, if you're a part of the New Testament Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ clearly, plainly, and without stutter or stammer, said, "*But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven*" (Matthew 10:33).

But Jesus said, *“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven”* (Matthew 10:32). That’s the reason this morning, when I’m finished, I’ll give an invitation for those of you who are convicted that Jesus Christ is the Son of God to come forward. *“Let the redeemed of the LORD say so”* (Psalm 107:2). You cannot be ashamed of the Lord Jesus and sneak into heaven. *“For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed”* (Romans 10:11).

Years ago, I heard the story of a young lady in a revival crusade. She was in the back of the auditorium, weeping copiously, and under deep conviction of sin. Somebody went back there to witness to this young lady and ask her if she would come forward and confess her faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. She said, “Oh no, I can’t go down there in front of all of those people. Isn’t there some way that I can be saved right here back where I am?” Do you know what that personal worker told her? He said, “No, you cannot be saved unless you are willing to come forward.” I know what you are thinking, but let me finish the story.

The next night, there was another great move of the Spirit of God. The young lady was in approximately the same place in that mammoth auditorium; again she is weeping. The personal worker went back and said, “Would you like to be saved?” The same person talked to her. She said, “Oh, yes, I would.” He said, “Would you come forward and confess Christ?” She said, “Oh, no, can’t I be saved back here?” He said, “I’m sorry, you can’t be saved back here.” The third time that happened. He went to talk to her. He said, “Young lady,” as she was weeping, “won’t you come and give your heart to Christ?” She said, “Oh, yes, I will! I’ll go anywhere, I’ll do anything, if I can just have peace with God.” He said, “Now you don’t need to come forward. You can be saved back here.”

Oh, listen, dear friend. Let me tell you something. If you are ashamed of Jesus, Jesus must be ashamed of you. If you confess Jesus, Jesus will confess you. *“For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation”* (Romans 10:10).

### **C. A Personal Conversion Through Christ**

There is, my dear friend, a personal conviction about Christ—*“Thou art the Christ”*—a personal confession of Christ; and that, my friend, leads to a personal conversion through Christ. Listen. Jesus said to this man whose name was Simon—do you know what *Simon* means? *Simon* means, “unstable.” And Jesus gave him a new name. Jesus said, “I’m going to say to you that thou art Peter.” And the word *Peter*—*Petros*—means, “rock.” Here is this one who’d been so unstable that the devil could sift him like wheat!

he is no longer unstable. No longer is he an oatmeal character. Now he is a rock. He doesn't get a piece of the rock. He is a piece of the rock. I mean, he becomes, my dear friend, a different person.

You see, when there is a conviction about Christ, when there is a confession of Christ, there is a conversion through Christ. And the Lord Jesus literally changes you from the inside just as He changed Simon Peter so long ago. And the Bible says, *"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature"* (2 Corinthians 5:17). Oh, hallelujah for that! And I tell our folks around here—listen, friend—to be saved is not just to join a church; it is to be radically and dramatically changed for all eternity. And if your religion hasn't changed your life, you'd better change your religion. You do not have New Testament salvation.

You know the problem today is, folks, that you can join churches today easier than you can some social organizations or some country clubs. The church today has become some sort of institution where anybody can get in and nobody gets out. What started out as a sheepfold has become a zoo. No, my friend, it is to be made up of those who are born again, those who have a conviction that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, those who are not ashamed to confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God, and because of that have been changed radically, dramatically by a new birth for all eternity. That is the saving faith of the Church.

## **II. The Supernatural Formation of the Church**

The second thing I want you to notice: I want you to notice the supernatural formation of the church. Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Peter, you are right. I am the Christ, the Son of the living God. You have confessed it. You are not ashamed of me." And then he says, "And upon this rock, I will build my Church" (Matthew 16:17–18). Jesus said He is going to build His Church. I love that. I told the Lord about it before I left my study: "Lord, I praise you for this, that I have not been called to build this church. It is not my responsibility. It is only my response, Lord, to your ability." Jesus is the builder of the Church.

Jesus builds the Church. He didn't say, "I will build your Church." He didn't say, "You will build my Church." He said, "I will build my Church." Isn't that a blessing? Friend, the Church can't fail. The Church can't fail, because the sovereign builder of the Church is the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the supernatural formation of the Church. I've talked to you about the saving faith of the Church. Now I'm talking to you about the supernatural formation of the Church. Flesh and blood cannot build the Church. Jesus said, "Flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 16:17). It is God's work to reveal who Jesus is. It is God's work to build the Church. The Bible says, *"The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved"* (Acts 2:47). Flesh

and blood cannot and will not build the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **III. The Solid Foundation of the Church**

Now there's a third thing I want you to see. First of all, I've talked to you about the saving faith. And then I've talked to you about the supernatural formation of the Church. Now I want you to see the solid foundation of the Church. *"Upon this rock I will build this church"* (Matthew 16:18). Some people think the Church is built upon Simon Peter, because Jesus calls Simon Peter a rock. But Jesus calls Simon Peter a small rock, a boulder. But then Jesus is making a play on words. He uses another word for *rock* which means, a "rock ledge," a "stratum of rock," "bedrock," or a "stone mountain," if you will. And He says, *"Upon this rock."* What rock? That I am *"the Christ, the Son of the living God."* *"I will build my church."*

Friend, the Church is not built on Simon Peter. It is built on Jesus Christ—on Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul clearly knew this. First Corinthians chapter 3 and verse 11: *"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ"* (1 Corinthians 3:11). Thank God I don't have to look back to some ancestral priest for my authority. I look up to the living God. That's the solid foundation of the Church.

### **IV. The Sweet Fellowship of the Church**

I want to speak to you, fourthly, not only about her solid foundation, but I want to speak also to you about the *sweet fellowship* of the Church. Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my *ekklesia*." Now that's the word that is used in the Greek language, and it literally means, "my called out ones"—"my called out ones." People that I have called out of every race and kindred, tribe and nation, rich and poor, young and old, black and white, people from every spectrum of society, is my Church. This, my dear friend, is the fellowship of the Church.

Now, think of the Church as a spiritual house. Think of the Lord Jesus as the sovereign builder. Think of God the Father as the architect. Think of faith in the Lord Jesus as the Son of God as the foundation, Jesus as the foundation. But how are we going to build this spiritual house? Well, our Lord builds this spiritual house out of folks like us. This building is not the Church. It's just a sheep shed. Friend, the Church is the blood-bought Body of Christ believers who are spiritual stones. Put in your margin 1 Peter chapter 2 and verse 5. Now, remember that Jesus was talking to Peter when He said, "You are Peter, and upon this rock I'll build my Church" (Matthew 16:18). And Peter, therefore, understood what Jesus said. And, later on, when Peter wrote his epistle, in 1 Peter chapter 2 and verse 5, he spoke to his brothers and sisters, and said, *"Ye also, as lively stones,"*—that means, "living stones"—*"are built up a spiritual house"*

(1 Peter 2:5).

Do you get it? Christ is the foundation. Now we are getting ready to build upon this foundation. And He takes a you, and a you, and a you, and they, and these, and those, and us, and we, and He puts us all together stone upon stone. And He builds a spiritual house, not a church building. Nothing wrong with church buildings, but some people confuse the church building with the Church.

I read about a man who was filling a form one time, and they asked him, “What is your church preference?” He said, “Red brick.” Now he had confused the building with the Church. And we do it all the time. We say, “I’ll see you down at the church.” Don’t we do that? I do that, and you do that. But, folks, I mean let’s be specific, the Church is not these sticks and stones, but it is these living stones built upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Listen to it—1 Peter 2:5: *“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”*

Now, let me just say a couple of things about the sweet fellowship of the Church.

#### **A. We Are Built Together**

First of all, dear folks, we are built together—together. You’re a stone; he’s a stone, she’s a stone; they’re a stone. And we are built together. Nobody ever saw a one-brick building, okay? Nobody ever saw a one-brick building. Have you ever heard anybody say, “Hey, I don’t need those folks down there”? You do, if you’re going to be part of a church. You can’t be a one-brick building.

The Bible says that we are built together—we’re built together. You see, that is so important. You can shove bricks around. But it’s hard to shove a building around, isn’t it? You see, that’s where the power comes, and that’s where the strength comes. We are built together. What is a brick lying out on the ground? Not much. But together we are part of the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the principle of cooperation.

#### **B. We Are Bound Together**

Not only are we built together; if we are built together, we are bound together. You know, a building is not a not a stack of stones. They are stones that are fitted to one another and bound together by mortar. You see, I belong to you. You belong to me. We belong to one another. These stones that make up this physical building, which is not the church, but is the church house, these bricks on the outside, one brick rests upon another brick. Another brick rests upon that. One brick holds hands with this brick, and another hand holds hands with that brick. Friend, I stand on the shoulders of those bricks before me. There are others who will come after me who will stand on me. I stand with this one, and this one stands with me. Together—we are bound together.

Now, again, a brick by itself is not very strong. At least, it’s not impressive. It can’t do

much, and it can be carried around—but not a building. A brick by itself, a stone by itself, may not be beautiful; but, oh, friend, when they get together, how beautiful that is!

An architect told me years and years ago, when I first got out of seminary, something I've never forgotten. We were building a building. He was an old man. I went into his architectural office, and he said to me, "Young man, good architecture is not an arrangement of beautiful materials; it is a beautiful arrangement of materials." Isn't that neat? I mean, look around. We're not altogether beautiful. But together we are beautiful—together we are beautiful: beautiful, because the Lord has taken you, and you, and him, and her, and us, and them, and He has put us together.

### C. We Are Blessed Together

Oh, friend, this is the sweet fellowship of the Church. The Lord just has quarried us out, this stone and this brick, and this rock, and He has put us together. And we are built together. And we are bound together. And, therefore, my friend—listen to me—we are blessed together—we are blessed together. Listen. Peter says, "Jesus is the foundation. You are the stones." And once our Lord builds us together, what for? He says, "A spiritual house." Do you know what that means? A house for the Holy Spirit—a house for the Holy Spirit. First Corinthians 3: *"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"* (1 Corinthians 3:16). Friend, this building is not His temple; we are His temple. And He lives in us when we meet together. *"For where two or three are gathered together in my name,"*—what?—*"there am I in the midst of them"* (Matthew 18:20). You see, we are a spiritual house, and when we meet, the Lord says, "This is where I live." The Lord dwells in the midst of His brethren. That's so exciting to me.

I heard about a church where it was rumored that the President of the United States was going to come and worship in that assembly. Oh, the word got out. You know, "The President's going to be there"—"the President's going to be there." Everybody was all excited about the President coming. The truth of the matter was, he wasn't coming. One lady who'd never been to church, or had not been to church for many, many years, called up and she said to the pastor, "Oh, is it true that the President of the United States is going to be present Sunday morning? If so, I want to come. And how could I get a reserved seat?" He said, "Madam, the President will not be here, but the King of kings will, and that ought to be good enough for you." Amen?

Oh, Jesus is here when His people worship. We're built up as a spiritual house. You see, here's the sweet fellowship of the Church: we are built together; we are bound together; we are blessed together. And don't you tell me, dear friend, that you can be as good a Christian without the Church. It's ridiculous! Oh, no, my dear friend! Listen. We

are living stones, built upon Jesus Christ, and we are built together, and we are bound together, and we are blessed together. And I'm glad that I'm part of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## V. The Sure Future of the Church

Now, let me talk to you next not only about the sweet fellowship of the Church, but let me talk to you about the sure future of the Church—the sure future of the Church. Jesus said, *“Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church,”*—and then He says something that just thrills me, and He says—*“and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”* (Matthew 16:18). And there He's talking about the sure future of the Church.

Oh, we have enemies today—we really do. Our battle is not with flesh and blood, but with the demonized, organized, and mobilized forces of hell. But thank God we already have the victory. And I'm so glad, Brother Jim, we sang this morning, “Oh, Victory in Jesus.”

Now when the Lord Jesus says, *“And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it,”* He's not saying primarily that the Church will survive. It will survive. But that's not what He's saying. He's saying that the Church will thrive. It's not that we're going to be on the defensive. It's not the gates of the Church that He's talking about; it's the gates of hell that will not prevail. He's not saying that the Church is a fortress, and hell can't get in. He's saying that the Church is an army that hell can't withstand. Do you understand that? You see, what He is saying is that it's not that we're behind closed doors and hell has its battering rams trying to get in. That's not what He is saying. He is saying, dear friend, that we are on the offensive. When He says, *“the gates of hell,”* it literally says, in the Greek language, “the gates of Hades.” And He's talking about the unseen world, the shadowy world of sin, sorrow, and death. We alone have the answer to those problems.

When Samson was armed with strength, he carried away the city gates of Gaza. But when Jesus went into the tomb, He carried away the gates of hell. My dear friend, through the Lord Jesus Christ we have an answer. *Thank God hell has no dominion, sin has no power, death has no hold, that Jesus, through the gospel, cannot break. The gospel of Jesus Christ goes through the dominion of hell like a white-hot cannonball through a crate of eggs.*

The gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church. The Church is not temporary. The Church is eternal. Dear friend, sin, death, hell, sorrow, the grave, and everything cannot withstand the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Hey, does that excite you? Listen, folks. Everybody's trying to find something to belong to motorcycle clubs—*vroom, vroom*—well, something. Boy, listen. If you're in a motorcycle club, I love you. That's all right, fine. Listen, friend. There's mountain climbing, doing this thing, that



thing. You want something exciting? Throw in your heart, your life, to the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **VI. The Sacred Function of the Church**

One last thing I want to say, and I'll be finished. I've talked to you about, dear friend, the sweet fellowship of the Church, and the sure future of the Church. Let me talk to you, last of all, about the sacred function of the Church—the sacred function of the Church. The Lord Jesus said to Simon Peter, "I'm going to build my Church." And then He says, "I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven. And whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:18–19). The keys of the kingdom tell us of the sacred function of the Church.

What do keys represent? Keys represent two things: number one, authority—if you have keys to this building, you have some authority here; number two: they represent responsibility. You've got keys to this building. You've got some responsibility here, right? We don't just put them in a box and say, "Anybody want some, take them"—keys to anything. Remember when your boy turned sixteen and you gave him the keys to the car—at least, you let him use them, you know, oh, for a little while—and finally there came a time when you saw enough responsibility in that boy that you may have given him enough authority, you gave him his own key, or his own car that had a key? You remember when you first gave your child a key to the house, and you figured now they could put that key around their neck on a little chain where they wouldn't lose it, or something—they come home after school and unlock the house themselves?

You see, what does a key mean? A key speaks of authority. It speaks of responsibility. And Jesus says to Simon Peter, "Now you're in my Church, and I'm going to build my Church. But here's the way I'm going to build my Church. I'm going to build it through people just like you. And I'm going to give you the power to bind and to loose." And so, actually, I don't want to get too convoluted here, but this is a future perfect tense, and what He says is that whatever you bind on earth shall have already been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have already been loosed in heaven. It's not us who are doing it. We're not doing the binding and the loosing. We just have the keys our Lord has given to us to use because of what He has already bound and what He's already loosed.

You see, here's the exciting thing. What is the key? The key is the saving gospel of Jesus Christ: that He is the Son of the living God, that through Him we can be changed for eternity, and we can be keepers of those keys, and preach the gospel, and whatever we bind will be bound in heaven. That is, we can bring souls bound in the golden chains

of the gospel and lay them at Jesus' feet, and what we loose will be loosed in heaven. Sin's power is broken, and we can set the captives free through Jesus Christ. What a thrill it is to know that God has entrusted to us the keys of the kingdom, which is the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ!

And churches don't need to be snooty religious country clubs with steeples on top. My dear friend, we need to be churches preaching a white-hot gospel. You listen to me, dear friend. *The church must evangelize or fossilize.* We must go out and bring the lost to Christ. And a church that has misused, abused, or neglected the keys is not just simply missing a blessing; it's guilty of high treason against heaven's King.

## Conclusion

Now, may I be personal with you for a few moments—and I'll be finished. And I want every mother's child who names the name of Jesus to listen to me. Do you realize that you have been given the keys, just like Simon Peter?—authority and responsibility. How many people are you bringing to Jesus Christ? Did you know that some of us come to the house of God without even inviting a friend to attend, much less be a soul winner? We come here, sit, soak, and sour, thinking we've done God a wild favor when we come to church: "I went to church Sunday morning."

What on earth are you doing for heaven's sake? What are you doing to bring people to Jesus Christ? He has given to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. No wonder Andrew Murray said, "There are two classes of Christians: soul winners and backsliders." There are more than 5,000 people in this sanctuary right now. If there were only 5,000 Christians in the world, no more than is in this building, and those 5,000 in one year—365 days—reproduce themselves twice, the first year there would be 15,000 Christians—just twice! If they did it three times, there would be 20,000 the first year—20,000, if there were no other Christians in the world! Now if they taught each one of their converts to do the same thing, then think how that's going to grow! In ten years, every soul on earth would be born again Christians—three a year! That's the principle of multiplication.

Christianity hasn't failed; it just hasn't been tried, folks. Are you trying to tell me that you praying, weeping, loving, yearning, learning, and listening could not bring three souls to Jesus Christ in a year? You say you couldn't do it? That's not humility on your part; that's arrogance on your part: that you would refuse to obey and listen to God tell you what God would have you to do. The sacred function of the Church is that we have been given the keys of the kingdom.

You say, "Pastor, I am not gifted." Listen to these words. If you cannot preach like Peter, if you cannot pray like Paul, you can tell the love of Jesus and say, "He died for

all.” Let none hear you say, “There’s nothing I can do,” while the souls of men are dying and the Master calls for you. That’s the reason why I’m telling you, dear folks, the most exciting thing I know is the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

# The Church Triumphant

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** January 20, 1985

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 16:13–19

*“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”*

MATTHEW 16:18

## Outline

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## Introduction

Turn, please, to Matthew 16, and we’re going to be speaking today on “The Church Triumphant.” We said this was the year of victory. We’re claiming victory in the Lord Jesus, so I want us to think of the Church triumphant. The Bible teaches that the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ cannot fail—that, indeed, it will be triumphant.

Matthew 16, beginning in verse 13: *“When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates*

*of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”* (Matthew 16:13–19)

Every now and then, we hear people say the Church is on its way out—that the Church Age is over: the Church has had her day, and after a while, the Church will just be a shabby beggar on a forgotten corner. Well, I want to agree: The Church is on her way out. Jesus Christ has called her out of this world. Jesus Christ has sent her out into this world. And one of these days, the Lord Jesus is coming to take the Church out at His Second Coming, amen? Thank God, we’re on our way out. Thank God, we’re on our way up to be with our dear Lord forever. And the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is triumphant—not shall be; *is* triumphant.

Now the scripture that I read to you took place about six months before the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, in a sense, it is the final examination that the Lord Jesus has given to His disciples after they’ve been with Him in three years of seminary. And the examination has two basic questions: number one, “Who do people say that I, the Son of man, am?”; (Matthew 16:13) number two, “Who do you say that I am?” (Matthew 16:15) Well, people were saying He was John the Baptist, Elias, or one of the prophets. And then Jesus really narrowed in the questioning, and He said, “But who do you say that I am?” It was at that time that Simon Peter, who frequently spoke, and was frequently wrong, spoke up this time and got an A-plus. Simon Peter said, “You’re the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus said, in effect, “Simon, you get an A-plus. Now, don’t get puffed up about it. You didn’t figure it out. It’s not because you’re such a good student. *‘Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven,’* (Matthew 16:17) He’s the One that showed it to you.” And then Jesus said, “*Peter, ‘upon this rock I will build my church; and the [very] gates of hell shall not prevail against it.’*” (Matthew 16:18)

Now, there are some things I want you to learn about the Church of the Lord Jesus this morning: “The Church Triumphant.”

## **I. The Foundation of the Church**

Number one: I want you to see the foundation of the Church—the foundation of the Church. Look again in verses 16 and 17: “*Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.*” (Matthew 16:16–17)

Now the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is to be built upon a rock, upon a foundation stone. The question has arisen: Who, or what, is that rock? Now our Roman

Catholic friends tell us that that rock is Simon Peter—and here’s why they say the Church is built upon Simon Peter: because the name *Peter* is “rock.” Peter is a form of *petros*, and *petros* is the Greek word for “rock.” Peter was Rocky I. And so Jesus said to Peter, “You are a rock, and upon this rock I’ll build my Church.” (Matthew 16:18) “So,” they say, “it’s clear—as plain as the nose on your face: Jesus called Peter a rock, and then He said, ‘I’m going to build my Church upon this rock,’ and so the Church is built upon Simon Peter. Simon Peter is the rock upon which the Church is built.”

Ah, not so! The Church was not built upon Simon Peter. The Church is built upon none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, when Jesus called Peter a rock—you don’t see it in the English language here, the English translation, but in the Greek in which it was written—it is very clear that Jesus is making a play on words, and He uses two different words for rock. Now, here’s what Jesus said: “*Thou art Peter*”; that is, “You are a rock.” But the word that He uses here is *petros*, which means a “boulder,” or as we would say over in Arkansas, a “little rock.” All right, “Now you are a little rock.” But then Jesus said, “*Upon this [petra]*”—*petros* is masculine gender; *petra* is feminine gender—“*Upon this [petra] I will build my church.*” Two different words in the original language: one, “little rock”; the other word means “foundation stone.” The other word means “rock ledge.” The other rock—the other word—means “bedrock; great, massive, monolithic rock.” “*Upon this [Gibraltar] I will build my church.*” He’s making it very clear that, while Peter is a little rock, the Church is not to be built upon such a little rock, but the Church is to be built upon the Lord Jesus Christ. And I am infinitely glad that I don’t have to look back to some ancestral priest or some ancestral apostle as the foundation of the Church. I am so glad that the Church is built upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

And, incidentally, when you go home, take your Bibles, and turn to 1 Peter 2, and read the entire chapter, and you’ll find out that Peter understood clearly what Jesus Christ was talking about. In that chapter, Peter calls all Christians “living stones.” (1 Peter 2:4) That is, every one of us is a stone. But he calls Jesus the “*chief corner stone.*” (1 Peter 2:6) Peter knew that Christ was the foundation of the Church, the chief cornerstone, and he knew that the rest of us are living stones, little rocks, built upon that foundation stone. And so that is exactly what Jesus was talking about. And it was Paul who told us in 1 Corinthians 3:11: “*For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*” (1 Corinthians 3:11) And so the foundation of the Church is the Lord Jesus.

*The Church’s one foundation  
Is Jesus Christ, her Lord.,  
She is His new creation  
By [Spirit] and the Word.*

—SAMUEL J. STONE

## II. The Formation of the Church

Now, the second thing I want you to see today: Not only the foundation of the Church—and thank God the foundation stands true and firm, the Lord Jesus Christ—but I want you to see the formation of the Church. What good is a foundation if you don't build a building upon it? And the Lord Jesus said in verse 18, *“Upon this rock I will build my church.”* (Matthew 16:18) That's the reason I said the Church will be triumphant: because Jesus said He would do it, and He won't lie. He can't lie, and He can't fail. He said, “I will—I will, I will—build my Church.” Now, if Jesus had said, “Upon this rock you will build my Church,” we might worry a little bit, because we'd say, “We can fail.” But He didn't say that. He didn't say, “Upon this rock you will build my Church.” He didn't say, “Upon this rock I will build your Church.” He said, *“Upon this rock I will build my church”*—*“I will build my church.”* And so the Church is built upon none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Christ, the Son of the living God. That is the rock upon which Jesus is going to build His Church.

Now, how does He build His Church? I mean, what does it mean to build His Church? What is the Church? Is the Church a material, physical building like this one? Of course not! Sometimes people call this “the church,” and we all use that terminology: “I'll see you down at the church.” We like to think of the church as a building, a material building. One man was filling out a form, and they said, “Church preference.” He said, “Red brick.” No, no, no! That's not the Church; that's where the Church meets. By the way, the Church is not a denomination either, and the Church is not an organization. What is a church? A church is a called-out body. The very word *church* means “someone who has been called out.” It is an *ecclesia*, and the word *ecclesia* means—it's a combination of two Greek words—it means “to call out.” For example, if I were to say, “You and you and you, come up here,” and you got up and came out of that congregation, you would be called out; you would be brought out of the rest. And that's exactly what the word means: It means “people who have been called out.” And the Lord Jesus Christ in this world has called us out of this world with a holy calling: out of the world and unto Himself. And that is what the Church is—the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, if you haven't been called out by the Lord Jesus, you're not a part of the Church; you may have your name on the roll, but you're not a part of the Church. Jesus said, *“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”* (Matthew 7:22–23) The real Church is going to be called out again at the Second Coming of Christ. We're called out of the world to Him, and then we're going to be called out with Him when He comes again.

When I was a boy, we used to play in an old scrapyard down at 34<sup>th</sup> Street in West Palm Beach. And I would go down there and play in that place. I was amazed to see what things had been thrown away. It was back during World War II, and they had some scrap airplanes down there and other things that had been somehow destroyed or discarded in the war. And we would get in the fuselages of those old airplanes and play and have a big time. And they moved that metal around with a great electromagnet, and that magnet that was on the end of a crane would come and pick up huge things like the carcass of an automobile and so forth. What power was in that magnet! I was intrigued by that magnet. But I noticed there were certain things that magnet would not pick up. It didn't pick up aluminum. It didn't pick up brass. It would not pick up copper. And yet it would pick up all that iron. Do you know why? It had an affinity for the iron, but not for the brass, not for the aluminum, not for the copper. Now some of the iron was rusty, and some of the brass was shiny; but it made no difference. It was the iron that went up, and not the brass.

You know, that's what it's going to happen when Jesus comes: His coming is going to be like a great electromagnet. And those of us who have an affinity for Him—those of us who share His nature—are going to be caught up. You can look out here. Some of you are polished brass, and some of you are rusty iron. And, you know, if we were to choose, we'd say, "Hey, that brass, that looks pretty neat. He must be a Christian. Hey, that guy is kind of rusty. We don't think he's saved." But, you know, "the LORD sees not as man sees." (1 Samuel 16:7) God sees us on the inside, and when He comes, we're going to be caught up to be with Him.

The formation of the Church is this: that the Lord Jesus Christ, by His grace and by His power, is calling people out. Thank God—thank God, thank God—He called me. And you ought to praise Him that He called you. Listen, friend. It wasn't your idea. You love Him because He first loved you. (1 John 4:19) Had He not called, you never could have come. Hallelujah, we're the called-out ones! That's the formation of the Church. He said, "*I will build my church,*" and that's the reason it cannot fail.

### **III. The Fellowship of the Church**

Now, the third thing I want you to notice is the fellowship of the Church. What the Lord Jesus said is this: "*I will build my church.*" (Matthew 16:18) Did you know it's His Church? It's so precious to Him. Listen to me. Jesus Christ and the Church are distinguishable, but they are inseparable. Now, listen. Christ and the Church are not identical, but Christ and the Church are inseparable. That's the reason it's so absolutely absurd and foolish for a person to say, "Jesus, yes; and church, no. I believe in Jesus, but I don't want to have anything to do with the church." That's ridiculous, folks. If you love Jesus, you're going to love what Jesus loves—and Jesus loves the Church. It is an



absolute false and bogus Christianity that does not love the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus called His Church by three things. His Church, in the Bible, is described, first of all, as His Body. Remember there in Ephesians 1? He's the head, and the Church is the body, (Ephesians 1:22–23) right? Right! Nod your head; look intelligent. Okay, number two: The Church is called in Ephesians 5 His bride. (Ephesians 5:23) We are the Bride of Christ. And also, in the book of the Revelation, the Church is called the bride of Christ. (Revelation 21:9; Revelation 22:17) And then, thirdly, the Church is called His building in 1 Corinthians 3 (1 Corinthians 3:9) and also here in Matthew 16. The Church is a building—not a physical building, a spiritual building: Christ, the foundation; the rest of us as living stones to make that building.

### A. **The Church Is the Bride of Christ**

All right, what is the Church? The Church is a body. The Church is a bride. The Church is a building. Got that? All of those things talk to us about the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, let's think of the Church as a bride. Now so many times the women say, "The Bible always uses masculine terms to describe us. Why can't we be described like women?" You know, "*If any man be in Christ, he is a new [creation].*" (2 Corinthians 5:17) Women say, "Why doesn't it say, 'If any woman be in Christ, she is a new creation'? Why is it always speaking in masculine terms?" Well, this time, women, you win: The Church is spoken of in a feminine term. And we ugly-looking men up here, we're brides; we're part of the Bride of Christ. And, in that sense, all of us are part of the Bride of Christ, if we are in the Church. The Church is the bride. He is the heavenly Bridegroom.

Now, let's just imagine that this morning there is a young bride and groom. They've been married several weeks, and somebody in Bellevue Baptist Church comes up to that young groom and says, "I'd like to have you for my guest. I'd like for you to come over to my house this Thursday evening for dinner. We're going to have a marvelous dinner—and a seven-course meal. And it's all for you. And it's in your honor. I just think so much of you, and we just want you to come over." He says, "Well, fine. Let me go ask Susie. You know, I just married Susie. Let me go ask Susie and see if she can come to it." "Oh, no, it's not for Susie. You see, we don't like Susie. As a matter of fact, we don't want to have anything to do with Susie. It's not for Susie. It is for you. We think a whole lot of you, but we really don't think very much of Susie. As a matter of fact, we just don't like Susie at all, and she cannot come." I want to tell you, if that fellow doesn't want to wear a wooden overcoat, he'd better decline the invitation, amen? I mean, Susie will fix his wagon, isn't that right? And if he's any kind of a groom at all, he's going to say, "Listen, if you don't like Susie, you don't like me. And I don't like you if you don't

like Susie. I mean, Susie is precious to me. And if you love me, you're going to have to love Susie, because I love Susie so much."

Now I'm going to tell you something, folks. You can say bad things about me and get away with it more quickly than you can say bad things about my Joyce. As a matter of fact, if you say anything real bad about Joyce, I just might get carnal and put you on the ground, because she is my bride and I love her. And I want to tell you something. You listen to me. When you criticize the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, do you know what you're doing to Jesus? He is the heavenly Bridegroom. He loves the Church. He died for the Church. The Church is His bride. And you'd better be very careful before you go around criticizing the bride of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **B. The Church Is the Body of Christ**

And not only is the Church His bride; the Church is His body. He's the head, and we're the body. Now, what man says, "Well, I just love my head, but I just hate my body; I mean, I'm going to take care of my head, but I'm not going to do a thing for this body"? That's ridiculous! The head and the body are not identical, but they're inseparable. You see, there's a union, a vital union. And how foolish for a person to say, "Oh, I love Jesus, but I just don't go down to church; you don't have to go to church to be a Christian"! Friend, let me tell you something. If you love Jesus, you're going to love what Jesus loves. And the Church is the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the head. We're the body. Christ is the invisible part of the visible Church; and the Church is the visible part of the invisible Christ; and we are one with our Lord.

### **C. The Church Is the Building of Christ**

But not only that; the Church is His building. He inhabits the Church. Now I'm not talking, again, about these physical buildings. I'm talking about us. He lives in us. You remember there in Matthew 18 where the Lord Jesus said, "*Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I*"—where?—"in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20) Now Christ is always in our heart. Everywhere we go, we're never alone: He's there. But there is a peculiar sense—there is a unique sense—in which Jesus Christ meets when His people meet. He is standing in the midst of the golden lampstands, which is the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. You're going to find Christ here in our midst. Brother Jim has quoted several times that, when we sing, He is singing in the midst of the brethren. When we have a song service, the Lord Jesus is here joining in, and singing praise, and giving glory to the Father with us. "*For where two or three are gathered together...*"

You see, a church is a building. What is a building for? A building is to be inhabited. Why does He build this building? So He can live in it. And we are the temple of God. Corporately, He lives in us. And so the Lord Jesus is here in a very special way when

we meet together that He's not at other times.

You know, every now and then, the President of the United States will attend a worship service. One day, Ronald Reagan may attend the services here. And when the President attends the worship services, generally, the Secret Service, they go out ahead and make certain that everything is going to be all right, and they check up on the pastor to make certain he's not a subversive of some kind. And they don't want anything to be embarrassing or anything, and they want everybody to be safe. They want the President to be safe. And they do all of that. Now, in this particular church, the President thought that he might attend that church. And they'd done all the preliminary work. And then at the last moment there was a change of plans.

Well, they were making plans. It was members only, first, and all of this, and everybody was wanting to be there. And the news was out, and after a while, the pastor got a little exasperated because of the phone calls. And one lady called the church office, and she said, "I need to know, is the President of the United States going to be there Sunday morning? We need to make our plans as to whether or not we're going to attend. Can you tell us, please, if the President will be there?" The pastor got a little exasperated. He said, "No, ma'am. He will not be, but the King of kings will be!" Amen? "The King of kings will be—the Lord Jesus." *"Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them."*

And, by the way, suppose we knew that the President of the United States were going to visit these services, what would we do? I want to ask you a question, Jim. If you knew that you knew that Ronald Reagan were coming—now, be honest. Look, you be honest this morning, won't you? Look at me. Look. All right now, listen—if you knew that the President was going to come, would you practice better with the choir? I'm glad you're honest this morning. You really would. Boy, you'd pull out a sugar stick, or get a brand new one, and you'd really practice. You'd do good, wouldn't you?

Now I want to be honest. If I knew the President were coming, I'd just study better and harder. And, you know, I'd work on the message, and you'd want to be here. You'd say, "Well, we can't be gone that Sunday. The President's going to be there that Sunday." You'd want to be faithful. You'd want to be here, wouldn't you? We'd probably want to kind to have the grounds looking good? And you'd kind of vacuum the floors, and look and see if there were any smudges around, and pick up paper—everything! Why, the President is going to be there, right? Oh, friend, listen. The King of kings is here every Sunday, isn't that right? We ought to sing and preach and pray, and keep these grounds as to honor Him, the Lord Jesus.

Now we're not talking about these physical buildings as being the Church; this is the church house. But, oh, He inhabits this place when we are here, because we are His building. The people are His building. So, remember this about a church: A church is

His bride, and you can't love the groom without loving the bride. The Church is His body: You can't love the head without loving the body. And the Church is His building: It's where He is present. And so, dear friend, if you love the One who built the building, you have to love the One who lives in that building, and love the building that the One lives in: the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the fellowship of the Church. He says, "*I will build my church.*" (Matthew 16:18)

#### **IV. The Faith of the Church**

Now, the next thing I want you to notice is what I want to call the faith of the Church. Now, why did Jesus Christ ask them this question: "*Whom do men say that I...am?*" (Matthew 16:13) Because He wanted to see if they understood the faith of the Church. And Jesus received the right answer in verse 16: "*And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" (Matthew 16:16) And, by the way, that's the rock upon which the Church is built—the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. That is the confession of faith upon which every true church is built: that Jesus is Christ, Messiah, the Son of God.

Now, listen—listen. There are a lot of churches today—so-called "churches"—that are not churches at all, because they don't make this confession. Any organization is merely an organization and not a church if they do not confess that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God. And when you say, "He's the Messiah, the Son of the living God," that speaks of His deity.

Now Jesus Christ is not a great religious leader. You never speak of Jesus Christ the Great. You might say, Peter the Great, Charlemagne the Great, Alexander the Great, but not Jesus the Great. He is Jesus, the One and only. If there's something that used to rub my fur the wrong way—and still does when I hear it—it's this rock opera Jesus Christ Superstar. I thought that was dead, but the other day I heard somebody is putting it on around here somewhere: Jesus Christ Superstar. He's not a superstar. You see, a superstar is the best in a category.

For example, at the Super Bowl, they have a quarterback from Florida and a quarterback from California. It's obvious the quarterback from Florida will be best just because of where he's from; but these two men are superstars. Of all of the quarterbacks—and there are a lot of them—these fellows have come to the top of their profession. They are superstars. They are the best in a category. You see, Jesus is in a category all by Himself. Understand what I'm talking about. I mean, He is the unique Son of God. He's not the best of all the sons of God; He is the only begotten Son of God. He is not a Christ; He is *the* Christ—the Christ—the Son of the living God. This is the faith of the Church.

Now because of this, let me tell you how you get into the Church. Let me tell you

how you become a part of the Church. Three things are necessary.

#### **A. To Get into the Church, There Must Be a Conviction**

First of all, there must be a conviction that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God. How did Simon Peter know that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God? Was Simon Peter that smart? Was he that intelligent? No! Jesus said, “Simon, you get an A, but don’t get puffed up about it. You didn’t figure it out. Flesh and blood didn’t reveal it to you. My Father revealed it to you.” (Matthew 16:17) I’ve told you this many, many times; I want to tell you one more time: Anything I can talk you into, somebody else can talk you out of. They had been with Jesus for three years, and yet it still took something supernatural for them to understand who He was. After three years of teaching, still God had to reveal it to them.

Do you understand that? You see, I can preach truth; but only He can impart truth. And that is why, ladies and gentlemen, He builds the Church. We can’t do it. I can’t just get a people—a group of people—in a room and say, “I’m going to make Christians out of you. Now, listen to this. Doesn’t this make sense? You all agree with that? Now you’re all Christians.” No! That would be head knowledge. What Jesus said to him was, “God revealed it to you.” You see, we are called out by the Holy Spirit of God. Many of us do not understand how dependent we are upon the Holy Spirit of God for this thing called conversion: that He is the One who gives that conviction that He’s the Christ. It takes a divine, supernatural revelation. God takes the initiative.

#### **B. To Get into the Church, There Must be a Conversion**

Not only is there a conviction; there’s also a conversion. You see, when He said, “You are a rock, and upon this greater rock I’ll build my Church,” (Matthew 16:18) what was He saying? He was saying, “Peter, you and I now have the same nature—the same nature. We’re both made of the same substance.” You know, he didn’t have a piece of the rock; he was a piece of the rock. Peter understood this, and Peter said in his epistle we are “*partakers of the divine nature.*” (2 Peter 1:4) See, we’re made like unto Him. So it’s not just enough to be convinced that He’s the Christ, the Son of the living God. You have to be made like Him. There’s a supernatural conversion when we share His nature.

#### **C. To Get into the Church, There Must be a Confession**

All right now, watch: a conviction, a conversion, and a confession. Peter says it openly and plainly, unashamedly, “*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*” (Matthew 16:16) You see? Not ashamed of the Lord Jesus. Now Jesus said, “If you’re ashamed of me, I’ll be ashamed of you.” (Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26) It is when we’re convicted, converted, and confess the Lord Jesus Christ that we are called out of this

world and we become a part of that organization, that organism, His body, His bride, His building, which is the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. And without this, no one can qualify for church membership.

## **V. The Future of the Church**

Something else I want you to notice: not only the faith of the Church, but the future of the Church. Jesus said, *“Upon this rock I will build my church;”*—verse 18—*“and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”* (Matthew 16:18) That is, the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ cannot fail; it will not fail. Every now and then, people talk about how dark things are getting for the Church. There will be persecution for the Church; there will be more and more. Ten years from now, you’ll say, “I believe what the pastor said.” If the Lord tarries ten years, the persecution is going to get greater. But I want to remind you that when Jesus Christ gave this statement about the future of the Church, things never looked darker outwardly, for around the corner was the crucifixion. The crowds were now leaving Him. His work was misunderstood. It was a dark hour when Jesus said, *“I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”* Never put your eyes upon outward circumstances. Always remember this promise. The future of the Church is as bright as the promise of God.

Now Jesus said, *“The gates of hell shall not prevail against [the Church].”* Many people have the idea that the Church is standing strong, and hell has a battering ram. That’s not the idea. It is the Church with the battering ram, and the forces of hell behind the gates. And, literally, what He’s talking about is this: The gates of hell are in the Greek language the gates of Hades—that is, the abode of the dead—and the devil has taken people through sin and death and kept them captive. But Jesus said, “Those gates cannot keep them.” We have the ability to set the captive free and to bring them out. Jesus has the keys of death and of hell; and, therefore, the gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus, who called the Church out—Jesus, who sent the Church out—is the One who’s going to come to catch the Church up. And we are going up with the Lord Jesus Christ, and the devil cannot keep us.

## **VI. The Function of the Church**

Now, one last thing I want you to notice as we think about the Church triumphant: I want you to think about the function of the Church. Let’s continue to read verse 18: *“Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”*—that is, “will not succeed against it,” “will not be able to withstand it.” *“And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”* (Matthew 16:18–19)

Now this is the reason that some people, again, believe that the Church is built upon Simon Peter. That's the reason some people believe that Simon Peter was the first pope, because they say that Jesus gave to Peter the keys of the kingdom. And since Peter has the keys of heaven, you can't get into heaven unless Peter lets you in. And, therefore, in all of the comic strips and everything, there's St. Peter at the golden gate with the keys, and he lets you into heaven. And you have to go and tell Peter, you know, if you want to get into heaven. That's all ridiculous! The Bible doesn't teach that at all. Jesus doesn't say here "the keys of heaven"; it is "*the keys of the kingdom of heaven.*"

Now Peter is not the one who lets you into heaven. Back in the fifties, they used to sing a song about smoking cigarettes, and one of the lines in that song was, "Smoke, smoke, smoke that cigarette. Puff, puff, puff and if you smoke yourself to death, tell St. Peter at the Golden Gate that you hate to make him wait, but you just gotta have another cigarette." Remember that song? All right, well, the idea is that there will be no smoking in heaven, you know, just like some folks stand out here on the front of the church hoping that it will last them until they get out and the preacher doesn't preach too long. Well, Peter's not the guy—Peter's not that guy.

No, listen, friend. What He's talking about is that back in this time every scribe had a key that he wore on a girdle. It was a sign of knowledge and authority. Now Jesus has given us knowledge, and Jesus has given us authority. Jesus here is speaking, obviously, symbolically when He says, "*I give [you] the keys of the kingdom of heaven.*" There's no material key that unlocks, so it must be Jesus is talking here about authority. "Well," you say, "but He gave it to Peter, and look what it says to Peter: '*Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*'" (Matthew 16:19) Wonderful! That's in chapter 16. Turn to chapter 18 now; look in verse 18—same Jesus: "*Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven.*"

Now, do you notice something? In 16, He says, "thou"; in 18, He says, "ye." What's the difference? *Ye* is plural. And let's read it like a Southern Baptist would read it: "*Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever [you all] shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven:*"—that's what it means: "you all; every one of you"—"*and whatsoever [every one of you] shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*" (Matthew 18:18) The keys of the kingdom of heaven are given to every blood-bought child of God who confesses that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

And what is the purpose of keys? To unlock. And what is the key? It is the gospel of Jesus Christ that unlocks the prison house of despair and unlocks the treasures of heaven. And with this Bible, and with God's Word, and with the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, we have the key that sets men free. We have the keys to the kingdom of heaven, and the Lord Jesus has given us those keys. And what,

therefore, is the function of the Church? It is to use those keys. I want to tell you, the function of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is evangelism; and *if we don't go out in evangelism, we will go out of existence*. I told you last week, we'll evangelize or fossilize, and that we have a main calling, and that is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I believe we ought to fight abortion. I believe we ought to fight communism. I believe we ought to fight liquor. But let me tell you something, friend. You can fight liquor, and not be a Christian. You can fight communism and abortion, and not be a Christian. But, dear friend, you cannot make a man a real Christian without changing him on these other issues. What I'm trying to say is this: that if we don't preach the gospel, we're going to fail, folks. And you know what I want to be known as? I don't want to be known as a liquor fighter. I don't want to be known as a man whose instincts are in the political realm. I don't want to be known as a communism fighter. I don't want to be known as an anti-abortionist. Oh, listen. I don't mind being known by all of these things, but I don't want to be known by those things. You know what, when they think of Adrian Rogers, I want them to think of? Gospel preacher. Now, that might sound old-fashioned; but I want to be known as a preacher of the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I'm going to pay my respects to all of these things; but I want to tell you, dear friend, that the Church is the one that has been given the monopoly on the gospel of Christ. And if we don't preach it, nobody else is going to preach it. Jesus has given the Great Commission to His Church. Jesus says to the Church, *"I'll give unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven."* (Matthew 16:19)

And I pray God—oh, I pray God—that you'll see that those keys are not just given to Peter and not just given to Adrian; they're given to you, and they're given to every blood-bought child of God. And if you're in that Church, and you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, at the same time, correspondingly, you're going to want others to believe it too, and to be called out, and to be a part of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## Conclusion

Someone wrote these words:

*If you cannot preach like Peter,  
If you cannot pray like Paul,  
You can tell the love of Jesus  
And say, "He died for all."*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

*Let none hear you idly saying,*



*“There is nothing I can do.”  
While the lost of earth are dying  
And the Master calls for you.*

*—DANIEL MARCH*

# The Church Triumphant

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: July 5, 1992**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 16:13–19**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Foundation of the Church
- II. The Formation of the Church
- III. The Fellowship of the Church
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- VI. The Function of the Church

Conclusion

## Introduction

**T**ake God's Word and turn with me, please, tonight to the Gospel of Matthew chapter 16—we'll begin reading in verse 13. The grandest organization that this world knows anything about is the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm so delighted to be a part of His Church, this visible expression of the grandest organization and organism that the world has ever known: the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. I want to talk to you tonight about "The Church Triumphant."

Now the scripture that I'm going to read takes place about six months before the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. He has been teaching and preaching, ministering to His disciples, discipling them, if you will, developing them and bringing them to this critical moment. And now they've been in school, and Jesus is giving the final examination. I want you to listen. Matthew 16, verse 13: *"When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona:"*—that means "son of Jona"—*"for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I*

*will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”* (Matthew 16:13–19) Thank God for the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And let me tell you why the Church is the Church Triumphant.

## **I. The Foundation of the Church**

First of all, I want you to think about the Church as a spiritual building. Now the Church is not a literal building, not a physical building. This building, beautiful as it is, is not a church. It is a church house; we meet here. But you're the Church. You see, the building is not the Church, but the spiritual building has a spiritual foundation. Now I want you to see the spiritual foundation of the spiritual building. Verse 16: *“Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.”* (Matthew 16:16–18) And in verse 18 you have the foundation of the Church.

Now, what foundation is the Church built upon? Someone says, “Well, if you read it, it's obvious: the Church is built upon the foundation of Simon Peter, for Jesus says, *‘Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.’*” But may I say plainly, clearly, without stutter or stammer, without equivocation, the Church is not built upon Simon Peter, nor did Jesus say that He would build His Church upon Simon Peter. That is a careless reading of this passage of Scripture. The word *Peter* is an English translation of the Greek word *petros*, and it simply means “rock.” Jesus said to Peter, “Peter, you've been unstable up to this time, but now, Peter, you are a rock.” And then He says, *“Upon this rock I will build my church.”* In the Greek language, it is obvious He uses another word for “rock.” He uses the word *petra*, which is the feminine form of the word for “rock.”

And He says, “Now, Peter, you're a rock,” but that word means “a rock like a boulder.” But then He uses another word, an entirely different word, and the word *petra* means “foundation rock.” It means bedrock. It means a strata of rock. It means a mountain of rock. And Jesus said, “Upon this larger rock, this solid rock, this bedrock, I will build my Church.” And we're going to see in a moment that He is not talking about Simon Peter, but He is talking about Himself, for Simon Peter has said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,” and He said, “That's right. And on this rock I will build my Church.”

The Apostle Paul understood it that way. In 1 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 11, the

Apostle Paul said, “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 3:11) We sing it:

*The Church’s one foundation  
Is Jesus Christ her Lord,  
She is His new creation  
by [Spirit] and the Word.*

—SAMUEL J. STONE

No, the Church is not built upon Simon Peter, and I, for one, am very glad that it’s not built upon Simon Peter. Though Peter was saved, he was certainly subject to the foibles of human nature. And right after this grand confession where Peter got an A-plus for his answer, he then got an F in prophecy, because Jesus began to say to Simon Peter, “I’m going to go to the cross; I’m going to suffer and die,” and Peter said, “No, Lord, this can’t happen to you.” And Jesus had to say, “*Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me.*” (Matthew 16:23)

No, the Church was not built upon Simon Peter, is not built upon Simon Peter; the foundation of the Church is Jesus Christ. And I thank God that I don’t have to look back to an ancestor, priest, prophet, or apostle, but I can look to Jesus Christ as the living, sure foundation of this church and every church.

## **II. The Formation of the Church**

The second thing I want you to see is, not only the foundation of the Church, but I want you to see the formation of the Church. How is the Church built? Well, look in verse 18 again—Jesus said to Peter, “*I say...unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.*” (Matthew 16:18) Friend, I cannot tell you how many times it’s been a blessing to me since I’ve been in the ministry. Jesus did not say to me, “Adrian, you will build my Church.” And He certainly didn’t say, “Adrian, I’ll build you a church.” He said, “*Upon this rock I will build my church.*”

Flesh and blood can never build a church of the Lord Jesus. It will not; it cannot. The Church is not a material, physical building. The Church is more than an organization. The word *church* is a translation of the Greek word *ekklesia*. It’s a word we get *ecclesiastical* from. And the word *ekklesia* is two Greek words put together: *ek*, meaning “out of,” and *kaleo*, which means “to call.” And so the Church is the “called out ones.” The word *ekklesia* just simply means “an assembly of called out people.” They have been called out. If it’s used in an ecclesiastical way, that just means they are spiritually called out. It could refer to a town assembly or anything. The word *church* just simply means “people who have been called out.” That’s what it means.

That’s what a church is: the Church is the people of God, those who have been

called out. There are many people in the world, but the Church is made up of those that God has called out of the world. There are some who have their name on this church roll, but they're not a member of this church. How could they have their name on this roll and not be a member of this church? Because, friend, they've never been called out of the world. All they have is a name on a piece of paper. But they're not members, because they are still in the world; they're still of the world; they have never been saved; they've never been born again. How are people added to the Church? They are called out of the world into the Body of Christ. And who does that? God does that through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit. And Jesus said, "*Upon this rock*"—that I'm the Christ, the Son of the living God—"*I will build my church.*" And, friend, He's just calling out stones, building blocks for that spiritual building.

### **III. The Fellowship of the Church**

Now, here's the third thing I want you to see. Not only the foundation and formation of the Church, but I want you to think about the fellowship of the Church. I had us to sing, "We are one in the bond of love." You see, my dear friend, you and I, and all of us that are saved, are a part of His body. I belong to you, and you belong to me, and together we belong to Jesus Christ, because He calls it His Church. Christ and the Church are not identical, but Christ and the Church are inseparable.

Now I said the Church is like a building. And Jesus Christ is the foundation, and we are individual stones built upon that foundation. Peter makes that very clear in his epistles. But not only is the Church like a building; the Church is also like a body. There are many analogies. Christ is the head, and we're the members of that body. And not only are we individual members, but we're members one of another. We interrelate; we're in the body together.

Now another analogy of the Church is, not only is the Church like a building, and not only is the Church like a body, but the Church is like a bride. We find this in Ephesians chapter 5. Christ is the bridegroom, and the Church is the bride.

Now, you think about it. Think about all that has to do with fellowship. For example, if the Church is a building, and Christ is the foundation, we're built one upon another. We're in it together like bricks in a wall. What holds those bricks together? "Well," you say, "the mortar." Well, it does. But it also holds them apart. And that mortar is love, that holds us together and also holds us apart. You know, all bricks have some rough edges, but the mortar of love makes up for those rough edges. All bricks have some indentations. But that mortar of love fills those indentations. And that's what makes us one in the bond of love. We are held together by the love and Christ, built upon the foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And, independently, we're not much. Friend, this building has some bricks in it. You can push a brick around, but I'd like to see someone push this building around. You see, independently, we're not much; but, together, we're something. You see, that's the fellowship of the Church. The Church is like a body, with Christ as the head; and we're members together. Now, if this hand is related to the head, and this hand is related to the head, and rightly related, friend, they have to be related to one another. They have to cooperate with one another, because there is a common head, even though they are individual members. Thank God for that. That's the fellowship of the Church.

And the Church is the Bride of Christ. Now some people say, "Well, I love Jesus. I just don't love the Church." Well, I want to tell you something about this man standing up here. Don't come up to him and say, "Adrian, I love you, but I don't love Joyce." You're in bad trouble with me if you talk that way. "Well, Adrian, I'd like to have you over for supper, but don't bring Joyce. We don't like her. We don't want to fellowship with her." Friend, I want to tell you, if you don't love Joyce, you don't love me. That's just the way it is. I'll tell you something else. I'm a peace-loving man, but you lay hands on her, and I'll put you on the ground as fast as I can. I mean that with all my heart, because she's my bride. I love her. And Jesus loves the Church. Don't ever make the mistake of saying, "I love Jesus, but I don't love the Church." That's like saying, "I love the foundation. I care not for this building"; "I love my head, but I don't care for my body"; "I love the groom, but I don't like the bride."

Now that's the fellowship of the Church. We're in it together. And think again of the Church as a building. "*Upon this rock I will build my church.*" "*Know ye not that ye...*"—that's all of us—"*ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?*" (1 Corinthians 3:16) Where does the Holy Spirit live? In us. Now He lives in us individually, but now He's talking about all of us plurally: "ye." As you would say in the South, "You all." "You all are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you."

It was rumored that the President of the United States was going to visit a particular church. One lady who had not attended very regularly called the church office, and she said, "Is it true that the President of the United States is going to be in the service this Sunday morning? And, if so, is it necessary to reserve seats? Because I surely want to be there." The pastor was quite irate. He said, "Madam, the President of the United States is not going to be here. But the King of kings will be. And that ought to be good enough for you." Amen? "The King of kings will be." "You are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwells in you."

Friend, that is the fellowship of the Church.

## IV. The Faith of the Church

Now I want you to think with me not only about the fellowship of the Church, my dear friend, but I want you to think about the faith of the Church. Go back, if you will, to Matthew chapter 16, and remember now that Jesus is giving Simon Peter a test. Look in verse 13: *“When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist.”* (Matthew 16:13–14) Why did they say John the Baptist? Well, I guess because He was preaching repentance. “Some say Elias.” Why did they say He was Elias? Because He was prophesying. “Others said Jeremias.” Why did they say Jeremias? Because He was weeping. He was *“a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.”* (Isaiah 53:3) And others said, “He’s one of the prophets.” But He said to them, “Let’s not be second-handed about it. Who do you say that I am?” And Simon Peter answered and said, *“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”*

Now, my dear friend, that is the faith of the Church. What is the true confession of faith that everybody must make in order to be a part of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ? Your confession, your faith, will be the same as the faith of Simon Peter.

Now I want you to notice three things about what Simon Peter said here.

### A. A Positive Conviction

First of all, it was based on a positive conviction. “Who do you say that I am?” Not, what does Adrian Rogers say? Not, what does some book say? Not, what have you read? what have you heard? But “who, Peter, do you say that I am?” There, my dear friend, is what I want to call a very positive conviction. Simon Peter said, “You’re the Messiah; you’re the Christ; you’re the Son of God.” Now, friend, you must believe that in order to be a part of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now you’re not going to figure it out. Jesus said, in effect, to Peter, “Peter, that’s right. In this examination you get an A. But don’t get puffed up about it. You did not figure it out. The only way you know it is by divine revelation.” And I’m so keenly aware of that when I preach. As I’ve told you a thousand times, I can *preach* truth to you, but only the Holy Spirit can *impart* truth to you. *“Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”* There is a positive conviction.

Now, you think about it. Jesus had been teaching Simon Peter for three years—the very Son of God, intense study. No seminary course had ever been like this. And still Simon Peter was dependent upon the Holy Spirit to understand just who Jesus is: *“Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”* When God reveals it to you, dear friend, nothing will be able to shake you. Peter did deny the Lord out of fear, but he never denied the Lord out of unbelief. He knew who

Jesus was. *“Thou are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”* It is a positive conviction.

## **B. A Personal Conversion**

And, my dear friend, that leads to a personal conversion. Now you have to understand what Jesus is doing when He says, “Now, Peter, you are a rock.” You see, look. Peter says, “Jesus, you’re the Messiah.” And Jesus says, “Thank you. And, Peter, you are a rock.” They’re just giving each other names; they’re just describing each other. And then Jesus said, “Upon this bedrock I’ll build my Church.”

Now, why did Jesus say, “Peter, you’re a rock”? Well, because He was describing the new nature that Peter had. The word *Simon*, which is his natural name, means “unstable.” Do you remember what Jesus said? “Simon, Satan has desired you, that he might sift you like wheat.” (Luke 22:31) He was something unstable like wheat that could be sifted. But now He says, “Simon, you are now a rock. And upon this rock, the bedrock, I’ll build my Church.” What He is saying is, “Peter, you have the same nature I have. You have been a partaker of the divine nature. You have a rock nature. You are a piece of the rock.” That’s what He is saying: “You now have my nature.” Peter understood this. Peter never thought of himself as the foundation of the Church, but he spoke of himself and other believers as holy stones, living stones, built upon a foundation. (1 Peter 2:4–8) And he realized that he had the nature of his dear Lord.

## **C. A Public Confession**

Now you see what qualifies a person to be a part of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. First of all, a positive conviction: *“Thou are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”* Secondly, a personal conversion. And, thirdly, a public confession. A positive conviction, a personal conversion, and a public confession. Openly, publicly, unashamedly, he says, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Are you ashamed to confess the Lord Jesus Christ? Some people wonder why in our churches we give a public invitation, ask people to come openly and publicly, and let it be known that they’re not ashamed of the Lord Jesus Christ. Simply this: Jesus said, “If you are ashamed of me, I’ll be ashamed of you.” (Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26) But Jesus said, “If you confess me before men, I’ll confess you before my Father which is in heaven.” (Matthew 10:32) Now the confession doesn’t save you. It just shows that you’re saved. It shows that you’re not ashamed of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now no one can qualify for membership in the Church unless he shares the faith of the Church.

## **V. The Future of the Church**

Now, let’s move on. I’ve talked to you about the foundation of the Church. I’ve talked to you about the formation of the Church. I’ve talked to you about the fellowship of the



Church. I've talked to you about the faith of the Church. Now, here's the part that I really love. I want to talk to you about the future of the Church. Look in verse 18 now—and Jesus said, *“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church;”*—now, notice the last part of verse 18—*“and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”* (Matthew 16:18)

Now, when Jesus said this, His ministry was at the lowest ebb. I mean He was about to be crucified; the crowds were leaving Him; the public opinion was turning on Him in many ways; but Jesus said, *“I will build my church; and the [very] gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”* Now some people use this as a text to prove that the Church will survive. It will—but that's not what Jesus is teaching here. Jesus is not teaching that the Church is on the defense and trying to survive, and is going to make it to the very end. He's speaking here about gates. He's not talking here about swords and cannons, but gates. Gates are not weapons of war. Nobody ever saw an army going forth carrying gates to destroy the enemy with gates. What He is saying is that there is a dominion called hell. *Hades* is the Greek word. Jesus speaks of “the gates of Hades.” There is a dominion, a city of prisoners, the city of the dead, the abode of the dead, locked in by these gates.

You see, the sinister minister of fear and death is Satan. In Hebrews chapter 2, verses 14 and 15, the Bible says that, *“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood,”*—that is, he's talking about us, calling us children: we have flesh and blood—*“he also himself likewise took part of the same;”*—that is, Jesus became flesh and blood—*“that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”* (Hebrews 2:14–15)

Do you know the one all-consuming fear that people have? It's death. And it's death that keeps men slaves. Every fear, every phobia, flows from the poison fountain of the fear of death. But Jesus Christ suffered, bled, and died to obliterate Satan's kingdom; and the gates of hell and death cannot hold the Church. What Jesus Christ has done is to invade the enemy's territory. He's gone right into the city of the dominion of the dead—spiritually dead and physically dead—and He's moved right into that, and He's called out people for His name. He said, “You belong to me.” “You belong to me.” “You belong to me.” “And we're not staying here; we're breaking out. And the gates of hell won't stop us. We are coming out.”

*People say the Church is on its way out. It sure is, friend. Jesus has called the Church out, and then Jesus has sent the Church out, and soon He's coming to take the Church out.* And, my dear friend, those who have been buried, and those who are still alive, are going to be caught up to meet the Lord Jesus in the air. (1 Thessalonians

4:17)

This is the future of the Church: *“and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”* Why? Because Jesus has the keys of death and hell. Now those gates cannot prevail against us.

Dr. W. A. Criswell said he was on an airplane, and seated next to him was an eminent theological professor. And they got in a conversation. And Dr. Criswell asked this professor about his family. And the professor told him about his wife. Then the professor said, “Dr. Criswell, my wife and I had a son, only one boy. He was a very young little boy that we loved with all of our heart. But one day our son came home from school and had a headache, and he didn’t want to go back to school the next day, because his head hurt. So we let him stay home. And he developed a fever. And soon it was a raging fever. And they called the doctor, and the doctor said, ‘Sir, your son has spinal meningitis, and in a little while he will be dead. We cannot help him. Medical science cannot save the life of this little boy.’”

And Dr. Criswell told how that professor told about how his little boy died. He said, “I would go and spend as much time as I could in his bedroom with him. We took him home and brought him home so that he might go to heaven from home.” And he said, “The doctor came to the house and made a visit, and told the professor—he said, ‘Professor, if you have anything to say to your boy, you ought to say it now, because it will not be long.’” And this eminent theological professor went in and sat by the bedside, and took his little boy by the hand. The sun had not yet set, but the illness was taking the sight from the boy. And the little boy said, “Daddy, it’s getting dark, isn’t it?” And the professor said, “Son, it’s getting real dark.” And he said, “Daddy, it must be almost nighttime.” The professor said, “Yes, son, the night is coming.” And then, Dr. Criswell said that little boy said, “Well, Daddy, I’d better go to sleep. I feel so tired.” He said, “Yes, son, you’d better go to sleep.” Then he said the little fellow had a way of fixing his pillow. He fixed it a certain way, and fixed his hands a certain way. It was his habit when he slept. And he fixed his pillow just the way he fixed it, fixed his hands just the way he would fix them, before he’d go to sleep. And the little fellow said these last words to his daddy on this earth. He said, “Well, Daddy, I’m very sleepy. I’m going to go to sleep. Good night, Daddy. I’ll see you in the morning.”

And Dr. Criswell said, “That professor looked out of that plane window for a long time. He couldn’t say anything else for a while. And then he turned back and looked at Dr. Criswell and said, “And, Dr. Criswell, I can hardly wait till the morning.”

And, friend, there’s a morning coming—there’s a morning coming. I believe that’s what Jesus Christ is talking about when He says, *“Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”*—the gates of death and hades. Friends,

we're breaking out through the Lord Jesus Christ.

## VI. The Function of the Church

One last thing I want you to see. Not only the future of the Church, but I want you to see the function of the Church. Look, if you will now, in verses 18 and 19: *"I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."*

(Matthew 16:18–19) Some people have the idea that Peter is the fellow with the keys, letting people in and out of heaven. We make a lot of jokes about that. There used to be an old song called, "Smoke, Smoke, Smoke that cigarette." Do you remember that song? No, you're too young.

*Smoke, smoke, smoke that cigarette  
Puff, puff, puff and if you smoke yourself to death  
Tell St. Peter at the Golden Gate  
That you hate to make him wait  
But you just gotta have another cigarette.*

—MERLE TRAVIS

Do you remember that song? All right, so that old song, that idea—there's old St. Peter there, he's the one checking people in and checking people out.

Friend, when Jesus said to Peter, "Peter, I'll give to you the keys to the kingdom of heaven: whatever you bind I'll bind and whatever you loose I'll loose," he was not just talking to Peter. Let me give you a profound statement. Chapter 18 follows that. Now, look in chapter 18, if you will, where Jesus said, *"Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye"*—ye, you all—*"shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye"*—plural, you all—*"shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."* (Matthew 18:18) Not just Peter: this is a promise to the Church to bind and to loose. We have the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

In Bible times, they had scribes, and these scribes wore as an insignia on their girdle a set of keys. And they were symbolic, and they spoke of the knowledge that the scribes were supposed to have. And the key stands for knowledge; it stands for truth. Luke 11 and verse 52 would point that out. (Luke 11:52) What's Jesus saying? Jesus is saying, "Listen. I am going to give you my spiritual authority. I am going to give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven." What are the keys of the kingdom of heaven? The gospel that we preach, the truths of God's Word, that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God, that men, women, boys, and girls are saved by faith in Him. And with the power of the gospel we can bind the power of Satan and we can loose and liberate souls.

What is the function of the Church? It's not to fight communism. I hate communism. I'm glad to see that communism has imploded. It's not to fight pornography. I hate pornography. But that's not the purpose of the Church. It is not to fight liquor. I hate liquor, and every time I get a chance, I'm going to do it damage, if I can. And I'm going to do damage to pornography, and I'm going to do damage to abortion. I'm going to do damage to communism, and anything I can. But, my dear friend, the function of the Church is evangelism: bringing people to Jesus Christ using the keys of the kingdom. And the church that does not go out in evangelism will go out of business. We'll evangelize or fossilize, dear friend. That is the purpose of the Church.

Jesus has given us the keys. Jesus has given us the ability to bind the powers of darkness, and to liberate souls, and bring people to Jesus Christ. God alone knows how many times I've preached. God alone knows how many times people have come to Christ. How many souls that I've had the joy of introducing personally to Jesus Christ, I don't know. I'm not a record-keeper. It's not one of my fortes. But I'm going to tell you something, friend. There, to me, is no greater joy on this earth than bringing a soul to Jesus Christ—no greater joy. You let Congress make the laws; you let Hollywood have the fame; you let the President run the nation; you let Wall Street handle the finances; you let me be a winner of souls, and I'll be happy. *"He that winneth souls is wise."* (Proverbs 11:30) That is the function of the Church.

## **Conclusion**

Do you know the mark that a man knows Jesus? He wants everybody else to know Him. That's the mark that you know Jesus Christ. Friend, the foundation of the Church is Jesus Christ. The formation of the Church, it is the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit: *"I will build my church."* The fellowship of the Church: we've been called out of this world; we're different. The faith of the Church is that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. We confess it. We become like the Lord Jesus. We share His nature. The future of the Church: the gates of hell can't keep us in. The function of the Church is to tell everybody that Jesus saves.

Father, I pray that you will seal the message to our hearts. Thank you for our own dear local fellowship, this visible expression of your great invisible Church around the world. Lord, even that Church is really not invisible, because there are local congregations all over this world, black, white, red, and yellow, different denominations, different forms of worship, but one dear wonderful Savior who's the Christ, the Son of the living God. In His dear name I pray. Amen.

# The Church Triumphant

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: May 27, 2001**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 16:13-19**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Saving Confession of the Church
  - A. A Personal Conviction About Christ
  - B. A Personal Confession of Christ
  - C. A Personal Conversion to Christ
- II. The Sovereign Construction of the Church
- III. The Spiritual Composition of the Church
  - A. We Are Built Together
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- IV. The Singular Commission of the Church
- V. The Settled Consummation of the Church

Conclusion

## Introduction

Turn to Matthew chapter 16, would you, please, and look up here.

This is the time of year that students are taking tests, some of them hoping to graduate. I heard of a youngster who came home, and his father said, "How did you do on your examinations?" He said, "Well, Dad, I'm afraid I flunked my history test." The dad said, "No, you need to be more positive." He said, "Okay, I am positive I flunked my history test."

The scripture that I'm going to read to you is really an examination. The disciples had been with the Lord Jesus Christ in the greatest seminary of all. He had been teaching them for almost three years. And now he comes to the conclusion of His ministry with them, and He's going to give them a final examination. And I want you to notice how it goes here in Matthew chapter 16, and we begin in verse 13: *"When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: and some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them,"*—and here's the major question on the exam—*"But whom say ye that I am..."*—and, by the way, is that not the greatest question of the ages?—*"whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona:"*—that is, "You

aced it; you got 100; you got A-plus”—*“for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”*

(Matthew 16:13–19)

I’ve already said that the greatest organization and the greatest organism on the face of this earth is the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is absolutely totally foolish to talk about loving Jesus without loving what Jesus loves; and Jesus loves the Church.

Now there are several things I want you to learn about the Church, and I want you to pay attention, because God’s plan for every person listening to me is this: number one, that you be saved; and, number two, that you be an active participant in a local New Testament church. And if you’re not that way, you’re not right with God, okay? So, pay attention. I want you to listen.

## **I. The Saving Confession of the Church**

All right, first of all, I want you to think with me about what I’m going to call the saving confession of the Church. Write that down: the saving confession of the Church. What must you confess? What must you believe in order to be saved? Here’s what you must believe in order to be saved. You must believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. That’s where you put your faith. You must be a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Simon Peter is asked a question: “Peter, who do people say that I am?” “Well,” they said, “some say that you’re John the Baptist. Others say that you’re Elijah. Others say that you’re one of the prophets.” “All right now, Peter, who do you say that I am?”—“who do you say that I am?” Peter says, “You’re the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Do you believe that? Do you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God?

I want you to think about this saving confession, and listen to me very carefully.

### **A. A Personal Conviction About Christ**

It was a personal conviction about Christ. Put it down: a personal conviction. Now he said, “What are other people saying?” “Well, some say this, and some say that, and some say the other.” “Now, Peter, what do you say personally? What is your conviction?” Peter says, “I believe—I personally believe—that you are the Christ;”—that means the Anointed One, the Messiah—“I believe that you are the Son of God.”

Now, how did Peter come to this conclusion? Well, not by taking a poll. Not by going out and saying, “What do others say?” Nor did he come to this conclusion because he had figured it out. Not by intellectual investigation. Now, remember he had been almost three

years with Jesus Christ, and yet Jesus said, *“Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”* (Matthew 16:17) Now, how can you know who Jesus Christ is? Not by taking a poll, not by asking what others think. Very frankly, it makes no difference what others think. Number two: not by bringing your mind and your intellect to the Bible to try to dig truth out of the Bible with your flesh and your blood, your mind, your intellect, your emotions. You’ll never know God except by divine revelation.

Now, listen. Jesus said, “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona. You’re blessed, but remember this: It doesn’t matter what others say; it doesn’t matter what you think. What matters is what God reveals to you.” Now I hope you get this, because if you don’t get this, you’re going to miss the whole thing. Stop looking around and studying world religions. Stop, my friend, bringing your carnal mind to the Word of God. Lay your pride in the dust, and ask God to reveal to you who Jesus Christ is. And I tell you, He will. I promise you on the authority of the Word of God, if you want to know who Jesus Christ is, you can know, but not by taking a poll, not by intellectual prowess, but by humbling yourself and opening yourself to the Word of God. The Bible says, “God hath hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, and hath revealed them unto babes.” (Matthew 11:25; Luke 10:21) Are you willing to come with a childlike faith? You say, “Oh, no, I want to strut into the presence of God.” Well, you’re not going to strut into the presence of God. “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona.” His was a personal conviction about the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **B. A Personal Confession of Christ**

But, secondly, I want you to see not only was it a personal conviction of Christ; it was a personal conviction about Christ, but it also was a personal confession of Christ. Now Simon Peter was not ashamed, not afraid, to confess what he knew about the Lord Jesus Christ. Are you ashamed to confess Christ? Then you’re not going to heaven. Even if you have the conviction, and yet you don’t make the confession, you are not going to heaven.

Listen to Romans 10, verses 9 and 10: *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth”—listen—“confession is made unto salvation.”* (Romans 10:9–10) Now you’re in Matthew 16. You could go backward to Matthew 10, but let me just read it to you. Matthew 10, verses 32 and 33—Jesus said, *“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.”* (Matthew 10:32–33)

Now, suppose Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon Peter, who do you say that I am?” And suppose Simon Peter said, “Well,” to himself, “in my heart, I know who He is, but there are too many people standing around here. I don’t want to be identified with Him openly and publicly, so I’m not going to make this great confession that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God.” There are some of you sitting in this building this morning, you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, but you’re ashamed to confess Him before men. I want to tell you something. Walking down a church aisle doesn’t save anybody. Shaking a pastor’s hand doesn’t save anybody. But what it indicates is what saves you: that you’re not ashamed of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said frankly, clearly, plainly, “If you’re ashamed of me, I’ll be ashamed of you.” The faith that will not lead to confession will not lead to heaven.

Now you may be somewhere out in a desert where there’s nobody to confess to. That’s one matter. But when you sit in a congregation like this, and an opportunity is given to you to make an acknowledgement of your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, then you ought to gladly say, “I want to do it.” How could you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and be ashamed of Him? It’s impossible. It’s impossible, if you truly believed it that He is the very Son of God.

### **C. A Personal Conversion to Christ**

We’re talking, friend, about the saving confession of the Church. It was a personal conviction. It was a personal confession. And it was a personal conversion. Notice what Jesus said. Jesus said, “*And I say...unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.*” (Matthew 16:18) Now Jesus is making a play on words. We’re going to see later that Jesus is the foundation of the Church, that Jesus is the bedrock upon which the Church is built. But Jesus says to him, “And I say that you are Peter.” Now his name, prior to this, has been Simon. What does the name *Simon* mean? It means “something unstable.” Remember the Scripture, “Simon, Satan has desired you, that he might sift you as wheat.” (Luke 22:31) We could call him “Shifty.” But now Jesus calls him “Rocky.” Jesus gives him another name: Peter—*petros*. It means “rock.” It means “boulder.” He says, “That’s all right, Peter. Now I’m going to change your name. No longer are you Simon Johnson Barjona.” That’s what it means—Simon Johnson, son of John. “Now your name is Peter.” Maybe his nickname was Rocky. “Now you’re Peter. You are a rock.”

Now Jesus is the foundation rock. We’re going to see that later on. But now Peter has the same nature as Jesus. Peter doesn’t just *have* a piece of the rock; he *is* a piece of the rock. He has become a partaker of the divine nature.

Now, let me tell you this about Christians. A Christian is not just a nicer person. A Christian is somebody who’s had a miracle. He has become a partaker of the divine nature.



Have you become a partaker of the divine nature? Have you? I mean, does God live in you? Has there been a change in your nature? The Bible says, clearly and plainly, *“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature”* (2 Corinthians 5:17) —“a new creation.”

Christians are not a tadpole who finally turns into a frog; Christians are a frog turned into a prince by the kiss of grace. There is a divine, supernatural change.

You have a change in your life. Has there been a change in your life? Or have you just joined a church?

Now, what is the saving confession of the church? It is a personal conviction about Christ: *“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”* It is a public confession of that Christ: *“I believe that you’re the Christ, the Son of the living God. This is what I say.”* And it is a powerful conversion. Now you have become a piece of the rock. Now I say to you that that’s what a New Testament church is built upon. Nobody is qualified for membership in this church, or any church—your church out there—who does not believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God; who’s not willing to confess openly and publicly and unashamedly that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and has had a transformation by receiving Jesus Christ into their heart and into their life.

Do you know what has happened to so many churches today? Churches have become sort of social clubs. But, obviously, it’s easier to get into some churches than some social clubs. At least they have some standards. Many churches today, rather than a sheepfold, have become a zoo, where everybody gets in and nobody gets out. The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is built upon a saving confession.

“Who do you say that I am?” Peter said, *“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”* Have you said that? Have you confessed that? Has there been a change in your life? Has there? I say, has there?

## **II. The Sovereign Construction of the Church**

All right, let’s go on. The second thing I want you to see: not only the saving confession of the Church, but I want you to see the sovereign construction of the Church. Notice what Jesus says. Just keep your Bibles open: *“I say...unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock...”*—I’m reading now verse 18—*“and upon this rock I will build my church.”* (Matthew 16:18) Now the Church is sovereignly constructed. Jesus did not say, “You will build my Church.” He didn’t say, “I will build your church.” Jesus said, *“Upon this rock I will build my church.”* Flesh and blood cannot build a church of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is Jesus’ Church, and He is the One that builds it.

Now we're not talking about the building. We're not talking about this building here. This building is just a sheep shed. This is not the Church. This is where the Church meets. You are the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I heard one day about a man who was filling out a form, and on that form it said, "church preference." He put "red brick."

We're not talking about a building. We're talking about a group of people that Jesus Christ has redeemed by His shed blood.

Now Jesus is the architect of the Church, Jesus is the builder of the Church, and Jesus Christ is the foundation of the Church. Jesus says, "Upon this rock I will build my church." Now some people say that the Church is built upon Simon Peter. That's absurd. The Church is built upon Jesus Christ. The Bible says, clearly and plainly, in 1 Corinthians 3, verse 11, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 3:11) Jesus is the foundation of the Church. Jesus is making a play on words. Jesus said, "I say unto you that you are Peter,"—the Greek word there is *petros*—if we were to anglicize it—"and upon this rock I will build my Church." But He doesn't use the word *petros* again. He uses another word. "Thou art *Petros*, and upon this *petra* I will build my Church."

What's the difference between *petros* and *petra*? One word means "a rock, like a boulder." Another word means "a rock like a rock stratum; a ledge; a foundation; a massive rock." Now Jesus says, "Peter, you're a piece of the rock. You're a boulder, but I am the foundation, and upon this foundation stone I will build my Church." What is the foundation stone upon which the Church is built? What Peter's just said: "You're the Christ, the Son of the living God." "That's right. And upon that rock I will build my Church."

*On Christ the solid rock I stand,  
All other ground is sinking sand.*

—EDWARD MOTE

*The church's one foundation  
Is Jesus Christ her Lord.*

—SAMUEL J. STONE

I'm not looking back to some ancestral priest. I'm so grateful the Church is not built upon Simon Peter. Simon Peter was a sinner like you are, like I am. If you continue to read this chapter, in a few verses later Jesus had to rebuke Simon Peter and say, "Get thee behind me, Satan. You're an offense unto me." (Matthew 16:23) The Church is built upon the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the solid rock. He is the One who is building the Church. And, therefore, I want to tell you something, folks. The Church will be built. The Church will be completed. Philippians 1:6: "He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it." What

God starts God will complete. He will present it to Himself a glorious Church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, (Ephesians 5:27) and don't you feel beleaguered. You are on the winning side. And we have beneath us the foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I heard of a woman one day who was dying, and she seemed to be comatose. Others standing around the bedside thought she could not hear what was being said. But, many times, people who are dying, who cannot articulate, cannot speak, they can hear, they can understand. And so they were talking about her. She was a great Christian, had a glorious experience with the Lord Jesus Christ, and somebody said, "Well, she's sinking." She opened her eyes and said, "Sinking? How can one sink through a rock?" She was resting on the Lord Jesus Christ, and so am I.

### **III. The Spiritual Composition of the Church**

So there's the sovereign construction of the Church. Here's the third thing I want you to see. I want you to see the spiritual composition of the Church. Now Jesus said, "*Upon this rock I will build my church.*" (Matthew 16:18) Well, what is the composition of the Church? What does He build the Church out of? Out of stone, living stone. Now Simon Peter knew he was not the foundation. Put in your margin 1 Peter 2, verse 5. Now here's what Peter thought about that. Here's what Peter himself wrote about that. He said, "*Ye also, as lively stones,*"—that is, living stones—"*are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood*" (1 Peter 2:5)—"*an holy priesthood.*" Now what Peter is saying is that, "Jesus taught me one day that He was the foundation and I am a stone." But he says, "You also are living stones." We're not dead stones; we're living stones. And we are built upon the foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the very word *church*, He says, "*I will build my church*"—it's the Greek word *ekklesia*, and it means "a called out assembly." What the Lord Jesus Christ is doing in Memphis, He's calling out some people. In Toledo, He's calling out some people. In Spain, He's calling out some people. In Japan, He's calling out some people. In Jakarta, He's calling out some people. In Australia, He's calling out some people. And He's calling them by the Holy Spirit and by the preaching of the Word of God: a stone here, a stone here, a stone here, a stone here. And all of these stones are built upon the foundation, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is a living stone. He is a living stone. He is a living stone. You are a living stone if you confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. And the Master Builder, the Lord Jesus Christ, is putting stone upon stone upon stone. Here's a stone, here's a stone, here's a stone. And what our Lord Jesus Christ is doing is building a spiritual house.

Now, let's think about that for a little bit. Let's think a little bit about the composition of the Church.

## A. We Are Built Together

Friend, first of all, I want you to know that we are built together. That's the reason we must have the church. We are a building. You ever hear of a one-stone building? Do you ever hear of a one-brick building? No! Friend, you can take a stone and push it around. You could take a brick and shove it around. It's hard to shove a building around. Besides that, one stone, one brick, doesn't make a house. Therefore, you, apart from me, and I, apart from you, I'm not what I ought to be, what I could be. We are standing together.

## B. We Are Bonded Together

Listen to me. We are built together, and because we are built together, we are bonded together. Now you don't just take stones and stack them up. Stones have to be bonded together. Jesus Christ is the foundation. We are living stones like Peter. "Peter, you're a rock; you're a boulder."

Now our Lord is taking these stones, these living stones, and He's putting them in place. What keeps them from falling apart? They're bound together. What is the mortar that holds us together? What is the mortar that holds Bellevue Baptist Church together? It is love. We are bound together by love. We sing, "We are one in the bond of love." It's that love that holds us together. I'll tell you, without the love of Jesus Christ Bellevue Baptist Church would fly apart. People look at this church. They can't understand this church. They say, "Who are those people? What brings them all together? What is the commonality that they have? They come from different backgrounds, different educational achievements, different tastes, different proclivities, even root for different ball teams." Some folks don't even root for Florida. Now, what is it? What is it that holds us together? What is the mortar? Friend, it is *l-o-v-e*—love—that holds these stones together.

Besides that, not only does the love hold us together; love holds us apart. You know, every stone is not perfect. Some stones have bulges and bumps, and other stones have cavities and chips. But where there's a bulge, the mortar gives; and where there's a cavity, the mortar fills. Isn't that what love does?

You know, if I were to get right up real close to Jim Whitmire, and stayed at Jim Whitmire real close, and we'd just get up there just real close, and I'm just rubbing on him and him rubbing on me, I want a little mortar in there, don't you, Jim? Yeah, you see, it's the mortar. And, by the way, I've been working with Jim Whitmire since 1964. Can you believe that? I'm about to teach him how to sing.

## C. We Are Blessed Together

Now, let me tell you something, folks. What keeps us together? What binds us together? We are built together. We are bonded together. Now, listen. And because we are built

together and bonded together, we are blessed together. People say, “Well, you can be just as good a Christian outside the church as you can be inside the church.” Just one thing wrong with that: it’s not so. It’s just not so. Friend, I’m telling you that when we come to worship on Sunday morning, when we come, Peter says, “*Ye...are built up a spiritual house.*” (1 Peter 2:5) What does that mean? A place for the Spirit to live. God’s Spirit comes. Why did Jesus say a little later, in Matthew chapter 18, “*For where two or three [of you] are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*” (Matthew 18:20) I’m telling you, folks, that Jesus Christ is in this place this morning in a way that He’s not out there—in a way He’s not out there.

Now He’s omnipresent. There’s no place where He is not, but there is His manifested presence. When God’s people come together, God comes to dwell with them and to meet with them, and we are blessed together. How good it is when God’s people get together! That’s the reason the Bible says we are not to forsake “*the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more.*” (Hebrews 10:25)

One woman heard that the President of the United States might visit a particular church. She wanted to be there to meet the President of the United States. And so she called the church office, got hold of the pastor, and she said, “Is it true that the President of the United States will be in your service this Sunday morning?” He said, “No, madam, it’s not true; but the King of kings will be there, and you’re welcome to come.”

Amen? Listen. Jesus Christ said, “*Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*” Can you be a Christian without being a church member? Well, yes, I guess you could be a bee without a hive, and a sailor without a ship, and a parent without a family. In my estimation, if you’re truly saved, you’re going to want to be a member of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. You say, “Well, it looks like church on the losing end.” Well, friend, I want to tell you something. When Jesus said this in Matthew chapter 16, “*Upon this rock I will build my church,*” His ministry was at its lowest ebb. The crowds had all forsaken Him, and Calvary was right around the corner. And yet Jesus said, “*I will build my church.*”

Woodrow Wilson said, “I had rather temporarily fail with a cause that must ultimately succeed than to temporarily succeed with a cause that must ultimately fail.” I’ll tell you, the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is His Church, and He said, “*I will build my church.*”

#### **IV. The Singular Commission of the Church**

Now here’s the next thing I want you to see. It’s what I want to call the singular commission of the Church—the singular commission of the Church. What is it? We talked about the

construction, the composition, the confession. What is the commission of the church? Well, listen to it in verse 19. Jesus said, *“And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”* (Matthew 16:19) Now, away with these jokes about St. Peter holding the keys to let you in and out of heaven at the pearly gates. That’s just all superstition. He’s not talking about that at all. What’s He talking about when He says, “I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven?”

What are the keys of the kingdom of heaven? The truth, gospel truth: salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. The word *key* here stands for knowledge. Back in Jesus’ day there were scribes. These were people who were teachers of the Word of God, and the scribe would wear a key on his belt: not to unlock doors with; it was a symbol to symbolize the truth that he held. For example, the Bible says, in Luke 11, verse 52, *“Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge.”* (Luke 11:52) He’s speaking of knowledge. Here’s the key—Matthew 13, verse 52: *“Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.”* (Matthew 13:52) What He is saying is this: “I’m going to give to you some truth, some keys that you can use to get people into the kingdom of heaven.” What a blessing and what a responsibility!

What is my responsibility and what is your responsibility? Now you say—listen to me—that you have made the confession, “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.” You believe that you are part of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, what the Lord said to Peter, He’s also saying to you that He is placing in your hands—listen—the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Now here He tells Peter, “Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” He says the same thing to all of them over here in Matthew chapter 18. It’s not simply to Peter. It’s not that Peter only is the keeper of the keys. We all are keeper of the keys. We’re all custodians of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What is the singular commission of the Church? Let me tell you what it is. The single commission of the Church is to bring souls bound in the chains of the gospel and lay them at Jesus’ feet. Our job is to win souls to Jesus Christ.

Now our job is not to fight communism. Our job is not to fight pornography. Our job is not to fight gambling. Our job is not to fight abortion. Our job is not to fight racism or sexual perversion. The gospel of Jesus Christ applies to all of these things. But, friend, listen to me. You can make a man an anti-communist, you can make a man an anti-bigot, you can make a man an anti-pervert without making him a Christian, but you can’t make him a Christian

without making him an anti-these other things. You see, the change is in the heart, and if we forget our singular commission, our singular commission is winning souls.

Somebody says, “Well, we need to clothe the naked.” Yes, we do. Somebody says, “We need to house the homeless.” Yes, we do. Somebody says, “We need to feed the hungry.” Yes, we do. But that is not our singular commission. And if we’re not careful, all we’re doing is making the world a better place to go to hell from. Our singular commission is to bring souls to Jesus Christ. Do you believe that? I hope you believe that. You know, it’s so easy to get sidetracked. *The devil doesn’t care whatever else we may do as long as we’re not bringing souls bound in the golden chains of the gospel and lay them at Jesus’ feet.*

Now, what does this mean: “Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven”? The Greek scholars tell us—and it’s absolutely true—that the construction of this verse says this: that whatever you bind on earth shall have already been bound in heaven. Now, listen. Whatever you loose on earth shall have already been loosed in heaven. Now what Jesus is saying is not that earth’s will is going to be done in heaven, but what Jesus is saying is that heaven’s will be done on earth when you use the keys of the kingdom. Now He is saying, “Look, I have bound Satan. I have loosed the Holy Spirit. I have come to set the captives free. You have the keys. Whatever you bind, I’ve already bound. Whatever you loose, I’ve already loosed.” What a privilege is ours! That is the singular commission of the Church: evangelism.

Jesus takes this Book of Matthew, and He ends it, “*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost...and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.*” (Matthew 28:19–20) Question: Are you a soul winner? You say, “Well, no, but I’m a Christian.” To be a Christian without being a soul winner is like being a bus driver who won’t drive a bus. It’s a contradiction in terms. You say, “Well, I’m not gifted to do it.” If you cannot preach like Peter, if you cannot pray like Paul, you can tell the love of Jesus, and say, “He died for all.” Don’t let me hear you idly say, “There’s nothing I can do,” while the sons of men are dying and the Master calls for you.

Now I don’t want to hurt your feelings, but I want you to listen to me today, and it’s not a fun sermon. But *if you’re not endeavoring to bring souls to Jesus Christ, you’re not right with God.* You may be a church member. You may be heaven-bound, but you’re going to heaven second class, and you’re going to be ashamed when you meet the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the singular commission of the Church.

## **V. The Settled Consummation of the Church**

I must hurry. I want you to see the settled consummation of the Church—the settled consummation of the Church. Now, notice this—Matthew 16, verse 18: “*And I say unto thee,*

*That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church;*”—now, listen to this—*“and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”* (Matthew 16:18) The word that is translated “hell” there is the word *hades*. It means “the abode of the dead.” What’s He talking about? It’s not, “Here’s the church behind walls with massive gates, and hell is banging on those gates, but hell cannot break through.” No, that’s not what He’s talking about. Gates don’t prevail. Nobody takes gates off to war with them. The idea is not here that hell is on the offense and the Church is on the defense. No, that’s not what He’s saying at all. Nor is He saying that the Church is going to invade hell and take over hell and possess hell. What do we want with hell? No. What He is saying is this: “Because of your faith in Me, Simon Peter, the very domain of the dead cannot hold the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

## **Conclusion**

Folks, we’re breaking out—we’re breaking out. The very gates of hell, the very domain of the dead, cannot stop the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Centuries have come and gone, the saints have died, but one of these days the trumpet will sound. One of these days our Lord will come, and the dead in Christ shall rise first, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church. Friend, we’re going up. Some people say, “Well, the Church is on its way out.” You know, they are absolutely correct. Jesus has called the Church out. Jesus has sent the Church out. And, one day, He’s coming to take the Church out.

I heard a preacher one time, a country preacher. He told a remarkable story. I may have shared it with you—I don’t remember. But he said, “In a pond, a particular pond, there was a great, huge catfish—I mean, a big one—and that catfish would swim around that pond. He owned that pond, and all the little minnows were afraid of him. But, eventually, he would catch them and gobble them up—just swallow them, swallow them, swallow them, swallow them whole, just suck them in: in goes a minnow. He had a belly full of minnows swimming around on the inside of him, a great big old huge catfish. But one day he made a mistake. He swallowed a very special minnow, took him in; and that special minnow began to swim around, and then swam over to the side of that catfish and began to chew on his side, and chewed a hole in the side of that big old catfish, and swam out. And all the other minnows swam out with him.

That big old catfish is death. He’s been swallowing this person, swallowing that person, swallowing this person, swallowing that person. One day He swallowed Jesus. That was his mistake, because the Lord Jesus Christ has eaten a hole in the side of death, and become the death of deaths, and the very gates of hell will not prevail against the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.



Let me tell you something, friend. If you say that you're saved, you're going to love the Church of Jesus Christ. You're going to attend the Church, you're going to defend the Church, you're going to commend the Church, and you're going to extend the Church, if you love Jesus Christ. I love the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

# The Great Escape

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: September 28, 1980**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 16:13-19**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Foundation of the Church
  - II. The Formation of the Church
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## Introduction

Take your Bibles, please, and turn to Matthew chapter 16—Matthew chapter 16. We begin reading in verse 13: *“When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”* (Matthew 16:13-19)

I want us to think on this subject: “The Great Escape”—“The Great Escape.” Now the scripture that I just read to you took place about six months before the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus. And He has been tutoring His disciples; He has been teaching them. They have been in school with Him for three years, and now comes examination day. First question: “Who does everyone else say that I am?” (Matthew 16:13) And they had various opinions.

Some thought perhaps that Jesus was John the Baptist; others thought perhaps that Jesus was Elijah; others thought that Jesus was Jeremiah; others thought that He was, indeed, some great prophet, one of the prophets. But then Jesus asked the second question, the most important question, the crucial question: “But who do you say that I am?” (Matthew 16:15) And Simon Peter answered.

Now Simon Peter was always quick to speak, but most of the time, about the only time he opened his mouth was to exchange feet, for he was always putting his foot in his mouth. But this time he got it right the first time. He got an A-plus. He said, “*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*” (Matthew 16:16) And Jesus said, “You’re absolutely right. But don’t get puffed up about it. You didn’t figure it out yourself. It’s not because you’ve been such a good student. You had help on this examination”—“*flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.*” (Matthew 16:17) And then, after this, Jesus gave one of the most tremendous, fabulous lessons on the Church that is in all of the Bible. And since today we’re talking about loving the Church, that will be our lesson for study today. So I want us to learn some things about the Church.

## **I. The Foundation of the Church**

The first thing I want us to learn is something about the foundation of the Church—the foundation of the Church. Now there’s a lot of confusion about the foundation of the Church, but I want you to notice what Jesus said to Peter after Peter said that Jesus was the Christ. Notice in verse 18, and Jesus says to Peter, “*And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.*” (Matthew 16:18) Now there are some people who believe therefore that the Church is built upon Peter, and here’s the reason they believe that. The word *Peter*, a translation of the Greek word *petros*, means “rock.” When something is petrified, it’s turned to a rock. And the word *petros* means “rock.” And here’s what Jesus said to them—here’s what they think He said, anyway: that, “Peter, you’re a rock”—and they’re right; Peter was a rock—“*and upon this rock I will build my church.*” So they say the Church is built upon Peter. But what they fail to see and understand is that Jesus in this one sentence uses two different words for rock. Now you don’t see it there in your English translation, but Jesus uses two words for rock. The first word He uses is the word *petros*, and the second word He uses is the word *petra*. One is the masculine form; the other is the feminine form—*petros* and *petra*.

Now, what is a *petros*? What He called Peter was a *petros*, and that means “a boulder, a chip of rock, a piece of rock”—for you folks from Arkansas, “a little rock.” All right, and then He uses another word, and this word, *petra*, means “bedrock, foundation rock, an

outcropping of stone coming up out of the earth, a mighty rock.” “Peter, you’re a little rock, but upon this mighty rock I will build my Church.” (Matthew 16:18)

What is the Church built upon? Not upon Simon Peter, but upon Jesus Christ. You see, Simon Peter had just said, “*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,*” (Matthew 16:16) and Jesus says, “That’s right, and on that rock I will build my Church.” Peter knew that he was not the foundation. Peter in his own writings says that Jesus is the chief cornerstone and we are living stones built upon Him. (1 Peter 2:4–8) The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 11, “*For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*” (1 Corinthians 3:11) And I’m so glad that the Church stands, really, upon her Lord Jesus today.

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord.

—ROBERT KEENE

The Church’s one foundation

Is Jesus Christ her Lord,

She is His new creation

By Spirit and the Word.

—SAMUEL J. STONE

I heard about a dear little lady who was dying, and her loved ones were there in the hospital room. And they thought that perhaps she was in a coma; they thought that she could not hear them. Her pulse rate was very weak, and there seemed to be very few vital signs. And one of them said to the other, “She’s sinking.” The little lady opened her eyes and looked up, and she said, “I am not.” She said, “How can any one sink through a rock?” She was resting on the Lord, and she said, “I’m not sinking.” Oh, dear friend, underneath is the foundation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

You know, some people think that in order for you to be a minister of God you have to be in apostolic succession from Simon Peter right on up, and they say to me, “Where do you get your authority to preach?” Friend, I want to tell you, it’s not from some ancestor priest; it’s from my living Lord, who is the foundation stone of His Church. And I’m so glad that He is. Jesus is the foundation of the Church.

## II. The Formation of the Church

Now, the second thing I want you to notice: not only the foundation of the Church, but the formation of the Church. Jesus said, “*Upon this rock I will build my church.*” (Matthew 16:18) So not only is He the foundation, but He’s also the architect and the builder. He is building His Church. Now, notice He doesn’t say, “Upon this rock I will build your Church,” nor does He say, “You will build my Church.” He says, “*Upon this rock I build my church.*” (Matthew

16:18) The Church is built by the Lord Jesus Christ—Jesus and Jesus alone! Flesh and blood cannot build the Church. The Church is a spiritual house, and it is spiritual work. It is *“not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD.”* (Zechariah 4:6) Men can build a denomination, and men can build a building; but only Jesus can build a church.

And, incidentally, this building is not the church. I hope you know that. This building—thank God for it! I love these buildings. I love every square inch of this place. But I want to tell you, these buildings are not the church; they’re where the church meets. And if something were to happen to these buildings—if they were to evaporate, disintegrate, explode, or burn, or something, God forbid—there would still be Bellevue Baptist Church; we’d still have a church. We’d meet in a stadium somewhere. We’d meet in a field somewhere. We’d meet in homes somewhere. But there would still be the church, for we are the church. Don’t confuse the building with the church.

I heard about a man one time who was filling out a form, and on that form there was a question for church preference. He wrote, “Red brick.” Now that man had confused the church with the building. Now I want to tell you that I think red brick buildings are nice, but I tell you, my preferences for churches is the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, of which Jesus Christ is the foundation and Jesus is the builder.

Now, how does He build His Church? By calling people to Himself. The word *church* is a Greek word, *ekklesia*, and it means “a called-out assembly, people who are called out.” Jesus looks into this world and calls out that one, and He calls out this one, and He calls out that one, and He just says, “Come! I want you. You are a part of my called-out assembly.” And as we’re called to Him, we are separated from the world.

Now some of you may have your name on this church roll, but you’re not a part of Jesus’s Church. Why? Because you’ve never been called out of the world; you’ve never been separated from the world. You’re still in the world. There’s no difference between you and the people that you work with tomorrow. You may have your name on this church roll, you may have been through that pool; but you’re nothing but a baptized pagan. You’ve never been born again. Church membership is not the way to heaven; Jesus is the way to heaven. And you’re not in the Church until Jesus has called you out and until you have come out.

“Oh,” you say, “I’m a big worker in the church.” So was Judas. Jesus said in Matthew 7, verse 22, *“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?”* And then Jesus said, *“And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”* (Matthew 7:22–23) They are prophesying in His name. They’re casting out devils in His name. There are many wonderful works He called “iniquity.” I want to tell you, if you teach in a Sunday School class, if you give your money to this church, if you sing in the

choir, if you usher in this place, if you work on these grounds, and you're not born again, God calls it "iniquity." You say, "It's good works." God says, "It's iniquity"—iniquity, if you've never been born again.

Oh, dear friend, *the devil had just as soon send you to hell from the pew as the gutter*. And so a church is an assembly of people that have been called out of the world, separated from the world, separated unto the Lord Jesus Christ. It is Jesus who is building the Church.

### **III. The Fellowship of the Church**

Now, the next thing I want you to notice: I want you to notice the fellowship of the Church. If Jesus builds the Church, that means He loves the Church. It's His Church, and therefore we are to love Him, and we are to love it. And therefore we are to love one another. We are a called-out assembly. We have been called out; and therefore we have been brought together, because we have been called out.

You know, one of the strange things to me is that someone will say, "Well, I love Jesus; I just don't love the church." That's ridiculous! Did I hurt your feelings? That's ridiculous! Hurt them twice now. Now, listen. You can't love Jesus without loving His Church. You see, Jesus and the Church are inseparable. They are not identical, but they are inseparable. Jesus describes His Church under three figures. The Church is a body—His body. He's the head; we're the members of the body. The Church is His bride. He's the groom, and we're the bride. And, thirdly, the church is His building. He's the foundation, and we're the living stones that He occupies. So the Church is a body, a bride, and a building.

#### **A. The Church Is a Body**

Now He's the head of the body. *Wouldn't it be ridiculous if I got up this morning and I said to my head, "I'm going to take care of you; I really like you, head; I'm going to brush your teeth, and I'm going to wash your face, and I'm going to shampoo and comb your hair; but I don't care for this thing down here from the neck down; I just don't care for this at all, so I'm not going to bathe it, and I'm not going to dress it, and I'm not going to eat it; I'm not going to care for it; I love the head, but I don't love the body"?* Now that would be silly, just as silly as the man who says, "I love Jesus, but I don't love the Church." He's the head; the Church is the body. Jesus Christ and the Church are not identical, but they are inseparable.

#### **B. The Church Is a Bride**

*Or let me give you another illustration. Jesus is the bride. Suppose here's a bride and groom. They get married, and they have a wonderful wedding. And then, shortly after the wedding, someone says to the groom, "Say, we'd like to have you come over to our house*

for dinner tonight.” “Well,” he says, “fine, wonderful. I’ll go ask my bride.” “Oh, no, no, no! We don’t want her. We didn’t mean her. You see, we don’t like her. As a matter of fact, we can’t stand her. All we want is you.” Now, what do you think that bridegroom’s going to do? What do you think he’d better do? You think he’s going to say, “Well, all right, just so long as you love me, it doesn’t really make much difference whether or not you love my bride”?

Friend, listen. When you love the bridegroom, you’re going to love the bride. When you love Jesus, you’re going to love the Church.

### **C. The Church Is a Building**

And the Church is His body. The Church is His bride. And the Church is His building. What’s this building for? He inhabits it; He lives in it.

One man called a pastor up in Washington, I’m told, and asked this question: “Will the President of the United States be in your services this morning?” The pastor said, “No, but the King of kings will be there. That ought to be enough for you,” amen? “The King of kings will be there.”

You see, this is where the Lord Jesus is in a very special way. “*Where two or three are gathered...in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*” (Matthew 18:20) And I want to tell you that Jesus Christ is present in the midst of His Church like He is in no other way.

And I’m saying, dear friend, the fellowship of the Church is this: When you love Jesus, you’re going to love what Jesus loves—and Jesus loves the Church. Therefore, I must love you, and you must love me, and must love us, because Jesus does. That’s the fellowship of the Church. It is His body. It is His bride. It is His building. He built it. “*I will build my church,*” (Matthew 16:18) the Lord Jesus said.

## **IV. The Faith of the Church**

Now I want you to notice not only the foundation, and the formation, and the fellowship, but I want you to notice the faith of the Church. What is the faith of the Church? Well, notice again Peter’s confession of faith when Jesus asked Simon Peter, “*Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?*” (Matthew 16:13) And I want you to notice Peter’s magnificent confession of faith in verse 16: “*Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*” (Matthew 16:16) And, my friend, that is the faith of the Church: that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God. That is the faith of the Church. That’s what makes us one. We are united in that one faith that Jesus Christ is God’s Son. From that truth are multitudes of truths, but they all find their heading in that one central affirmation of faith: Jesus is “*the Christ, the Son of the living God.*” And you cannot be a part of the Church unless you have the faith of the Church, and that is the faith of the Church that has become the foundation of the Church.

## A. Personal Conviction of Faith

And I want you to notice that Jesus, first of all, asked, “Who are other people saying that I am?” (Matthew 16:13) Why did He ask that question that way? Was Jesus really interested in His public relations? Jesus was never concerned about what others thought about Him from that point of view. All He is doing is just zeroing in. What He is doing is showing them that they must have a personal faith of their own.

Now it’s not enough—it’s not enough, dear friend—for you to know what *others* think about Jesus Christ. Do you know what the burning question is today for you? Who do *you* say that Jesus Christ is? Who do you say? You say, “Well, I have an orthodox pastor.” Well, that doesn’t make any difference. Who do you say that Jesus is? You say, “Well, my mother and my daddy were Christians.” That doesn’t make any difference. Who do *you* say that Jesus is?

I heard about a man one time who was a Methodist, and a Baptist was talking to him, trying to get him to come to the Baptist church. He said, “I can’t do it.” He said, “My mother was a Methodist, my daddy was a Methodist, my granddaddy was a Methodist, my grandfather, grandmother, was a Methodist, and I’m a Methodist.” Well, this Baptist was a little irritated. He said, “Well, if your mother was a moron, and your daddy was a moron, and your granddaddy was a moron, and your grandmother was a moron, then what would you be?” “Oh,” he said, “I guess I’d be a Baptist.”

Well, I’m not asking you about your ancestors. I want to know, who do *you* say that Jesus is? You see, there must be this personal conviction of faith. It must be yours. And the only way that you’re going to know who Jesus is, is not for me to tell you; the only way that you’re going to know who Jesus is, is for God to tell you. *“Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”* (Matthew 16:17)

I want you to know that Peter had been to school for three years, and he still hadn’t figured it out—for three years, under the best teacher the world has ever known, the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet he has not figured it out. Why? Because it is not something you figure out; it is something you learn only by revelation. And so, therefore, when he finally did get the right answer, it wasn’t because he was intellectually astute; it was because God the Father had revealed it to him. And I’m glad that it’s that way, for God “has hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, and has revealed them unto babes.” (Matthew 11:25; Luke 10:21) Now I can tell you that Jesus is the Christ, and I am going to tell you, Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; but, friend, *anything I can talk you into somebody else could talk you out of.* But something God the Father tells you—something God the Father shows



you—is yours forever. When God the Father reveals to you that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, you have it forever.

We hear about these people sometimes, oh, they were once Christians, they were once Evangelicals, and then they became Buddhists, or they got into some cult. They got into this thing, and that thing, and they say, “I don’t believe that Jesus is the Son of God anymore.” Well, dear friend, they never did believe it—they never did believe it. No man can ever see by divine revelation that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and ever again deny that. John says, “They went out from us, but they were not of us, because they continued not”—“They went out from us, because they were not of us”—and then, John said—“had they been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.” (1 John 2:19) I want to tell you something, friend: When God gives it to you by revelation that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, it’s yours forever. That doesn’t mean there has to be a flash of light or thunder. But if you just have that quiet awareness that the Bible is true and that Jesus is the Son of God, and you know because you know that you know that it is true, it is because God the Holy Spirit is speaking that to your heart. And thank God for that. You see, this is the faith of the Church: that Jesus is “*the Christ, the Son of the living God.*” (Matthew 16:16)

## **B. Personal Confession of Faith**

And then, it’s not enough for there to be that personal conviction of faith; there must be that personal confession of faith. Peter was not ashamed to say it. He said it openly, outwardly, boldly, unashamedly: “*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*” (Matthew 16:16) And at that time, Jesus said, “Yes, and you are a rock.” (Matthew 16:18)

Now some people say, “Oh, this is when Peter became stable, so Jesus is now calling him a rock.” No, this wasn’t when he became stable. I don’t know if he ever did become stable. I guess after Pentecost he did; but even then, he and Paul got into it. Let me tell you something about Peter. Peter certainly wasn’t stable at this time, because right a few verses later Jesus has to call him the devil. Or, He doesn’t really call him the devil; He speaks to the devil through him. But He says, “Peter, you’re acting like the devil”—“*Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me.*” (Matthew 16:23) And this same guy was not very stable when he cursed and swore and denied that he knew the Lord Jesus. And, again, he wasn’t very stable when he tried to keep Jesus from going to the cross and all of that. No, Jesus did not call him a rock because he became stable. But remember who Jesus is. Jesus is the Rock; Jesus is the bedrock. And now he says to Peter, “You’ve got a nature like I have. You are a piece of the Rock—you are a piece of the Rock. You are a rock. You share a nature like me. Peter, you have become a partaker of the divine nature. You are one with your Lord.”

How does one become one with Jesus? By being born again. And how does one get born again? By confessing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”* (Acts 16:31) When you believe on Him, mister, you become one with Him. You become a partaker of the divine nature, and you become a piece of the Rock. Hallelujah! That’s what He’s saying: “Peter, thou art a rock now.” I’m a rock. You’re a rock. We are together the servant and His Lord. And so that is the faith of the Church.

## **V. The Function of the Church**

Now I want you to notice with me, if you will, for just a moment, the function of the Church. What is the function of the Church? Why are we put here? What are we supposed to do? Well, look, if you will, in verse 18. And Jesus said, *“I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”* (Matthew 16:18–19) It literally says, “Whatever you bind on earth is already bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth is already loosed in heaven.” That is, “You are so one with me that you can ratify what heaven is doing. You are one with your Lord, and I’m in the midst of you. And when you speak, I speak.”

Oh, what’s He talking about here? Well, in this time when Jesus gave this teaching, there were a group of people known as scribes, and these scribes were teachers that taught with authority—at least they were supposed to have authority. And they were supposed to be reservoirs of truth, storehouses of knowledge. And as an indication of that, they wore around their girdle, around their belt, a key, and that key was symbolic of knowledge. It was a symbolic key, very much like the key to the city; but this was a key to knowledge. Now what Jesus is saying is, “I am giving you a key that unlocks everything.”

What is the key that Jesus gives us? The key is the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. With that, dear friend, we can bind all of the powers of darkness, and with that we can loose the prison house of despair and set the captives free. Jesus said, “Whatever we bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever we loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” And I’m so glad that I can stand here in this pulpit without stutter, stammer, fear, or apology, and tell you on the authority of the Word of God, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”* (Acts 16:31) For, friend, I’ve got the key—I’ve got the key. It’s Jesus. He is the One who has commissioned us. We are ambassadors for Christ. And the Lord Jesus has given to us the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And our job as a church is one thing—and that is to preach the gospel.

We are against communism; but others can be against communism. We are against the liquor business; but others can be against the liquor business. We're against pornography; but others can be against pornography. But I want to tell you, there's one thing that no one else can do, should do, ought to do, and can do effectively like the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ—and that is to preach the gospel. That's what we're here for. That's what you're here for. You have the key. I have the key.

If you cannot preach like Peter,  
If you cannot pray like Paul,  
You can tell the love of Jesus,  
And say, "He died for all."

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

That's the function of the Church.

## VI. The Future of the Church

But let me just come to the most important thing. Let me talk to you about the future of the Church—the future of the Church. Look again, if you will, please, here in Matthew chapter 16. And the Lord Jesus says in verse 18, *"And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."* (Matthew 16:18) Now, what does this mean: *"the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"*?

Some people think this means that the Church will survive. And the Church will survive—but that's not what this means. At least, that's not the primary meaning, not to me. You see, so many people have the idea that here's the church like a fortress, and we're all inside, huddled, trying to make it out till Jesus gets here, you know. And here are all of the forces of hell with all of their battering rams just beating and beating and beating and beating on the church. Yet, the gates of hell don't prevail; there she stands. That's not the picture. Nobody beats on anything with gates. Gates are not a weapon of offense. What does he mean: *"the gates of hell shall not prevail"*? Gates are not weapons of offense; gates are weapons of defense. The idea here is not a church on the defensive; the idea here is a militant Church.

Now, I think it will be a little clearer if we understand what we mean by "the gates of hell"—"the gates of hell." Literally, this word is "the gates of Hades"—"Hades." Now there are several words that are translated "hell" in the King James Version of the Bible. This word is the Greek word *Hades*, and it does not necessarily mean that burning, fiery place called "hell." Now there is a burning, fiery hell. I believe in that kind of a hell. But there's another word used primarily to describe that hell.

Incidentally, some sailors came to the chaplain onboard a ship, and said, “Chaplain, do you believe in hell?” He said, “Yes, I do. Why did you ask?” They said, “Very simply, for this reason: If there is a hell, and you don’t believe in it, we sure don’t want you for a chaplain; and if there is no hell, we don’t need any chaplain.”

There is a hell—there is a hell. But that’s not what Jesus is talking about here. There’s a different word that’s used here. There is the word *Hades*: “*And the gates of [Hades] shall not prevail against it.*” And what does that mean? It means “the abode of the dead, the place to which the departed spirits go when they die.” And so it’s the city of the dead. There is a great domain of death, a great walled city of death, and it has iron-barred gates. And none seem able to escape, and we’re born inside that city of death.

I want you to look in the book of Hebrews for just a moment. Now, don’t lose your place there in Matthew 16, but I want you to look in the book of Hebrews chapter 2 for just a moment—Hebrews chapter 2. This is the exciting part, so stay right here now. Hebrews 2, verse 14: “*Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood,*”—he’s talking about us. We’re the children he’s talking about. We’re partakers of flesh and blood. That is, when we were born into this world, we came in a human body; we were wrapped up in a human body—“*he also himself likewise took part of the same;*”—Jesus took a human body, too. Why did He do that?—“*that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death...*”—you see, in order for Jesus to redeem us, He had to die. In order for Him to die, He had to be *die-able*. And in order for Him to be able to die, He had to have a human body. So He became flesh here, the Bible says, that he might die. And why did He want to die? Because He wanted to—“*destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;*”—He’s going through death to destroy death. He’s going to meet the enemy in his own backyard and destroy him. Who is it that has the power of death? It is the devil. And what is the devil doing with the power of death? Look, if you will, in verse 15—“*and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*” (Hebrews 2:14–15) The devil keeps everybody in bondage through the fear of death.

We all learn very young that there’s something called death. We see flowers die. Our little puppy gets run over. The kitten dies. Then, granddaddy dies. And then, the neighbor boy dies. And then, it dawns on us: We’re going to die. And this brings a bondage to us, and we hate to get old. And we’re careful, and we’re fearful. Ladies and gentlemen, there is no greater bondage than the fear of death, and it is the poisoned fountain out of which all other fears and neurosis grow. And the devil uses this fear of death to keep us in bondage in this city of death, this high-walled city with iron-barred gates; and we’re prisoners inside this city afraid of death. But Jesus came to deliver us.

Now I'm going to talk to you now about what it means—what “the gates of death” means, what “the gates of Hades” means, that will not be able to prevail against the Church. Inside this city of death, there has come an invader, and he's come down in our midst. His name is Jesus, Son of God. He entered. He came over the walls, and He came inside the compound. And He's in here with all of those of us who are in bondage and living in fear. And right in enemy territory, right inside the walls, and inside those iron-barred gates, He's building an organization, an organism. He's calling out people, and He's saying, “Listen: You see those gates over there? We're going out; we're going through. We're going to escape.” And He starts to call people. He says, “Hey! Come over here! We're breaking out! Hey, lady, come on! We're breaking out! You, sir, come on! I want you to be a part of our group. You come with me. We're breaking out!” And all over this city of death, in the very midst, in the enemy territory, He is calling out people—calling this one, calling that one, calling this one: “Say, you can come, lady. Come on!” He's calling, and He's saying, “Come!” And they say to Him, “Are you sure we can get out?” He says, “Yes. I'm He that was dead and alive. I've got the keys of death and hell; and we're going out—we're going out! And I want you to know, no matter what happens, I am victorious over the grave, and death cannot keep its prey. And we are breaking out. And the gates of hell will not prevail against the Church.” That's the future of the Church, friend. Because He lives, we're going to live. He is the Victor. He has the keys of death and of hell.

Years ago, I heard Dr. W. A. Criswell tell of how he was sitting on an airplane, and he found himself sitting beside a renowned theological professor. Criswell said, “Oh, how I praise God that I was able to talk with this man that I'd never met.” And they shared great fellowship, and then Criswell said to this man, “Do you have any children?” “Oh,” he said, “we had a little boy. He died very young.” Criswell said, “Would you tell me about it?” And the professor said, “Well, the little fellow came home from school one day and told his mother that he had a headache. She put him to bed. The next day, he said, ‘Mommy, I don't feel like going to school. My head hurts.’” They called the doctor. The doctor called a specialist, and the specialist diagnosed it as a very severe form of meningitis. And the doctor told this theological professor, “Your little boy will be with you but for a few hours.”

And this man said that he sat by the bed of that son to watch his son, to be with him, and to pray for him. And the little boy said to his daddy, “It's getting dark, isn't it, Daddy?” It was high noon, but he said, “Daddy, it's getting dark.” The little fellow's sight was failing him. And his dad, knowing the darkness that was in his own heart, said, “Yes, son, it is getting dark.” He said, “Well, Daddy, don't you think I'd better go to sleep, then?” The professor said, “Yes, son, I guess you'd better go to sleep.” And he said the little boy had a way of fixing his pillow just so and fixing his hands just a certain way he did before he went to

sleep. You know, all have habits of sleep. And the little fellow fixed his hands just so there upon his face and there upon his pillow. And he looked at his daddy, and he said, "Goodnight, Daddy. I'll see you in the morning." And he closed his eyes in death.

Criswell said that professor turned his face away from him and looked out that airplane window for a long time, "I suppose," he said, "because he didn't want me to see the tears that were in his eyes. And then," he said, "he turned back to me, and he said, 'Dr. Criswell, I can hardly wait till the morning.'"

I want to tell you, friend, the morning is coming—it is! We're breaking out! Your grandmama in the grave—Jesus has the keys! Your baby, like my baby that's buried there in West Palm Beach—we're breaking out of this place! Those of us who live here in this city of death—we're breaking out! And the gates of hell shall not prevail against us. That, my dear friend, is the future of the Church.

## **Conclusion**

And I believe that Jesus Christ sent me here today as His servant to call you, to invite you, to tell you that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God, so that the Holy Spirit of God could say, "That's right: He is"; so that God the Father could reveal it to you; and so that you could confess it openly and publicly and unashamedly as Simon Peter did: "I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"; and so that you could become a piece of a Rock, and you could enjoy the future of the Church.

# Living on the Edge of Eternity

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: October 31, 2004**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 16:27–17:8,14–21**

*“Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.”*

MATTHEW 16:28

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  - B. It’s Jesus Only in Redemption
  - C. It’s Jesus Only in the Bible
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- II. We Are Living on the Edge of a Satanic Rampage
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Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you be finding, please, Matthew chapter 17 in the Word of God? May I tell you that ours is a special generation. Beyond the shadow of any doubt, in my heart and mind, we are living on the edge. We’re living on the edge of eternity. We’re living in the closing shadows of an age. And I want us to think about the frontiers that we face. We have a committee in our church called The Frontiers of Faith. Now, the frontier is the leading edge, and that’s where we are at as a church. And I heard a preacher one time say, “I’d rather be Peter, James, and John asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane than to be a Christian asleep in these pregnant days in which we live.”

Now, let me give you the background. Actually, I said Matthew 17, but let’s back up just a little bit and look in the last two verses of chapter 16. Jesus is speaking, and He says, *“For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works”*—now, listen to the words of Jesus—

*“Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom”—now, go down to chapter 17, verse 1—“And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment”—boys and girls, that means “His clothes”—“was white as the light.” (Matthew 16:27–17:2)*

## **I. We Are Living on the Edge of the Lord’s Return**

Let me just stop there and talk about some things that I’m going to tell you. At least, let me tell you what I want to tell you. It’s good to tell you before I tell you; then I’ll tell you I told you. But congregation, church, listen to me: we are living on the edge—on the edge of the Lord’s return. Now, in this passage of Scripture, Jesus said, “There are some of you standing here who will not see death ’til you see the Son of man come in all of His glory.” (Matthew 16:28)

“Well, pastor, He didn’t come, did He? That was two thousand years ago. And all of those people are dead; they died. But He said, ‘You’ll not die ’til you see the Son of man coming in His glory.’” Well, in order to understand that in the last part of chapter 16, you have to go to chapter 17 and see what our Lord was talking about. Now, in chapter 17, the first three verses, it tells us that Jesus went up on a mountain, and He was transfigured; that is, His inner glory came to the surface. His face was like the sun, His clothes in splendid white, and there He is in all of His glory. And along with Him there is Moses and Elijah. As verse 3 says, *“There appeared unto them Moses and [Elijah].”* (Matthew 17:3) Now, what you have here is a preview of the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And when Jesus said, “There are some of you who are standing here who will not taste of death ’til you see the Son of man come in His glory,” (Matthew 16:28) that’s what they were seeing. They were seeing a foretaste of glory—of the Resurrection, and the Glorification, and the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, look in verse 1—chapter 17, verse 1. The Bible says this happened *“after six days.”* (Matthew 17:1) That is, He says, “I’m going to come,” and then after six days He is transfigured. Now, I don’t think that’s incidental. I think there’s a great lesson there for us because six is the number of a man. There have been six thousand years of recorded history. Now, there’s coming after these six thousand years of recorded history another thousand years, which is the millennial reign of the Lord Jesus Christ here on this earth. Six is the number of a man. Satan’s number, Satan’s superman, as you know from the book of the Revelation, is 666. Now, you say, “Well, pastor, he’s just talking about six days there. You’re talking about six thousand years.” Well, this is symbolism. The Bible says, *“[With the Lord] one day is...as a thousand years, and a thousand years*



as [a] day.” (2 Peter 3:8) This stands for the six thousand years of human history that are going to come to a close.

And as we look around, folks, as we look, we cannot help but feel that we’re living in the closing shadows of the six thousand years of human history. Think of the terrorism; think of nation against nation; think of this nation of ours that is divided right down the middle. And, unless we get that healed, you can say goodbye to America because a *“house [divided] cannot stand.”* (Mark 3:25) And we’re living in treacherous times. Think of what is happening in the Middle East. Do you know what all of this terrorism is really about? It’s about Israel. It’s not about America; it’s about Israel. We’re a friend to Israel. And not only is it about Israel; it’s about Jerusalem. And there are those who resent the fact that God’s chosen people have the holy city. Zechariah chapter 12, verse 3: Our Lord is talking about His coming, and He says, *“In that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.”* (Zechariah 12:3)

We’re living in dark days. Arnold Toynbee, the great historian, had this to say—and I don’t think he knew what I’m preaching about tonight, but he said this—and listen: “The stable character of the past six thousand years of civilized history is being changed and falling apart.” Now, that was a secularist. But he’s saying this six thousand years that we’ve known, it’s undergoing a change, and the wheels are coming off of it. And that is true. *Now, that doesn’t mean that we have to go around with our head between our knees and ask this question: “What’s the world coming to?” We already know the answer. It’s coming to Jesus, amen?* It is His. But the signs of the times tell us that we are living in the last days.

Now, that ought not to cause you to panic. Really, it ought to cause you to say, “You know, the seventh day is about to dawn.” The Bible speaks of the saints in Revelation chapter 20, verse 6. The Bible says they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (Revelation 20:6) Jesus is going to live and reign here on this earth, and all of us are going to help Him administrate the earth. And I think I’d like to be the sheriff of this county. Well, we have a good sheriff. I don’t mean that disparagingly. But friend, there is a time when right, that has been on the scaffold, will be on the throne.

And so, don’t get all jittery, boys and girls, about Jesus coming. When I was your age, I used to think, “Oh no, He’s going to come in my age. I won’t get to grow up. I won’t get to go to college. I won’t get to get married. And I want to get to do all these things I want to do.” Well, boys and girls, never, never feel bad about that. I’m telling you that you will get things so much better than those things that you’re worried about missing when Jesus comes. You wouldn’t even think twice about wanting the Lord Jesus to come. You would pray, *“Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”* (Revelation 22:20) Folks,

I'm telling you, you don't need to get nervous. I heard a preacher say—a country preacher: "You can't make God nervous." And *there's no panic in heaven*. And our Lord Jesus Christ, here, is giving us a picture of the last days.

¶ I read some years ago about a man who was spending the night in Switzerland. He'd never been there before. And in the middle of the night, or early in the morning, he heard this rumbling, cracking noise, and he'd never heard it before. And he thought, "I don't know what this is. I wonder if this is the end of the world." And he said to his host who had him there, "What is going on?" "Oh," he said, "I'm sorry I didn't tell you. But this mountain is fixed so that when the sun comes up, it begins to melt the ice. And the cracking noise that you heard was the melting of the ice in that great ice floe that is there." He said, "It's not the end of the age; it is the dawning of a new day." And that's what we need to understand: that when our Lord comes—glory, hallelujah!—we have something glorious to look forward to.¶

Now, the Bible tells us that when these disciples were there and Jesus was transfigured, there were two other figures that stepped on the scene. Look in verse 3: "*And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias*"—now, that's just the New Testament way of saying, "Elijah appeared with Him"—"*talking with him*." (Matthew 17:3) So, they're having a Bible conference up there. Here's Jesus glorified, and here are Moses and Elijah. Now remember, this is all a wonderful preview, a picture.

Now, I want you to think about Moses and Elijah. I want you to think, especially, how they went to heaven. Moses died and went to heaven. Moses was buried on Mount Nebo, and he is buried there and will stay buried there until the resurrection. This is a picture of that resurrection, when Moses appears with Jesus in the glory. Now, Elijah never died. He was taken to heaven in a whirlwind, in a chariot of fire. Why do we have this? Because it represents the saints of all of the ages. There are some saints, like Moses, who have died, and they've gone to the ground. And when Jesus comes, they'll be raised. And there are some saints like Elijah who will never die but will be raptured when Jesus comes again. Some will sing, "O grave, where is your victory?" Others will sing, "O death, where is your sting?" (1 Corinthians 15:55) I believe there are some living in this auditorium, very likely, who will never die but will be caught up to meet the Lord Jesus Christ in the air.

Now, there was Moses, and there was Elijah; but the central person in this story is the Lord Jesus Christ. Look in verses 4 through 8: "*Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for [Elijah]*"—now, that was a dumb thing to say. Peter gets all excited and says, "Let's have a building program, and let's just set up a campground up here"—"*While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them*"—that bright cloud was the Shekinah glory of God—"*and behold a voice out of the*

cloud”—that’s the voice of God—*“which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up there eyes, they saw no man, save”*—or, “except”—*“Jesus only.”* (Matthew 17:4–8) Now church, I want to tell you, that’s what it’s all about: Jesus only! Say, “Jesus only.” Say it again: “Jesus only.” They saw Jesus only.

#### **A. It’s Jesus Only in Creation**

It’s Jesus only in creation. Do you know why we have creation? Do you know why we have all this world and every minute electron and every mighty planet and star? For Jesus. It was all made by Him. It was all made for Him. It’s all coming back to Him. And the answer to creation, very simply, something that the scientists will never, never, never, never, never ever know until they know the truth of the Bible—in creation, it is Jesus only.

#### **B. It’s Jesus Only in Redemption**

In redemption, it is Jesus only. I was watching a program last night on CNN. I very seldom watch CNN, but somebody called me and told me to watch it. And in this program they were talking about those of us who are Christians, what they call “evangelical Christians” or “fundamentalist Christians,” and one of the things that seemed to be giving them the biggest consternation was we believe that salvation is in Jesus only. I hope you believe that. The Bible says, *“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”* (Acts 4:12) In redemption, as well as creation, it is Jesus only.

#### **C. It’s Jesus Only in the Bible**

Folks, it is Jesus only in the Bible. Do you want to understand this Bible? It is a “Him book.” It is written about Him. If you read the Bible and you don’t find Jesus, you’d better re-read it. You missed the message of the Word of God. Jesus said, *“Search the Scriptures...[these] are they which testify of me.”* (John 5:39) And, *“He [showed] them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.”* (Luke 24:27) It doesn’t say, “He showed them all the things concerning Himself in the Scriptures,” but *“in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.”* (Luke 24:27) In the Word of God, it is Jesus only.

#### **D. It’s Jesus Only in Prophecy**

In prophecy, it is Jesus only. The book of the Revelation says that this is the spirit of prophecy—listen to it—that *“the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”* (Revelation 19:10) Now, what are you waiting for? Are you waiting for the antichrist? Are you waiting for Armageddon? Are you waiting for the Millennium? Oh no, all those

things are ancillary. In prophecy, it is Jesus only. We're not looking for something to happen; we're looking for someone to come.

### **E. It's Jesus Only in the Church**

It is true in the church. What is the purpose of Bellevue? Jesus only—Jesus only. The Bible says, *“Unto him be glory in the church.”* (Ephesians 3:21) Now, if we have this meeting tonight and Jesus doesn't get the glory, we have misused and abused our responsibility and missed a blessing.

Friend, in creation, it is Jesus only. In redemption, it is Jesus only. In prophecy, it is Jesus only. In the church, it is Jesus only. Congregation, before long, I'm going to retire, but I want you to be a Jesus-only church. *“They...lifted up their eyes, [and] saw...Jesus only.”* (Matthew 17:8) I believe we're living on the edge—on the edge, the very edge—of our Lord's return.

## **II. We Are Living on the Edge of a Satanic Rampage**

Now, number two: We are living on the very edge of a satanic rampage. What can you expect in the last days? Well, look now in verses 14 through 18: *“And when they were come to the multitude”—now, they're up on the mountain, and then Peter, James, and John, they come down from the mountain, and there's a multitude down there in the valley—“And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is a lunatick, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour.”* (Matthew 17:14–18)

Now, I want you to see the contrast. Up there on the mountain is Jesus. Down here in the valley is a demon-possessed boy. And I believe the Scripture is teaching us here that in the last days we're going to see a revival of demonism like we've never seen before. We are going to be up against the organized, mobilized, demonized forces of hell, and Satan is going to let loose everything that's in his artillery. The Bible says in the book of the Revelation, he's “come down upon you with great wrath, for he knows that he hath but a little time.” (Revelation 12:12) Satan is like a cornered animal. And you're going to have this kind of thing coming down.

Now Jesus comes down, and He looks at the situation. First of all, there were the disciples who were a miserable failure. This man said, “Master, I brought my son to your disciples and asked them to do something, and they could not”—a demon-possessed boy; a brokenhearted Savior. Jesus rebuked them. He said, “Oh, you faithless generation. How long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? Bring him to me.”

(Matthew 17:17) Now friend, our job, our responsibility, is to bring people to Jesus Christ. “Bring him to me.” (Matthew 17:17) And Jesus spoke; the demons fled; and a little boy cuddled in the arms of his father with gratitude, thanking Jesus for what He did.

Now friend, that Jesus is in you. And, “*greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*” (1 John 4:4) And never—no, never, ever, ever, never, ever—think that Satan has power in your life, except what you let him have. Jesus rebuked them for their faithlessness. Had they had faith, they could have done the same thing that He did.

Now, there was a shame there. These disciples had failed. Would to God that we would hang our heads when we fail the Lord Jesus Christ! We’re living on the edge of a demonic manifestation. You’re going to see more and more of it in these last days. Now, to be forewarned is to be forearmed. You teach your children. You get your heart clean and pure. I don’t know what this election going to bring, but I know this much: that Jesus is King. We didn’t vote Him in, and we won’t vote Him out. He is King. No matter what happens, Jesus is Lord. Jesus is King. And never, ever, ever forget it. And never be discouraged if it doesn’t turn out like you want it to turn out.

### **III. We Are Living on the Edge of a Supernatural Revival**

Now, here’s the third thing about these frontiers of faith: not only are we living on the very cutting edge of our Lord’s return; not only are we living on the cutting edge of demonic oppression, but we are living on the edge of a supernatural revival. I like this part. Now, look in verses 19 through 21: “*Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you*”—now, listen to this—“*verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say to this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.*” (Matthew 17:19–21)

Now, they said, “Jesus, why couldn’t we do what you did?” And, by the way, the Bible says, “When they were come apart...” (Matthew 17:19) They were embarrassed even to speak about it in public. And Jesus said, “The reason you couldn’t do it is because of your lack of faith.” (Matthew 17:20) There are so many blessings that we miss because of our lack of faith. But then, Jesus gives a wonderful promise, and I want you to listen to it. He said, “If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea.’” (Matthew 17:20)

Now, what was the mountain? The mountain was the difference between what was happening up there when Jesus was transfigured and the valley down here where this demon-possessed boy is. Jesus is not telling us that we’re to go around casting literal mountains into the sea. Now, if He wanted that done, it would be no problem to Him; but you’re missing the message. Here was a mountain of despair. Here was a mountain of

demonism. Here was a mountain of the occult. Here was a mountain of broken-heartedness. And Jesus said, “If you believe, you can have the power to remove this mountain and bring heaven and earth together.” That’s what He was talking about.

### **A. The Size of the Mustard Seed**

Now, what He says is this: “*If [you] have faith [like] a grain of mustard seed...*” (Matthew 17:20) Now, you know what a grain of mustard seed is like? It’s like that fleck of pepper that you put on your eggs this morning. It was the smallest seed they knew anything about. And He said, “If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea.’” (Matthew 17:20)

Now, get the lesson, and don’t miss it. What Jesus is saying is this: that the least amount of faith is greater than the greatest amount of difficulty. That was a good place for an “amen.” Now, the least amount of faith is greater than the greatest amount of difficulty, amen? Now, you know the problem with that *amen*? It was kind of weak because you don’t really believe it. You believe that’s good preaching, but that’s all you think about. You know, “It’s preaching.” No, friend, it is truth! Now, listen—listen. Jesus said, “If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea.’” (Matthew 17:20) A mustard seed went to battle against a mountain and decimated it. It’s kind of like David going against Goliath, only a greater contrast.

### **B. The Secret of the Mustard Seed**

Now, think with me, boys and girls, about a mustard seed. Think about the secret of a mustard seed. What is the difference between the mustard seed and the mountain? Well, size. But that’s not what He’s talking about here. A mustard seed has life—it has life. A mountain has no life. When we have the life of God in us, then we can go against the mountains and remove them because a mustard seed has life. No scientist on earth ever has, ever will, ever can synthesize a seed. A seed is a little miracle.

### **C. The Source of the Mustard Seed**

And then, think not only about the size of the seed and the secret of the seed, but think about the source of the seed. Now, if you have faith, well, where does that faith come from? Faith is the gift of God. You cannot just have faith in your pocket, like pocket change to spend for whatever you want. If God wants a mountain removed, God will give you mountain-moving faith. Faith comes from God. Faith is the gift of God. Faith is like breathing. God gives you air, and God gives you lungs; but He doesn’t breathe for you. You can smother if you want. But oh, listen—God wants to put that seed of faith in your hand.

## D. The Sowing of the Mustard Seed

And think, not only of the source of that seed, but, friend, think of the sowing of that seed. What is a seed for? A seed is not a museum piece. What is your faith for? You plant it. You see, the seed has life. And when you take that little bit of faith that God has given you and you plant it, God will give you more. Now, in another gospel, that little boy's father—it's another description of this same episode—that little boy's father said to Jesus, "Lord, if you can do something for my son, please do it." And Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes." (Mark 9:22–23) Now, he said, "Lord, if you can." Jesus said, "No, if *you* can—if *you* can believe." Do you know what that father said? Something I've said to the Lord many times this week: "*Lord, I believe; help [my] unbelief.*" (Mark 9:24) Have you ever said that to the Lord?

You know, you don't have to have perfect faith. This father didn't have perfect faith. His faith was so small it was like a grain of mustard seed. And it was a very fragile faith. But he said, "O God, I believe." And then, all the doubts rush in on him. He says, "God, help my unbelief." You know, a weak faith is still a wonderful thing—not that I want you to have a weak faith; but friend, *a weak faith can lay hold of a mighty God.* Do you believe that? It did here. This man said, "*Lord, I believe; help [my] unbelief.*" (Mark 9:24)

Jesus was going through the city one time, and the crowd was all around Him; and there was a woman who was sick, and she'd tried so many doctors and couldn't get any relief or release. And she saw Jesus, and she said, "If I can just touch the hem of His garment, I will be healed." (Matthew 9:21) And I want to tell you, friend, that was a superstitious faith. That's really not Bible faith. And yet, it was Bible faith. There were a lot of things she didn't understand. That was superstition. It's a wonder we haven't gotten several denominations, some called the Hemites, and others called the Touchites, and so forth. "If I can just touch the hem of His garment, I'll be healed." She touched the hem of His garment, and immediately she was healed. Jesus said, "Virtue went out of me." (Mark 5:30; Luke 8:46) And Jesus said to her, "Blessed is your faith." (Matthew 9:22; Mark 5:34; Luke 8:48)

Now, I want to tell you, she had a weak faith, but she had faith. You start with the faith you have. If your faith is like a grain of mustard seed, plant it. Use it. Say, "God, I'm like that man. I believe; help my unbelief"—because in one mustard seed there are thousands and millions of mustard seeds, if they're planted. So, you think of the size of the seed; you think of the secret of the seed; you think of the source of the seed; you think of the sowing of the seed. God put that faith in your heart for you to serve Him.

## Conclusion

I want our church to have a mighty revival. You see that tent over there? That represents what we're going to do now at Love Offering time. You see that tent has

some cords. We call them ropes. And it has some stakes. The bigger the tent, the longer the cord and the deeper the stakes. Now, what we're going to be doing is lengthening our cords. We're going to be strengthening our stakes, driving them down deep into the promises of God's Word.†



# Mustard Seeds and Mountains

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** August 7, 1977

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 16:27–17:21

*“And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.”*

MATTHEW 17:20

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## Introduction

Would you take your Bibles, please, and turn to Matthew chapter 16. And as you're turning, I want to remind you that the chapter divisions as we find them in our versions of the Scriptures were not inspired, as such. Now all of the Bible is inspired—every jot, every tittle, every word, every sentence, every paragraph, every thought is inspired of God, without error; but the chapter divisions have simply been arranged so you and I could find the place more easily, when the pastor says, “Turn to chapter 16,” and so you are able to get there very quickly. So I want you to understand this particular instance I don't believe that the chapter division is right—or I believe that chapter 17 should begin with verse 27 of chapter 16.

So now we'll start with verse 27 of chapter 16 and just pretend we're in chapter 17, all right? And then we'll read right on into chapter 17: *“For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to*

*his works. Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom. And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias”—that is, Moses and Elijah—“talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for [Elijah]. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only” (Matthew 16:27–17:8).*

This is the Transfiguration chapter in the Bible; and it is indeed a chapter of great contrast, the chapter, as we shall see as we continue our reading in a moment, that speaks of mountains and mustard seeds. It’s a chapter that speaks of glory, and it’s a chapter that speaks of despair. For we’re going to see in just a moment that Jesus Christ came down off the mountaintop, from the place of holy communion, down to the valley of human defeat. And there are some wonderful lessons for us in this chapter that I want to call “Mustard Seeds and Mountains.”

## **I. The Period of Time Indicated**

Now, first of all, I want you to notice the period indicated—the period of time that is indicated here. Look in chapter 17, verse 1: “*And after six days...*”—“*After six days*”—all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and I don’t believe that the Holy Spirit recorded these words simply to waste paper and ink—“*After six days*”—now, what is he speaking about? “*After six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart*” (Matthew 17:1). The transfiguration was a preview of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Remember in the last part of chapter 16 Jesus said to His disciples, “*There be some standing here, which will not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom*” (Matthew 16:28).

Now we know that the disciples have been dead for almost 2,000 years, and Jesus has not yet come in His kingdom. And yet Jesus said there were some who were standing right there who would not see death until they saw Him coming. What was He talking about? Jesus here was talking about the Transfiguration, for the Transfiguration was a preview of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The Transfiguration was a foretaste of glory; the Transfiguration was a glimpse into the future. And indeed there were some standing there—Peter, James, and John—who did not taste death until they

saw the Son of man, the Lord Jesus Christ, in His glory, in His kingdom, because that's what the Transfiguration was right there, in my opinion.

Now, what is the significance of "*after six days?*" Six is the number of man, and it speaks of failure. Seven is the perfect number. And whatever else you may say about man, you can say this about man: he is no seven. Man is a six; he is one less than seven. And so six days represents 6,000 years of human history. You see, man's recorded history upon this globe has been 6,000 years. But there's a new day coming—there's a great day coming—and after six days of failure is going to come the perfect day, the millennial reign of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is coming, after 6,000 years of failure, 1,000 years of peace and righteousness when the Lord Jesus Christ shall rule and reign; and just as the Transfiguration was the Second Coming of Jesus in miniature—six days, or the history of man in miniature, foretelling that after six days our Lord is going to come—and the seventh day is going to be the millennial rest of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

You see, we are living right now late in the shadows of the sixth day. It's a day of failure. We're failing internationally. We're failing economically. We are failing domestically. And we are failing spiritually. And for the first time in history man is afraid of what he knows; his head and his hands have outrun his heart. And the more he learns, really, the less he knows. You see, he is smart enough to split the atom, but he's not good enough to be trusted. If we're so smart, why are we in the mess that we're in? There seems to be a shortage in America today of everything but crime and filth; and these things seem to be in greater abundance than ever before. I'm saying that six speaks of failure.

Do you know what Arnold J. Toynbee, the noted historian—we certainly wouldn't call him an evangelical Christian—but he said this—and I quote: "The stable character of the past 6,000 years of civilized history is being changed and is falling apart." That's what Arnold Toynbee had to say: "The stable character of the past 6,000 years of human history is being changed and is falling apart." I'm saying that we speak, when we speak of six, of a failure, and we speak of man. But the Bible says it was after six days that Jesus was transfigured. So I want to tell you—praise the Lord—there is hope, because the dawn comes just after the darkest hour of the night. There is coming—praise God—there's coming a glorious sunrise when Jesus comes again.

Now, does the Bible teach that things are going to get worse before Jesus comes? Yes! You know, if you're looking for the world to get better and better, you're going to be disappointed. The Bible doesn't teach the world is going to get better and better; to the contrary, the Bible says, "*In the last days perilous times shall come*" (2 Timothy 3:1). The Scripture teaches that it's going to get darker and darker, and worse and worse. But that shouldn't bother you if you're a Christian, because, number one, it's

prophesied; and, number two, it speaks of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ; because *remember that the dawn comes just after the darkest hour of the night. So if you're a Christian, you can say, "Praise God, it's getting gloriously dark!"*

You know, when you see all of these things begin to come to pass, Jesus said, then, *"Look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh"* (Luke 21:28). And you don't have to be sitting around with your head between your knees saying, "What's the world coming to?" You can say, "Praise God, look who's coming to the world! Jesus Christ is coming again!" And so 6,000 years of recorded human history do nothing but tell us there is the seventh day, the millennial reign, 1,000 years of peace, when the Lord Jesus Christ shall rule and reign hereupon this earth. And the signs of the times are telling me that we're living late in the sixth day. As a matter of fact, I've stopped looking at the signs; I've started listening for the shouts. I believe that Jesus is coming in my lifetime. And so it may be dark; but, in a sense, that's very good news.

I heard of a traveler in Switzerland who was spending the night high up in the Alps in a chalet there, and in the middle of the night—or what he thought to be the middle of the night—he heard a rumbling, a cracking, a roaring. It seemed like there was an explosion, and it seemed as though he could feel even the ground quivering some. It frightened him, but he got through the night. The next day he met his host at the breakfast table and said, "I heard a horrible noise last night." He said, "I thought it was the end of the world." And his host just laughed and he said, "Well," he said, "we're on the western side of this slope. But," he said, "when the sun comes up on the eastern side," he said, "the rays of the sun begin to warm that ice, and sometimes there is a melting and a cracking of the ice that causes an avalanche; and what you heard was caused by the sun coming up. It wasn't the end of the world. It was the dawning of a new day." And I think many times what we think is the end we fail to understand is the dawning of a new day.

You know, Christians ought to be optimistic people. Christians who know the Lord ought to be optimistic. I don't care how dark it is. I believe, tucked away here in chapter 17, verse 1, is a blessing for our heart, if we would see it: *"And after six days..."*—six being the number of failure, the number of man—*"after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John...and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them"* (Matthew 17:1–2). And so the first thing we want to notice in our study this morning is the period indicated: *"After six days...Jesus was transfigured."*

## **II. The Persons Involved**

Now the second thing I want you to notice: not only the period indicated, but the persons involved. Who were these who were involved in this dramatic, glorious, wonderful episode? Well, there are three groupings.

## A. The Three Disciples

First of all, there were the three disciples. Look in verse 1: “*And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John*” (Matthew 17:1). And so the first group of persons: the three disciples.

Now, why Peter, James, and John? Well, they were in that inner circle, that inner trinity of disciples, whom Jesus loved. And for some reason Jesus took these three, these special three. Now that brings up a real question: Does God play favorites? Does God have favorites? Why would God say to Peter, James, and John, “You come up here; I’m going to show you something that the others will not see; and perhaps the others will not understand”? Someone has well said, “God may not have any favorites, but He certainly has some intimates.”

Now you think about that—you think about that. Did you know that there are certain people who know the mind and the heart of God more than other people? And, you know, the Bible says that, “Certainly the Lord God will do nothing except He showeth it first to His servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7). I believe that God chose a little intimate group of people and said, “I’m going to reveal to you some truths; I’m going to give you a preview of the Second Coming of my Son and His reign and glory.”

And do you know, ladies and gentleman, I believe that God is doing the same thing today. I thank God today that there are some men who are very close to the Lord. They may not be God’s favorites, but they are certainly God’s intimates. And God has spoken to the hearts and minds of these men, and these men are telling us that the signs of the times and the witness of the Spirit speak of the soon coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. I thank God that we have some men today who can read the signs of the times and can tell the handwriting on the wall.

## B. The Two Participants

But not only were there the three disciples in verse 1; but there were also the two participants in this transfiguration. Look in verse 3: “*And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and [Elijah] talking with him*” (Matthew 17:3). Now to be transformed is this: the word that we translate *transform* is the Greek word *metamorphosis*. It means, “to change form.” Jesus changed His form there. He had a body like our bodies of flesh and blood and bone; but there on the mountaintop suddenly Jesus was changed, and He was given a glorified body and a glorious, almost indescribably beautiful, body. The Bible describes the shining “*as white as light*” (Matthew 17:2). And there appeared with him two persons: Moses and Elijah.

Now the disciples are watching, but Moses and Elijah and Jesus are there. And the three of them are having a Bible conference. They’re talking and they’re fellowshiping. Why Moses? And, why Elijah? Well, if Peter, James, and John represent those who will

be looking for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, Moses and Elijah represent those who will be participating in the Second Coming of Jesus.

Why Moses and Elijah? Well, there are two things that are very interesting about Moses. First of all, Moses was the lawgiver, and we think of him as the chief of the lawgivers. And Elijah was a prophet, and we think of him, perhaps, as the chief of the prophets. But I don't think that's the major reason they were chosen. Moses, you know, died on Mount Nebo and was buried. But Elijah never died. Elijah was raptured. That's a word that may shock some of you, but Elijah just went to heaven in a whirlwind, in a chariot of fire. He never tasted of death. And so these two represent two very important groups of persons who will be upon the earth when Jesus comes again. Some will be in their graves and will be resurrected. Moses represents the resurrected crowd. And others will not be in their graves; they'll be walking around like we are today when Jesus comes, and will be raptured. And Elijah represents the raptured crowd. See, when Jesus comes, there's going to be a resurrected crowd, and there's going to be a raptured crowd.

Look in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, and I think it will be clearer for us, for just a moment—1 Corinthians chapter 15, and let's begin reading in verse 51. Paul says, *"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep..."*—now the sleep here refers to the death of the Christian. In the Bible, for the Christians, death is called *sleep*, but not all Christians are going to die—*"We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we"*—those who have not yet died—*"shall be changed"* (1 Corinthians 15:51–52).

So, you see, the dead—that represents the Moses crowd—are going to be raised incorruptible; we—the rest of us who are still alive—and notice I said "us," because I expect it to be us—we're going to be changed in a moment. And then as we go on down to read in verse 54: *"So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality..."*—the word *mortal* means, "that which can die"—*"shall have put on immortality,"*—that which can never die—*"then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."* And then, notice particularly verse 55: *"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"* (1 Corinthians 15:54–55).

Now, notice verse 55 in the context of all of this. This is the twofold anthem of the redeemed. When Jesus Christ comes, we're all going to be singing and praising and shouting. And when we come to meet Him in the air, there will be two groups: there will be the Moses crowd; there will be the Elijah crowd. There will be the Resurrection crowd; there will be the Rapture crowd. Do you know what the Resurrection crowd is going to say? Look in verse 55. The Rapture crowd will be singing, *"O death, where is*

*thy sting?*” They never tasted the sting of death, the Elijah crowd: “*O death, where is thy sting?*” And what’s the Resurrection crowd going to be singing? They’re going to turn around and look at that old grave, and they’re going to say, “Grave, where is your victory?”

Oh, listen, dear friend. There’s something very wonderful that’s going to take place when Jesus comes again. Some are never going to taste the sting of death; others are going to be loosed from the hole of the grave. And we’re going to be brought up to meet our Lord in the air. And how glorious it’s going to be for the Elijah group, those who never taste of death!

Alexander MacLaren was a great expositor of the Scripture of yesteryear, and Alexander MacLaren said, “The primitive church...”—now when he says *primitive*, he means, “early”: the *early* church—“The primitive church thought more about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ than about death or about heaven. They were not looking for a cleft in the ground called a *grave*, but a cleave in the sky called *glory*.” I hope that’s what you’re looking for.

It’s going to be wonderful for the Elijah crowd; but it’s going to be thrilling also for the Moses crowd. Do you know what I read one day that Charles Haddon Spurgeon had to say, Brother Tommy? Spurgeon was different from most of us. Do you know what most of us are hoping? Jesus will come in our lifetime so we won’t have to die. But do you know what Spurgeon said? One of the greatest preachers, in my estimation, that has ever lived, and perhaps ever will live, other than Paul and Jesus Himself, Spurgeon, said, “I hope that I get to die before Jesus comes.” That’s strange. He said, “I want the thrill of the Resurrection.” He said, “I just want to come out of that grave.” He said, “I just want to be able to look back and say, ‘*O grave, where is thy victory?*’” (1 Corinthians 15:55). I think Spurgeon is the only man I ever heard or read about that said that.

But it’s going to be thrilling, friend; it will be thrilling. It doesn’t make any difference whether you’re in the Elijah crowd, or whether you’re in the Moses crowd: you’re going to have something to sing about. And we will be singing together—1 Corinthians chapter 15, verses 51 through 55. And, you see, it’s thrilling for the Elijah crowd. But you think about the Moses crowd. Do you realize that Moses prayed 1,500 years before this event, “[*Lord*], *shew me thy glory*” (Exodus 33:18), and it took 1,500 years for that prayer to be answered? You know, there’s a lot of living to do after we die. Oh, let me tell you something, friend. Death doesn’t end it all if you are a child of God.

### C. **Jesus Himself**

But listen. Not only were there the three disciples, and not only were there the two participants; but, thirdly, the third one that I want to mention in this grouping was Jesus Himself—Jesus Himself.

Notice again in verse 2: “*And [Jesus] was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there [was] Moses and Elias talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him*” (Matthew 17:2–5). And then verse 8: “*And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only*” (Matthew 17:8).

Now, listen: three disciples, two participants, but only one Jesus. Don’t forget that: only one Jesus. And if you miss that, you’re going to miss the impact of everything that He’s saying: “*This is my beloved Son...hear ye him.*”

Now Peter must have been a Baptist: he wanted to start a building program up there on the mountaintop. But the Lord was not interested in that right then. There’s nothing wrong with a building program. But that wasn’t the time. God’s plan for this world can be put into two words; God’s plan for your life can be put into two words: *Jesus only*—verse 8—“*Jesus only.*” If you miss that, you miss the whole thing. You see, *Jesus only* is the clue to everything.

You want to understand the meaning of things? It’s in these words: *Jesus only*. It’s true in creation. All creation was made by Him, all creation was made for Him, and all creation returns back to Him. And the tiniest electrons or the mightiest planet that has ever been swung into space has just one reason for existence. Do you want me to tell you what it is? *Jesus only—Jesus only*. It’s true, dear friend, in redemption and in salvation. The gospel is simply good news about Jesus: that’s all it is. You see, the gospel is not a program; the gospel is not a plan; and it is not a philosophy that saves. It is Jesus—one person—*Jesus only*. It’s true in the Bible. Do you want to understand the Bible? Do you want me to give you the key to the Bible? The key to the Bible is *Jesus only*. You have to understand the Bible in the light of Christ, and understand Christ in the light of the Bible. *Jesus only* is the clue to the Bible. It’s true in prophecy. You want me to tell you the meaning of prophecy? Why, we’re not looking for something to happen; we’re waiting for Someone to come. *Jesus only* is true in the Church. The Bible says, “*Unto him be glory in the church*” (Ephesians 3:21). What does the Church exist for? *Jesus only*, and that’s it. “*This is my beloved Son, hear ye him*” (Matthew 17:8).

### **III. The Program for the Interval**

Now, thirdly and finally, I want you to notice with me this morning, not only the period indicated—after six days—and not only the persons involved—three disciples, two participants, but only one Savior—but, thirdly, I want you to notice the program for the



interval. Now, what are you and I to be doing? What are we to be doing in the interval before the seventh day gets here while we're living in the shadows of the sixth day?

Now it's not to be mistaken that following this mountaintop of transfiguration there was the valley of despair. Notice, beginning in chapter 17 and verse 14, as we continue to read now: *"And when they were come to the multitude,"*—that is, back down to the valley—*"there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, Lord, have mercy upon my son: for he is a lunatick, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?"* (Matthew 17:14–19).

Down from the mountaintop of transfiguration came the Lord, down from the holy place of communion, this place of human defeat. And there was sickness there; a crushed and a bleeding heart was there; a father who had met an obstacle that had broken him in spirit and heart was there. Preachers were there too; religious workers were there, and they had gone through the procedures. They had rebuked the devil; they had shouted and they had groaned. But nothing had happened. And then Jesus spoke; and there was no struggle, no groaning, and no long battle. Jesus simply spoke, and the devil fled. And a happy boy cuddled in his father's arms and sobbed out his gratitude to God. And a glorious, happy father embraced his boy and looked with tear-stained eyes into the face of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Jesus transformed the situation, not only on the mountaintop, but down in the valley.

And the disciples were perplexed. The disciples wanted to know, "Master, why couldn't we do it? Why were you able to do it, and why were we not able to do it?" And then Jesus Christ spoke to them. And look again in verse 19: *"Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could we not cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you..."*—please underscore that, defeated people, discouraged people—*"nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting"* (Matthew 17:19–21).

### **A. Moving Mountains**

I trust that God will give me the strength this morning and the wisdom to get across to you a glorious truth. What are we to be doing in the period while we wait for Jesus? What is the program for our interval? We are to be moving mountains: that is our job.

We are to be moving mountains. We're not to be on the mountaintop gazing into the heavens; we are to be down in the valley moving the mountain. Peter wanted to build some tabernacle on the mountaintops. He liked it up there on the mountaintop. Jesus said, "Look, there's something to do down there in the valley if you want something to do; rather than building a tabernacle on the mountaintop, come back in the valley." Move the mountain, and you'll have heaven right on earth. Just take the mountain out between, and what's on the mountaintop is going to be down in the valley. Do you understand what I'm saying?

Jesus said, "*This mountain.*" He wasn't just talking about any mountain: "*Say unto this mountain, be thou removed.*" He was talking about the same mountain they'd just been up on: the same mountain up there where Peter wanted to build some tabernacles. Jesus said, "Don't build a tabernacle up there. You go back down in the valley. Take the mountain out of the way. Bring heaven to earth." That's our job while we're waiting. We're to be mountain movers.

Now you say, "Literally?" No, Jesus was not talking literally here. You'll miss it. Now if there's a need for mountains to be moved literally, they can be moved. But if that's all you see, you're missing it. There are mountains of fear, and mountains of sickness, and mountains of doubt, and mountains of poverty, and mountains of temptation, and mountains of struggle, and mountains of demonism. Here was a man who had a problem like a mountain, and Jesus had just moved that mountain. That's what it's all about. What, ladies and gentleman, is the program for the interval while we're waiting on that seventh day to dawn? It is moving mountains.

## **B. Faith as a Mustard Seed**

And what is the power for moving mountains? It is faith. And what is the symbol for that faith? It is a mustard seed. Look at it again—and in just a moment we're to be finished. Look at it again in the end there—chapter 17, verse 20: "*For verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you*" (Matthew 17:20)—"*faith as a grain of mustard seed.*"

Now, why did Jesus say, "*faith as a grain of mustard seed*"?

### **1. The Size of the Mustard Seed**

Number one—and I want to speak about three brief things about the mustard seed, and we'll be finished—number one: I want you to notice the size of the mustard seed: extremely small. As I've said before, just about the size of a fleck of pepper that you put on your eggs this morning. That's small. And Jesus said, "You see that mustard seed? If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you can move a mountain."

Now Jesus was not putting a premium on little faith, but Jesus was teaching a lesson

that we need to learn: that the least amount of faith—are you listening?—the least amount of faith is greater than the greatest amount of difficulty. A mustard seed and a mountain: it is a David and Goliath experience. In the realm of the spirit, a mustard seed went to battle against a mountain and whipped it—the size of a mustard seed. Here was a father who said to the Lord Jesus, “Master, if you can do something for my son, do it.” And Jesus said unto him, “If you can believe; all things are possible to him that believeth” (Mark 9:23).

Oh, friend, please, please understand there’s only one way to live this way—and it’s the faith way. *A mustard seed of faith is greater than a ton of will, a mountain of determination, or an ocean of scheming.* “If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed...”

## **2. The Source of the Mustard Seed**

First of all, the size of the seed. And then, secondly, the source of the seed. *“If you have faith,”* Jesus said. Where do you get it? Where do you get it? What’s the difference between a mustard seed and a mountain, other than size? Friend, here’s the difference. No man can manufacture a mustard seed; no laboratory can synthesize a mustard seed. Men can make a mountain, but men can’t make a mustard seed, because a mustard seed has life, and life is supernatural. And all faith is supernatural. Where do I get faith? How can I get faith? How can you have faith? If we’re to live here and move mountains, where are we going to get that faith? I tell you, there’s only one place that you’ll ever get that faith—and that’s from God. The same God who can make a seed is the One who puts faith in your heart.

Now the Bible says, in Hebrews chapter 12, verse 2, we are to be *“looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith”* (Hebrews 12:2). Do you know what that means? It means that faith comes from Him. It means that faith goes back to Him. He is *“the author and the finisher”*—He is the start and the goal—*“of our faith.”* It is from Him; no man can ever manufacture a mustard seed.

Do you want this kind of faith—mountain-moving faith? Then you must remember that it comes from Jesus Christ. You cannot clench your fist, grit your teeth, and say, “I’m going to believe.” Faith is a supernatural thing. He must give it, and He will give it—are you listening?—but you must open your hand to the seed. He will not place it in the clenched fist. The reason that you don’t have faith is not that you cannot; it is that you have not opened your hand; you’ve not opened your heart; you’ve not said, “Lord, I receive.” Listen, friend. If you need to believe, you can believe. And if God is wanting you to have faith—and He is, I promise you, on the authority of the Word of God—He will give you the faith that you need if you will just simply open that stony heart, unclench that clenched fist, and say, “Lord, place the mustard seed in my hand.”

### 3. The Sowing of the Mustard Seed

Now the final thing about the seed, and then we're finished: the size of the seed—very small, but it can move a mountain; the source of the seed—it only comes from God; the third thing—the sowing of the seed. A seed is not meant to be a museum piece; it is meant to be planted in the ground. And only when it is invested in the ground does it bring forth life. *“Except [it] fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone”* (John 12:24). We are to plant it. You see, when you put a mustard seed in the ground, it will shed its little overcoat, cuddle away in the arms of Mother Nature; and then it will burst open with joy and with delight and spring up from the dark earth. You see, your faith may be very small this morning, but if you'll just use the little faith that you have, it will grow. That's the secret of a seed: it can grow—it can grow. And in one seed are thousands of seeds. And in thousands of seeds are millions of seeds.

You know what some of you are waiting on? You're waiting until you've got all the faith in the world until you start; and therefore you'll never start. Do you know, in this same chapter where this father had a little demon-possessed boy, he said to Jesus, “Lord, I believe;”—now, watch—“help my unbelief” (Mark 9:24). His faith was so small, so weak; but he acted on what he had, and he got more. His faith was like a grain of mustard seed, but he put it in the ground, and it started to grow.

Today, you're not perfect. I'm not perfect. I don't have perfect faith. You don't have perfect faith. But by the grace of God I'm going to use what faith I have, even though it be like a grain of mustard seed.

### Conclusion

Now, listen, friend. What's it all about? Jesus is coming. He's coming soon. But in the meantime, down here in the valley we're to be in the mountain-moving business. That's the program for the interval: moving mountains by faith.

# Preparing for a New Millennium

*By Adrian Rogers*

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**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 16:28–17:8**

## Outline

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## Introduction

**W**ould you take God's precious Word and find Matthew chapter 17. And when you have found it, look up here, if you would. We are facing a new year.

I heard about a man who looked in the newspaper and read the obituary column and found his name in it. So he went down to the newspaper and said, "Look, you've made a mistake. I'm not dead. I'm here alive. You've made a mistake. I want you to put a retraction and let people know tomorrow that I am not dead." They said at the newspaper, "We don't print retractions. But I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll list your name in the morning with the new births and give you a brand new start."

Well, today, we are getting a brand new start—really, the first Sunday of a new year—and I thank God for that. But we are getting ready for the close of a millennium, and we are preparing for a new millennium. That's what we are going to be talking about this morning: "Preparing for a New Millennium."

Now, what is going to happen in the world today? Well, some will want to party. I've been reading that people are making plans where they are going to be and what they are going to be doing as we usher in a new millennium. It is going to be a great time to party. Others are going to want to panic. They are going to say, "Oh, good night! This is the end of the world, and we don't know what is going to happen; but it is very foreboding." And then, there are those of us who know the Lord; and we are going to want to praise. So you can either party, panic, or praise. I choose to praise as we enter into a new millennium. Now we do believe, and I believe, that we are living in the receding shadows of an age. I believe that our Lord is soon to come; and I believe that we need to learn how to prepare for a new

millennium, and we need an earth-shaking, mountain-moving, devil-defying faith in Almighty God.

With that in mind, let's look in the Word of God. I asked you to turn to Matthew chapter 17, but actually I want to begin reading and get a running start with the last verse in chapter 16, because these two are conjoined together inseparable, and you'll not understand chapter 17 unless you read the last verse in chapter 16. Jesus said, *"Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom"* (Matthew 16:28). Now He's talking about His Second Coming. And that was 2,000 years ago. And He was saying there are some who are standing here who will not die until they see the Second Coming. Well, that brings a little problem unless we read the next chapter.

Now, look, if you will, in the next chapter: *"And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him."* Elias is the New Testament way of saying *Elijah*—Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus. *"Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias."* Now Peter had said in all of his life some dumb things, and about the only time he ever opened his mouth was just to change feet; but I believe this is one of the dumbest things that he said right here. And, *"While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save"*—or except—*"Jesus only"* (Matthew 17:1–8).

Now I want to talk to you a little bit about getting ready for a new millennium, preparing for a new millennium; and I want to write on your heart this morning four thoughts that come from the passage of Scripture that we have before us.

## **I. Wake Up—Time Is Passing**

Thought number one: Wake up—time is passing. Look, if you will, here in chapter 16, verse 28, and chapter 17, verse 1: *"Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom"* (Matthew 16:28). Now, read chapter 17, verse 1: *"And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart"* (Matthew 17:1). What our Lord was doing is giving to the disciples a preview of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. They were

going to see in miniature a preview, a prefiguring, of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. And the Bible says that Jesus was taken up into a mountain and there He was transfigured. The word *transfigured* is, in the Greek language, the word we get out English word *metamorphosis* from, and it means actually, “a change where the inner nature comes to the surface.”

For example, all of us know that the caterpillar goes into the chrysalis, or cocoon, and goes through a metamorphosis, and comes out a butterfly. Well, the inner nature of that worm is a butterfly. What was the inner nature of our Lord Jesus Christ? It was glory. And so He is transfigured; He is metamorphosed. He goes through a change of form where the inner glory comes to the surface. And so there was around His shoulders the robes of light that the angels had woven. And all of it is a preview of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. It was a foretaste of glory divine.

But now here’s what I want you to notice. I want you to notice when it took place. Look, if you will, in chapter 17, verse 1: “*After six days*” (Matthew 17:1)—“*After six days.*” Now I don’t believe the Holy Spirit of God ever wastes words. Why does this say it comes after six days? Well, six is the number of a man. Man was created on the sixth day. The Antichrist is called what? What is the number of the Antichrist? Six six six: the man of sin. Put in your margin Revelation chapter 13 and verse 18. “*Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six*” (Revelation 13:18). That is 666.

Now this scripture says after six days Jesus is transfigured. What does that have to do with us? Well, folks, we are living in the closing shadows of six days—six days. There are 6,000 years—6,000 years, 6,000 years—of recorded human history. Now the Bible tells us, in 2 Peter chapter 3, verse 8, that, “*one day is with the Lord as a thousand years*” (2 Peter 3:8). So what we have are six of God’s days: one, two, three, four, five, six. And after six days they see Jesus coming in power and glory. Why is that there? Well, to me it tells me that Jesus is about to appear. I believe that we are living in the closing shadows of the sixth day, and I believe that our Lord is about to step on the scene.

Now this is a dark hour. It’s a dark hour internationally, economically, domestically, religiously; and for the first time in history man is afraid of what he knows. His head and his hands have outrun his heart, and we are being faced with things for which we have no answer. The plague of AIDS is a good example. The tinderbox in the Middle East is another example. The famine that is in places in our world is another example. And we just don’t know what to do. You would think with all of our inventions, all of our knowledge, we would come to a millennium ourselves. But our millennium has become pandemonium.

Man's day is marked by failure. After six days, then we are going to see the coming of our Lord.

I heard of a little boy who got a toy for Christmas; and he and his father were trying to put it together, and they could never get the toy put together. It was one of those you assemble yourself. After a while they read on the box it said, "This is an educational toy to teach your youngster how to cope in today's world. No matter how he puts it together, it will be wrong."

Now that's the way we are today. I mean all of the statesmen, all of the philosophers, all of the mathematicians, all of the politicians—all of them together—they are not able to make it work. We are sinking lower and lower into the mire. That's man's sixth day. And the great historian Arnold J. Toynbee said this: "The stable character of the past 6,000 years of civilized history is being changed and is falling apart." And I said, for the first time man is afraid of what he knows. For example, you are going to hear more and more—I read the newspaper this morning about the Y2K problem. *Y* stands for *year*; *2* is obvious; *K* stands for *kilo* or *thousand*. So it's the year 2000 problem.

What is the year 2000 problem? Well, to put it in a nutshell, on January 1, the year 2000, as the clock strikes midnight by the hour across twenty-four time zones in the world and enters into a new millennium, something is going to happen. Many computers, according to the experts, are going to cease to work. And it's just a problem that was not adequately prepared for by computer programmers; they just did not think about it. And I've been reading. I've got stacks of books and clippings and all of this. There are those who say that the sky is going to fall; airplanes will fall out of the sky banks will close; there will be murder, mayhem, absolute devastation. Others are saying, "It will only be a blip: don't worry about it." But reasonable people say there are not enough computer programmers to reprogram the computers, and we are going to have serious problems. Some are saying that our very way of life may be changed for a while, because there will be a chain reaction—and, when I said nobody really thought of it, there were some who thought about it who made a warning, but they were kind of blown off, very much like the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. When preachers preach about the Second Coming of Jesus, people just kind of look past that.

Now in a matter of days—I'm not saying it will happen, but you need to be prepared for the possibility in a matter of days that—wave after wave of computer malfunctions, the scope of which could ultimately affect every level of society, every area of life, every country of the world, will be upon us. Now you may not own a computer. I own one, but I don't know how to turn it on or off. You may not own a computer, and you may say this will not affect you; but from what I've been reading, it will affect all of us, because we are bound



together by certain technological so-called advances, and every day computers affect every area of our lives. And it's not that people don't know how to change it or correct it: there's just not enough time.

Now here are certain things that we do know are true. Some things we don't know, but here's what we do know. The deadline—the deadline—is unmovable and inescapable. That much you can say is true. The deadline is unmovable and it is inescapable. Now, when is it coming? After six days—after six days. And, by the way, you know, I get a real blessing out of this, Brother Jim, when they are talking about Y2K; you know, all over the world—all over the world—they are talking about Y2K. Do you know what that means? That means 2,000 years after the birth of a baby whose name is Jesus. Isn't that great? Isn't that great? I mean, whether they realize it or not, all over the world, today is recognizing that there was a baby who has changed the course of history. Y2K—2000 years after His birth. But, friend, you add that 2,000 years to the past 4,000 years of human history, and you have six days—six days. *“One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day”* (2 Peter 3:8). “Adrian, are you trying to set a date?” Well, not exactly—not a day, not an hour. But there are certain times and seasons that we ought to be aware of.

I was thinking about this Y2K program and problem, and my mind went to Genesis chapter 11. In chapter 11, a man was building a one-world government, where God had said they were to scatter abroad across the face of the earth, but they wanted to build a one-world government in contradiction to what God had said. And you may turn, if you wish, to Genesis chapter 11, and let me just read with you the first eight verses. And I want you to listen to it, because it is very significant. And the Bible says, *“And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.”* Did you know that the whole earth today is of one language and one speech? It's not English. Do you know what it is? COBOL. You say, “What is COBOL?” That's computer language. I mean, all of the computers operate now with one language and one speech. *“And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth”* (Genesis 11:1-4).

Now, let me just stop right there, and I want you to listen to the number six here. “Let us”—one—*“build us...”*—two—*“a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us”*—three—*make us...”*—four—and, “lest we be scattered abroad”—five. And then, go back up, if you will, to verse 3: *“let us make brick, and burn them.”* Six is the number of a man. Six times they used the personal pronoun *us, we, us*. They are talking about man who is going

to build with his brick and slime; he's going to build his high-rise to hell. He's going to build his utopia. He's going to build his tower of blunders. He says, "We're going to make us a tower whose top may reach unto heaven."

And now, beginning in verse 5: "*And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one,*"—that is, it is a one-world government—"*and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.*" That is, they are going to have a one-world government, and it doesn't look like there's any way to stop it. "*Go to, let us go down,*"—now, who is the *us*? Well, it is the Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Trinity is taught in the Old Testament as well as the New—"*and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city*" (Genesis 11:5-8).

Now here are men that are saying, "Well, look, we have finally reached utopia. We don't need any birth from above. We'll just have a building from below. We'll just build a building whose top may reach unto heaven. We are going to have us a one-world government." And, by the way, the man who founded this city of Babel was named Nimrod, and his name means, "rebel," and he's a type of the Antichrist, who will lead a one-world government. And so here are all of these men building their high-rise to hell, building the tower of blunders, building their great power. This is really funny. Now they say, "We're going to build a tower whose top may reach to heaven." If you have a sense of humor, you'll appreciate this. The Bible says, "God came down to see their tower." Their tower was going to "reach unto heaven." And God says, "I'll know what I'll do. I'll throw a wrench in the works. I'll destroy their ability to communicate." And everything went haywire from there on.

Now, is that going to happen? I don't know—I don't know. I'm just giving you food for thought this morning. I'm not trying to set dates, and I'm not trying to tell you what's going to happen with Y2K—and I'll tell you why: because I don't know. But that doesn't bother me, because you don't know either. I am just simply telling you, friend, that these are pregnant days in which we are living, are they not? And I'm going to tell you something else. The Bible says, "*after six days.*" Then Jesus gives them this preview of glory where He is coming again.

## **II. Look Up—Jesus Is Coming**

So the first thing I want to put on your heart and in your mind—and write it down: Time is passing—wake up. Turn to your neighbor and say, "Wake up." Would you do that? Okay,

time is passing—time is passing—wake up. That’s the first thought. *“After six days...”* (Matthew 17:1). Folks, six days of human history, 6,000 years, are coming to a close. Now, here is the second thought: Look up—Jesus is coming. Wake up—time is passing. Look up—Jesus is coming. Notice again what happened here. In verse 2, it says, *“And [he] was transfigured”* (Matthew 17:2). That is, His glory is shown. Now the dawn comes after the darkest hour of the night. And when things look like they are going to be very dark, then God brings in His seventh day. The seventh day is about to dawn. We call that the Millennium.

Now the word *millennium—millennium—*means, “thousand years.” Jesus is going to rule and reign here on the earth for a thousand years. Did you know that? The Bible teaches that. Turn to Revelation 20:6 when you get home and read it. And the Bible says, *“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”* See, that’s the seventh day. Man’s number is what? Six. What’s God’s number? Seven. The sixth day is coming to a close. The seventh day is about to begin, and we will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with Him for 1,000 years. Now the world is not going to get better and better. It is going to get worse and worse until Jesus comes. But we don’t need to go around with our head between our knees, saying, “What’s the world coming to?” We can say, “Look who’s coming to the world!” Jesus is coming again. And the signs of the times tell us that we are living in the closing shadows of the sixth day. Now we can’t set dates, but we need to be aware.

Now, let me show you what’s going to happen here.

### **A. Three Witnesses**

First of all, look, if you will, in chapter 17, verse 1, and see that there were three witnesses: *“And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart”* (Matthew 17:1). That is, they are there by themselves. And, by the way, I believe this high mountain was Mount Hermon—over 9,000 feet; stays snow-capped most of the time. I’ve been to Mount Hermon many times. And Jesus took Peter, James, and John. Why did He take them apart? Well, He tells us in the last chapter: “There are some of you here who are going to be witnesses of this thing. You are not going to die till you see me come in glory.” And He says, “All right, come on up here, boys.” And up there to the mountain they go—up on the mountaintop—Peter, James, and John. They were witnesses. As a matter of fact, Peter, later on in his epistle, in 2 Peter chapter 1, says, *“We...were eyewitnesses of his majesty.”* He said, “of his glory.” He said, “We

were not telling you fables. We were there. We saw this manifestation of His coming in glory” (2 Peter 1:16).

Now, why did He take three? Well, they were witnesses. The Bible says, “In the mouth of two or three witnesses a thing will be established” (Deuteronomy 19:15; Matthew 18:16; 2 Corinthians 13:1). So put it down: there were three witnesses. Three is the number of witness. They were there witnessing, to say, “Yes, Christ is coming again.” That’s the reason Peter wrote in his epistle that we are to be ready for the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In 2 Peter chapter 1, verses 16 and 17, Peter said, *“For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount”* (2 Peter 1:16–18).

Now, what is the import of all of that? That they were witnesses to teach us that we should be looking for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. And I’m telling you that God has His witnesses today, spiritual men who are telling us the same thing that Simon Peter, who was a witness so long ago, said.

## **B. Two Participants**

So, first of all, let’s do our arithmetic. There were three witnesses. Number two: there were two participants with the Lord Jesus there that day. Look, if you will, in verse 3: *“And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and [Elijah] talking with him”* (Matthew 17:3). Wouldn’t you have loved to have heard that conversation: Moses, the great lawgiver; Elijah, the great prophet; and Jesus, the Savior of the world? Now you have three witnesses, but you have two categories: you have the Moses crowd, and you have the Elijah crowd. What you have here is a microcosm of the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, what happened to Moses? Moses died and was buried on Mount Nebo. You can read that in Deuteronomy 34, verses 5 and 6. And the Bible says that he was buried there in the land of Moab—Moses died and was buried in Moab—Deuteronomy 34 (Deuteronomy 34:5–6). But what happened to Elijah? Elijah never died. Read 2 Kings chapter 2, verse 11: *“And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven”* (2 Kings 2:11). He rode a chariot of fire into heaven. He never died. So Moses died and was buried. Elijah was raptured. He never died.

Now, notice there are three witnesses—Peter, James, and John—but there are two categories. There’s the Moses category and the Elijah category. Now, what does that

picture? Well, that pictures the Second Coming of Jesus. What is going to happen? Put in your margin 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verses 51 and 52. Paul said, *“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep...”*—by the way, the word for *sleep* here means, “to die”—*“We shall not all [die], but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed”* (1 Corinthians 15:51–52). Not everybody is going to die. Some are going to die, but not everybody is going to die when Jesus comes.

When Jesus comes after six days—when Jesus comes—what’s going to happen? Well, there are going to be some like Moses, who was buried, who are going to be raised. And there are going to be some like Elijah, who have never died, who are going to be raptured. Now, raised or raptured, are you going? That’s the question, see? Are you ready? Are you ready? You can be in the Moses crowd, or you can be in the Elijah crowd; but I want you to be there when He comes, because, when He comes, dear friend, we are going to sing a song of redemption. Do you know what that song of redemption is going to be? Paul tells us about it in 1 Corinthians chapter 15. There are going to be some in the Elijah crowd, who will never die. They are going to say, *“O death, where is thy sting?”*—“you didn’t sting me.” There are going to be some in the Moses crowd, who are going to say, *“O grave, where is thy victory?”*—“you didn’t keep me” (1 Corinthians 15:55). This is the song of the redeemed, when our Lord comes again, and that’s the reason that you had Moses there and Elijah there. One died and was raised; and another never died, and was translated, and went up into glory.

### **C. One Savior**

Now, stay with me. There were three witnesses. Three is the number of testimony and witness. God wanted this thing testified. Number two: there were two participants, Moses and Elijah—those who have died, who will be raised when Jesus comes; and those who have never died, who will be raptured when Jesus comes. Okay now, three witnesses, two participants, but only one Savior—only one Savior. Look, if you will, in verses 4 through 8—it is so important that you see this: *“Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for [Elijah]. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes,”*— watch it—*“they saw no man, [except] Jesus only”* (Matthew 17:4–8).

Now I ask you to turn to your neighbor and say, “Wake up.” Just turn to your neighbor and say, “*Jesus only*”—“*Jesus only*.” Listen, folks. This is what it’s all about—this is what it’s all about. Yes, three witnesses. Yes, two participants. But the central figure here is the Lord Jesus Christ: “*Jesus only*.” Now old Peter wanted to get in a building program. But the Lord said, “No, no, no,”—in verse 8—“here’s my plan. It is Jesus only.” Folks, listen to me. If you want to understand everything, or anything, you’ve got it in two words: “*Jesus only*.” You say, “That’s silly, Adrian.” It is not silly. I mean, it is true in creation. People are wondering, “Well, how did the universe come into being?” The scientists are still racing their motors. I’ll tell you why: “*Jesus only*.” “*For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things*” (Romans 11:36). It is summed up in just one word: “*Jesus only*.”

People, it’s true in redemption. How are we saved? We’ve not saved by churches, creeds, codes. What is the gospel? The gospel is good news about one person: “*Jesus only*.” There is only one way to heaven—and that’s Jesus. That’s the key to the Bible. You want to understand the Bible? Friend, it is a *Him book*. It is about Him. The message of the Bible is Christ only. You see the Bible in the light of Jesus, and you see Jesus in the light of the Bible. The key to the Bible is Jesus only. It is the key to prophecy. People want to understand prophecy. The Bible says, “The spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus” (Revelation 19:10). We are not looking for something to happen; we are looking for someone to come. And His name is Jesus only. It is true in the church. The Bible says, “*Unto him be glory in the church...throughout all ages*” (Ephesians 3:21). Why does this church exist? Turn to your neighbor and say, “*Jesus only*.” That’s it—that’s it. Listen, folks. Jesus is God’s plan. God there said, “This is my beloved Son. Hear Him” (Matthew 17:5). And I hope you’ll hear Him today.

### **III. Sober Up—Satan Is Coming**

Now, what are we saying? And I’ve got to go quickly on. First of all, time is passing—wake up. Jesus is coming—look up. Number three—I want you to see this: Satan is working—sober up. Now, notice, if you will, in verse 9 now: “*And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead*” (Matthew 17:9). But then look in verse 14: “*And when they were come [down] to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is a lunatick, and sore vexed: for oftimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they cold not cure him*” (Matthew 17:14–16).

Now Jesus came down from the Mountain of Transfiguration, down into the valley of misery and defeat. There was satanic power there, because there was a boy there who was demon-possessed. There was sickness there, and there was sorrow there. There was a

father there with a crushed and bleeding heart. And there was shame there, because they brought this boy to the disciples that they should cast the devil out of him and heal him; and they couldn't do it. And then Jesus spoke. Look, if you will, in verse 17: *"Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour"* (Matthew 17:17–18).

Jesus spoke. There was no struggle. There was no groaning, no long battle. Jesus spoke, and the devil fled; and a little boy cuddled in his father's arms; and the father, with tear-stained eyes, looked to Jesus who had power over Satan. And I want to tell you today that Jesus' power has not diminished, and God is not dead, and He is not sick. Jesus spoke, and Satan fled. This is a decade of demons; and Satan is like a cornered animal. He knows that he has a little time, and he is the real enemy. And the Bible teaches in the last days there will be an outburst of demonic energy.

#### **IV. Pray Up—Mountains Need Moving**

So now, watch. Wake up—time is passing. Look up—Jesus is coming. Sober up—Satan is working. Here's the last thing: Pray up—mountains need moving. Now I begin to read verse 19. The disciples came to Jesus apart—they were ashamed to talk in public—and said, *"Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing"*—underscore this—*"shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting"* (Matthew 17:19–21). Pray up—mountains need moving.

Now, what did Jesus say? Listen to me. They said, "Why can't we do it? How could you do it? Why couldn't we do it?" Jesus said, if you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mountain, "Be removed, and be cast into the sea," and it would be done. Now, what good would that have done to remove that mountain? No good whatever. Is Jesus talking about a literal mountain? Not at all! What He is talking about is removing mountains of doubt and fear and disease and hatred and strife and unbelief and demonic power. You see, listen. You've got to get it in this context. Listen. The God that made the mountains could pulverize every one of them. But that's not what this world needs is for every mountain to be brought low. What this world needs is for the power of Satan to be broken.

Now, notice what is happening. Up on the mountaintop is the glory of God. Down in the valley is pain and suffering and heartache. What our Lord says is, "Get this mountain out of the way, and bring heaven to earth, and bring earth to heaven." That's what He is saying:

just get the mountain out of the way, and get the power of heaven down here on this earth. And He said, “If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed...” (Matthew 17:20). Now Jesus is not saying, “Have little faith.” What Jesus is saying is this: that the least amount of faith is greater than the greatest amount of difficulty. This is David and Goliath. A little mustard-seed David went against a Goliath mountain and slew it. That’s what He’s talking about. The least amount of faith is greater than the greatest amount of difficulty. Jesus is not saying, put a premium on little faith; but what Jesus is saying is there’s a difference between a seed and a mountain; and a seed has life, and a mountain doesn’t; and only God can make a seed, and only God can give faith.

Faith is not there for you to spend for whatever you want. Only God can make a seed. You can’t manufacture a seed. You can’t manufacture faith. But God will place that in your hand. And if God wants you to move mountains, God will give you mountain-moving faith. And the least amount of faith is greater than the greatest amount of difficulty. But you have to open your hand and receive that faith, because faith is the gift of God. And, once you receive it, it is not a museum piece. You plant it. You put it in the ground. For in one mustard seed there are thousands and billions of mustard seeds. Faith is meant to be used. Take the faith that God gives you. Plant it. Use it. It’s time, ladies and gentlemen. Listen—listen to me. We’d better sober up, because Satan is working. And we’d better pray up, because mountains need moving—mountains need moving.

## Conclusion

How do we prepare for a new millennium? I mean, if time is passing, if Jesus is coming, if Satan is working, what do we need to do? We need to believe God and believe that He means exactly what He says. Nothing is impossible. You don’t believe that, do you? You say, “Well, there are a few things impossible.” Well, friend, why don’t you just read the Bible and make up your mind who’s right: you or God? With faith. You see—listen—that doesn’t mean you can do anything you want. God is not going to give you faith for whatever you want.

There was a man who wanted a Midas touch so everything he would touch would turn to gold. He got the Midas touch, and everything he touched turned to a muffler. You’re not going to be able to do whatever you want. That would make you God. But I’m telling you that faith is a gift of God. You get your heart right, and anything God wants done will be done, even if it means taking a mountain and casting a mountain into the sea.

You know the problem with many of us today? We are just unbelieving believers. Leonard Ravenhill said, “One of these days somebody is going to pick up this book, read it, and believe it, and the rest of us are going to be ashamed of ourselves.” Listen—listen to me



now. Time is passing. Jesus is coming. Satan is working. Mountains need moving. Why don't you say, "Dear God, we've got one more year—one more year—before a new millennium. I want to be a pre-millennial mountain-mover—a pre-millennial mountain-mover—getting ready for your coming."

# Preparing for a New Millennium

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** January 3, 1999

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 16:28–17:8

*“And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.”*

MATTHEW 17:8

## Outline

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## Introduction

Will you take your Bibles and find Matthew chapter 17. We are going to talk today about Bible prophecy. We are entering a new millennium, and I believe there is much truth that needs to be preached and taught at this time.

I heard about a man who read the newspaper, and he read the obituary column, and in the obituary column he found his own name. “Ugh,” he said, “I’m not dead. They shouldn’t have done that.” So he went down to the newspaper and found the reporter and said, “You have made a mistake. You have put my name in the obituary column. But I am not dead. Tomorrow, would you print a retraction?” The man said, “We do not print retractions. But I’ll tell you what I will do. I will list your name tomorrow morning among the births and give you a brand new start.”

Well, we have, really, a brand new start. This is the first Sunday of a brand new year, and you are in a wonderful place, because this is the first day of the week, the first Sunday of a new year; but it is also in many respects the end of an age, and we are getting ready for a new millennium.

Now, what is going to happen on January 1, the year 2000? Well, there are some who are going to party. People are making plans for where they are going to be and what they are going to do to bring in, to ring in, a new millennium. And so parties will be

going on all over the world. But not only are some going to party; some are going to panic. Some will be scared stiff. They say, “Oh no, everything now is coming to an end, coming to a conclusion, coming to a climax.” And some who will not party, or panic, will praise. We will say, “Thank God, we know what is about to transpire—and because we are not children of darkness; we have the Bible.”

Now I want us to look into God’s Word this morning and to get some thoughts for the end of an age and a beginning of a new age. And the title of our message this morning is “Preparing for a New Millennium.”

Take your Bibles, and we are in Matthew chapter 17, but I want us to take chapter 16 and read the last verse of chapter 16, because it is virtually impossible to understand chapter 17 unless you understand chapter 16. As I have often told you, the chapter divisions are not inspired; they have been put there by translators. I sometimes suspect they are put there to keep preachers from preaching too long. I want us to begin at the end of chapter 16 and look in verse 28, and then read on, beginning in chapter 17. Jesus said, *“Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom. And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias”—now Elias is the New Testament way of saying Elijah—“talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.”* Now Peter often said some rather inelegant and stupid things, but this is the best—or the worst—of all of them right here. Peter, about the only time he opened his mouth was to change feet, and he made a real *faux pas* here, in my estimation: *“While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man save”—or “except”—“Jesus only.”* (Matthew 16:28–17:8)

Look at me and listen to me for just a moment. I want to give you four thoughts for the end of an age, and I want to prepare you through the Word of God for the coming new millennium. Now I pray that these four thoughts will be written not only on your notes but be written in your heart.

## **I. Wake Up: Time Is Passing**

Thought number one: Wake up: time is passing. Look at verse 28: *“There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his*

*kingdom.*” (Matthew 16:28) Well, that was two thousand years ago. And Peter, James, and John have died, and Jesus has not yet come. So, was this a mistake? Did Jesus expect them to see His Second Coming in their lifetime? Not at all! The next chapter explains it. What Jesus is going to do is to give them a preview of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. He is going to give them a foretaste of glory that shall be revealed when He comes again. And so you read in chapter 17 and verse 1: “*And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain.*” (Matthew 17:1)

And then, verse 2 says He was transfigured. The word *transfigured* is a translation of a Greek word. It’s the Greek word we get our English word *metamorphosis* from. A metamorphosis is when that which is on the inside comes to the outside; the inner nature is displayed and comes to the surface. The metamorphosis of a caterpillar is when the inner glory of that caterpillar changes and it comes to the outer, and that caterpillar becomes, after going through a chrysalis or a cocoon, a butterfly. And so that caterpillar goes through a metamorphosis, a change of form. Jesus, on the Mountain of Transfiguration, went through a metamorphosis.

Now had you seen the Lord Jesus Christ in His ordinary walk among men, He would have looked like every other man. You would not have been able to pick Him out. He did not have a halo around His head as He walked and talked, as the artists paint Him. No, He looked like an ordinary person. Judas had to point Him out in the Garden of Gethsemane. Remember that? There is “*no form nor comeliness...that we should desire him.*” (Isaiah 53:2) But what was His inner nature? The inner nature of the Lord Jesus was glory. And at this time He was metamorphosed, and His inner glory came to the surface, and His face like the noonday sun, white as light. And the angels had wrapped robes of light around the Lord Jesus Christ, and He was transfigured there before Peter, James, and John; and that was a picture of the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. But what I want you to notice is this—and look at it very carefully. Look in chapter 17, verse 1: “*And after six days...*”

Now the Holy Spirit does not waste words. Why is that in the Word of God: “*after six days*”? Well now, let me tell you something. Six is the number of a man. Man was created on what day? The sixth day. And what does the Bible tell us that the number of the Antichrist will be? 666—Revelation chapter 13 and verse 18. (Revelation 13:18) Man is imperfect. Seven is the perfect number. Man is imperfect, so man is no seven; man is a six. And so six is the number of a man. And the Bible tells us that this preview of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, this preview of the Second Coming, this foregleam of glory, takes place after six days.

Now, keep that in mind and let’s see if we can learn something there, because 2 Peter chapter 3 and verse 8 says this: “*But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing,*

*that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*" (2 Peter 3:8) So we could say it's been six days, or we could say six thousand years. You see, there are six thousand years of recorded human history. Six of man's days are coming to a close, and we are getting ready for the seventh day. Seven is the number of perfection. Six is the number of imperfection. And six speaks of man. Seven speaks of glory. After six days, Jesus is transfigured. His glory, His coming in power and glory, is displayed.

Again, I remind you there have been six thousand years of recorded human history, and man's sixth day is coming to a close this year, and I believe we are getting ready for that seventh day when our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is going to rule and to reign here upon this earth. Man's six days have not been millennium; they have been pandemonium. And for the first time in history man is afraid of what he knows. His head and his hands have outrun his heart. And we are talking about cloning human beings. We are talking about genetic engineering. We are doing all kinds of weird and sometimes wonderful things. But we have new diseases that we cannot control. There are plagues that are not only epidemic, but pandemic. AIDS is a world specter. Hunger is every place. The Middle East is a tinderbox. And the great historian Arnold Toynbee said this: "The stable character of the past six thousand years of civilized history is being changed and is falling apart." We don't know what is about to happen, but all of us have sort of an ominous feeling. The stable character of the United States government seems to be right on the brink.

We don't know what is about to happen, and many people are concerned about a problem called what? Y2K. Y: that stands for *year*; 2: that's obvious; K stands for *kilo* or *thousand*. And it's the Year 2000 problem, the year that we are about to go into; and the Y2K problem simply means that when we enter into a new millennium, our computers will malfunction. Now we have a technological age, and we are dependent upon computers far more than we know. Whether you own a computer or operate a computer, computers have so very much to do with your life. And man has in all of his inventions, all of his glory, come up with these computers that run and regulate our lives.

Now there are many people who are doomsayers, calamity howlers, who tell us, when the clock strikes midnight, that planes will fall out of the air, that hospital equipment will no longer work, that pacemakers will stop in people's chests, that all kinds of horrible, terrible things are going to happen; and basically, you won't be able to get food or gasoline or electrical power, and everything in the world will just close down. And then there are other people who are saying just the opposite. They say, "Well, we'll have a little blip; we'll have some trouble. Maybe there will be some embedded chips and so forth, and maybe we won't have it all done, we won't have it all ready; but it's not

going to be the end of the world.”

Now somewhere between those two brackets something is going to happen. You say, “Pastor, tell me what will happen.” I don’t know. But that doesn’t bother me. You don’t know either. And nobody knows. And I have been reading. I have a stack of materials, and I can read everything. Anything you want, either good or bad, I can give you stuff about that. I’ve got all that stuff. I’ve read books. I’ve read newspaper clippings and so forth. But I can tell you this: Leading military people, leading government officials, leading business magnates, say that there is a great problem looming on the horizon. I’m not talking about some backwoods preacher like myself. I’m talking about people who are in the world who are in the know. Somewhere, somehow, I think that we could have at the close of this age a calamitous problem. I’m not saying we will. And by the way, I’m not telling you to get a ton of spam and go to Wyoming. But what I am saying is this: We need to be aware of these days in which we are living. These are incredible days.

Now what makes me think that God may have something in His mind is to read Genesis chapter 11, because in Genesis chapter 11 there was a city that was founded by a man whose name is Nimrod. The word *Nimrod* means “rebel.” He is a type, a picture, of the Antichrist. And God had told the people after the flood to replenish the earth, to scatter abroad; but instead of God’s plan they wanted a one-world government, so they came to Babylon, and in ancient Babylon they said, “We are going to build us a tower.” Now Babylon ever since that time has been a symbol, a type, of man’s utopia, man’s ability to do without God, but to do his own thing. And in Genesis chapter 11, we read about men who get together, and they said, “Go to now, let us build us a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven, and let us make for us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the earth.” And in those two verses you find the word *us* or *we* six times. God is not mentioned in this at all. This is man. Man is building his utopia. Man is building his high-rise to hell. Man is building his tower of blunders. And led by this man, this type of the Antichrist, this Nimrod, whose name means “rebel,” they are building this great, colossal masterpiece, “*whose top may reach unto heaven.*” (Genesis 11:4) This is the crowning project. The Bible says they are building it with brick: “Brick had they and slime for mortar.” (Genesis 11:3)

So they are building this great, great tower. It is man’s crowning achievement, and it symbolizes a one-world government. And the Bible says they all spoke the same language. Now, notice—and it’s really kind of funny when you think about it—they said, “We are going to build a tower whose top will reach unto heaven.” And then the Bible says in Genesis chapter 11, “And God said, ‘Let us go down and see the tower which man has built.’” (Genesis 11:5) What does it mean, “Let us”? Well, the Trinity is taught in the Old Testament. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit said, “Let’s go down and see this

tower.” Now here is the funny part. They said, “We’re going to build a tower to heaven.” God says, “Let’s go down and see the tower.” Yeah, there it is, right down there: their great tower that is going to reach unto heaven.

What a joke! Man building a tower unto heaven! Man doesn’t need to build from beneath; he needs to be born from above. This symbolizes man’s religion, man’s pride, man’s utopia, man’s all of it. But God said, “*Now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.*” (Genesis 11:6) Man had come to a place, as I’ve said, where his head and his hands had outrun his heart. Just like today, we are talking about cloning human beings. We are talking about genetic engineering that will mix together animal flesh and human flesh—all kinds of strange things.

Do you know what God said He was going to do in that day when the whole world was of one language and one speech? God said, “I know what I’ll do. I’ll just throw a wrench in the works. I’ll go down there and destroy their ability to communicate.” That’s the reason now we call it the Tower of Babel, because they began to babble. One man would say, “Pass me a brick.” He’d say, “What did you say?” He said, “What did you say?” I say, “What did you say? What did you say?” And the first thing you know, the whole thing comes apart. It all comes crashing down.

Well, is the whole world of one speech and language today? Yes. That language is COBOL. It is the language of computers. And my computer speaks to your computer that speaks to your computer that speaks to his computer. And that’s a worldwide language. God says, “I’ll just confuse all of that. I’ll just confuse all of that. And now, let’s see what happens to man’s utopia, man’s great high-rise to hell.”

Now we are still living in a Babylonian age. You know things are different, but they are always the same, aren’t they? And so, what are we talking about? We are saying that this comes to pass after six days. I remind you again there are six thousand recorded years of human history. Even Arnold Toynbee says that.

Now you say, “Pastor, are you trying to set a date for the Second Coming of Jesus?” I would never do that. Everybody who has ever tried to do that has made a fool out of himself. But the Bible says we are to be ready; we are not to let that day take us as unawares; (Luke 21:34) and I think it is significant in the Bible that this will transpire after six days. “Pastor, are you saying that airplanes will fall out of the sky because of Y2K?” I’m not telling you anything. I don’t know. But I’ll tell you one thing. It would be far better to be prepared for it, and it not happen, than that you not be prepared, and it happen. And when I’m talking about preparation, I’m just talking about spiritual preparation, looking for those things, because I believe we are going to have one of the greatest opportunities to witness the saving gospel of Jesus Christ that we have ever had in this last year. I believe that people are going to be thinking more about the Second Coming of Jesus; they are going to be thinking more about spiritual things than

any time since mankind this year. What a wonderful opportunity to witness the saving grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

So, put it down. Wake up: time is passing. Turn to your neighbor and say, “Wake up.” Good. Thank you. That will help me.

## **II. Look Up: Jesus Is Coming**

Now, here is the second thing. Wake up: time is passing. Here is the second thing: Look up: Jesus is coming. Now what you have here is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ in preview—in microcosm, if you will. Now I want you to notice something about the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Look, if you will, in chapter 17, verse 1: “*And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart.*” (Matthew 17:1) Now, does God have favorites? Well, He does have intimates. He took Peter, James, and John apart so they could see this transfiguration. Why did He do that?

### **A. Three Witnesses**

Well, there were three witnesses. In the Bible, three is the number of witness. “By the mouth of two or three witnesses shall a thing be established.” (Deuteronomy 19:15; Matthew 18:16; 2 Corinthians 13:1) That’s what the Bible says. So here are three witnesses. And Peter in 2 Peter chapter 1 says, “*We...were eyewitnesses of his majesty*”; “we heard the voice; we saw His glory.” (2 Peter 1:16–17) And so He wanted these witnesses there to be a testimony there. So, put it down: three witnesses. And God has given that testimony so we can join those three witnesses and we today can be part of those witnesses and say Jesus is coming, amen? No ifs, ands, or buts about it; no stutter, no stammer, no apology: Jesus is coming again. Beyond any shadow of any doubt, He is coming again. Three witnesses.

### **B. Two Participants**

But then, notice, not only three witnesses; I want you to notice how the focus tightens now. There were two participants there that day on the day when Jesus came in preview. Look in verse 3. And the Bible says here in verse 3, “*And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.*” (Matthew 17:3) Now I would have loved to have heard that conversation. There is Jesus in His glory, as He will be when He comes again; and there is Moses, and there is Elijah.

Now, why Moses and Elijah? Well, Moses is the great lawgiver; Elijah, the great prophet. That’s part of it, but that’s not all of it. What happened to Moses? Well, you remember that Moses walked to his own funeral. Moses died without ever going into the Promised Land. And the Bible tells us in the book of Deuteronomy that Moses was buried on Mount Nebo in the land of Moab, and no man knew his burial place, because



God buried him, or sent an angel to bury him, and God performed the funeral. There is Moses. He died and was buried. But what about Elijah the prophet? He never died. The Bible says that at the close of Elijah's ministry there appeared a whirlwind and a chariot of fire, and Elijah went to heaven without dying. He was just caught up in a chariot of fire, and he went to heaven without dying. And now here are Moses and Elijah. If Moses is there, his body would have been brought from the grave; and Elijah is there, and he is one who has never died. And so there is Moses, and there is Elijah, on the Mount of Transfiguration.

What does that picture for us? Well, when Jesus comes again, there are two categories of people who will be on the earth. There is the Moses crowd and the Elijah crowd. There will be those who have died and will be raised from the dead, like Moses; and there will be those who will never have died and will be raptured without dying. And so all of us are going to be, if we are saved, in the Moses crowd or the Elijah crowd. We are going to be with those who have who have died and been buried and then are raised, or we are going to be with those who are raptured. So, raised or raptured, when Jesus comes, if you are saved, you are going to meet the Lord in the air. And that's what the Apostle Paul said, isn't it, in 1 Corinthians chapter 15? *"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep,"*—we shall not all die—*"but we shall all be changed,"*—that's the Rapture. Not all are going to die, but all are going to be changed—*"in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible."* (1 Corinthians 15:51–52) *"We which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."* (1 Thessalonians 4:17)

So, are you going to be in the Moses crowd, or are you going to be in the Elijah crowd? You don't know, and I don't know; but we're going to be in one or the other, right? There are three witnesses, and there are two participants that are a microcosm of all of us. There is Elijah who never died. There is Moses who died and came out of that grave. And that's the reason the Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15—the Apostle Paul is writing that great Resurrection chapter, and it's as though he is just mocking death and he is mocking the grave, and he says—*"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"* (1 Corinthians 15:55)

Now that is the twofold anthem of the redeemed. Those who are raptured will say, "Death, where is your sting? I never felt it"; and those of us who've been buried and come up are going to say, "O grave, where is your victory?"—one or the other. When our Lord comes, that's what's going to happen. Some will never know the sting of death. Some will not be held by the iron bars of death, will come up out of the grave, and be raised when Jesus Christ comes. And that's what Jesus was talking about when he said, "There are some of you standing here who will not see death till you see the Son

of man come in His glory.” (Matthew 16:28) And after six days He took them up into a mountain and showed them these things.

### C. One Savior

So you have three witnesses. Now, tighten it a minute. You have two participants. But tighten it a little bit more. You have only one Savior. This is very important. I want you to see this. And it’s so important that you see it. And the Bible says in verse 4, *“Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here; if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;”*—now, listen to this—*“hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save”*—or “except”—*“Jesus only.”* (Matthew 17:4–8)

Now, folks, look at those two words: *“Jesus only.”* That’s it! *“Jesus only.”* You want to know the meaning of everything? It is Jesus only. Now, listen. You may think that’s an overstatement. We live in a universe. We live in a great big world—billions of light years. Why? Scientists are trying to figure out the reason for creation. You want to know what it is? Jesus only. *“For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things.”* (Romans 11:36) There is nothing made that was not made by the Lord Jesus. The answer to creation is Jesus only. People say the world needs saving; the world needs redemption. Where is redemption going to come from? From Buddha? From Mohammed? From Confucius? Mary Baker Glover Patterson Eddy? Where is redemption going to come from? Jesus only. *“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”* (Acts 4:12) Not some creed, not some code, not so some cause; but Jesus only.

Friend, do you want to understand prophecy? Everybody wants to understand prophecy. They want to understand the meaning of some toe on the left foot of some beast in Revelation. The Bible says, *“The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”* (Revelation 19:10) It’s not what is going to happen; it’s who is coming. We’re looking for Jesus only to come. What is the purpose of the church: building buildings, raising money? No! The Bible says, *“Unto him be glory in the church.”* (Ephesians 3:21) It is Jesus only. That’s what everything is about. And when Jesus comes again, we are going to understand what God is moving toward. The entire universe, all of the plan of God, the sweep of all the ages, comes down to those two words: Jesus only. *“There are some of you standing here who will not taste of death till you see the Son of man come in His glory.”* (Matthew 16:28)

What a day that will be when all the universe bows its knee and every created thing says, “Jesus only”! And Hitler will confess it. And Johnny Carson will confess it. And Jay Leno will confess it. And Bill Clinton will confess it. And, Mark, you will confess it. And I’ll confess it. And the angels will confess it. And everybody will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Jesus is coming.

### **III. Sober Up: Satan is Working**

Listen. Wake up: time is passing. Look up: Jesus is coming. Here is the third thing: Sober up: Satan is working. Do you think that Satan has just rolled over and is playing dead? No! Look now, if you will, beginning in verse 14: *“And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour.”* (Matthew 17:14–18)

Now they’re up on the mountaintop. Peter is wanting to build tabernacles up on the mountaintop. But the problem was down in the valley. It is so easy for us to have our heads in the clouds of prophecy, to want to build tabernacles on mountaintops, but down in the valley was a brokenhearted and a crushed father. Down in the valley was a little boy who had been used and abused by the devil; a little boy, for whatever reason, who had a demon spirit in him. There was suffering there. There was sorrow there. There was shame there, because this man had brought his boy, demon-possessed, to the very disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, the ones who could and should have done something for him. And the man looks at Jesus and says, “Lord, I brought him to your disciples, and they couldn’t do anything for him.”

Time is running out in this message, but let me tell you something. If we are at the end of the age, the Bible says that Satan will “come down upon you, having great wrath, for he knows that he has but a little time.” (Revelation 12:12) And in this last year you are going to see the demons of hell—if this is the last year. I’m not setting a date, but I know we are living at the end of an age. You are going to see all of the artillery of hell let loose upon the church. We are going to see more demon activity, more lies, more distortion, more heartache, more unmentionable things happen, as Satan is like a cornered animal coming down.

And so I’m going to just give you this point very quickly and I’m going to pass on. But what I’ve said is: Wake up: time is passing. Look up: Jesus is coming. Sober up: Satan is working. Satan is working. We are living in a deadly time. And Jesus came to this little

boy, and Jesus spoke, and the devil fled. There was no groaning; there was no yelling; there was no contest. Jesus just simply spoke, and this little boy was healed. And I want to tell you something, folks. You listen to me. Jesus is still alive and well, and His power has not diminished. Two thousand years have not taken away the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is still able. God is not dead, and God is not sick. We need to understand that. And so here was the power of Satan as over against the power of Christ. Time is passing. Jesus is coming. Satan is working.

#### **IV. Pray Up: Mountains Need Moving**

Now, here's the final thing I want you to see. Not only do you need to sober up, because Satan is working; you need to pray up, because mountains need moving. Now, listen to me. Look, if you will, in verse 18: *"And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. Then came the disciples to Jesus apart,"*—that is, they got Him off to the side; they were so embarrassed they didn't want to talk with Him in public—*"and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief..."*—He didn't say, "Because of my lack of power," but—*"Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you,"*—when Jesus says, "verily," it means, "pay attention"—*"for...I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you..."*—underscore that—*"nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."* (Matthew 17:18–21)

Now I said, "Pray up, because mountains need moving." Jesus said, "If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea.'" Do you know what mountain He was talking about? Mount Hermon. Do you know how big it was? Over nine thousand feet! It stays snow-capped most of the time. Jesus said, "If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed..." A grain of mustard seed is no bigger than a fleck of pepper that you put on your eggs this morning. He said, "You could say to this mountain, 'Be cast into the sea,' and it would be done."

Now Jesus is not putting a premium upon little faith. He is not saying, "Let your faith be little." What Jesus is saying is this: The least amount of faith is greater than the greatest mountain of difficulty. That's what He is saying. It is David and Goliath. A little David mustard seed went to battle against the Goliath mountain and slew it.

Now, is He talking about just removing literal mountains? Well, God could do that. He could pulverize every one of them. But you know good and well that's not what the world needs, is to have every mountain thrown into the sea—that's not what the world needs. You have to understand what Jesus is saying. What has happened? They have been up there on the mountaintop. What is down here in the valley? Suffering and pain

and anguish and fear and demon-possession—and Satan having a heyday. Jesus says, “Get this mountain out of the way. Bring heaven to earth. Remove the mountain. What you saw on the mountaintop, let’s bring the power of it down into the valley.” He said, “If you just had faith like a grain of mustard seed...” What’s the difference between a mustard seed and a mountain? Given enough time, men can make a mountain. Give them enough bulldozers, and they can make a mountain.

King Herod, by the way, made his own mountain. You can see it if you go to the Holy Land. Men can make a mountain. But no man can make a mustard seed. You see, a mustard seed has life, and faith has life. Only God can give faith. You cannot make yourself believe. You can’t clench your fist and grit your teeth and say, “I’m going to believe.” That may be positive thinking, but it’s not faith. Faith is supernatural. It has the life of God in it. Only God can make a seed. That is the source of the seed. The size of the seed is what He’s saying: If you just have small faith, use it. In another Gospel—not in Matthew 17, but in Mark—that father said to Jesus, “Jesus, if you can do anything for my son, do it.” Jesus said, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes.” And do you know what the man said? He said, “Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief.” (Mark 9:22–24)

Have you ever been there? All of us are. Do you think you have perfect faith? The only thing you do perfect is sin. That’s the only thing I do perfect is sin. We don’t have perfect faith. This father said, “I do believe; but help my unbelief.” Take the faith that you have, because there’s the source of the seed, the size of the seed, but there’s the sowing of the seed. You’ve got to take that little faith that you have, just like that man did, and took his little faith and planted it. A seed is not a museum piece. A seed is supposed to be put in the ground and planted. Take your faith, whatever it is. Be like that man, and say, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief. I’m going to use whatever faith I have. It may be as small as a grain of mustard seed, but I’m going to plant it. I’m going to invest it. And that little seed will go down in the warm earth, and huddle in the warm earth, and one day it will throw off its little overcoat and burst with joy and spring up.” And in one seed there are thousands of seeds and billions of seeds. You just plant the faith that you have. “To him that hath shall be given.” (Matthew 13:12; Matthew 25:29; Mark 4:25; Luke 8:18; Luke 19:26)

God is not demanding perfection out of you. I’ll tell you what He is demanding out of you: that you open your heart, your life, and let Him put that mustard seed of faith; and then you take and plant it, and then you say in this decade of demons, “I am getting in the mountain-moving business.” You say, “I don’t think I can be a mountain mover.” Well then, you can’t. But if you had faith as a grain of mustard seed, nothing would be impossible to you. That doesn’t mean you can have what you want. That doesn’t mean believe for a new Cadillac. No. God only gives faith when He wants something done.

But many of us don't have faith, because we've not opened our heart to the faith that God has. If God wants you to move mountains, God will give you mountain-moving faith—if you just open your heart, open your life, to Him.

## Conclusion

Now, folks, listen to your pastor today, not because I'm the pastor, but now listen to what we've said. It was after six days that this happened. Does that ring something in your heart and mind? Wake up: time is passing. He took Peter, James, and John up into a mountain, and there He was glorified and transfigured. Look up: Jesus is coming. They went down in the valley, and there was a little demon-possessed boy, and a brokenhearted father, and paralyzed disciples. Sober up: Satan is working. "Why couldn't we cast him out?" "Because of your unbelief." "This kind cometh forth by nothing but prayer and fasting." Pray up: mountains need moving.

What we need is an earth-shaking, mountain-moving, devil-defying faith in God as we close out this millennium, amen? Let's do it. Let's believe God. I want to believe Him more. I want to take my little mustard seed and put it in the ground. I want to see mountains crumble. I want to see heaven come to earth. I want to see demon-possessed children set free. And I want to see His name glorified. He's coming. Folks, I believe we are living in the closing shadows of the end of an age. *"Even so, come, Lord Jesus."* (Revelation 22:20)

# How to Remove Mountains

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: April 9, 1995**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 17:1-22**

## Outline

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- III. The Gift That We Are to Appropriate
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Conclusion

## Introduction

**W**hen I was a young Christian, in the church that I attended, we used to sing a chorus. Maybe you remember it.

*Have you any rivers that seem to be uncrossable?  
Have you any mountains you cannot tunnel through?  
God specializes in things that seem impossible.  
He knows a thousand ways to make a way for you.*

—OSCAR C. ELIASON

And I'm speaking today to some people who have some difficulties; I mean, some mountains: mountains of heartache, mountains of debt, mountains of despair, mountains of satanic opposition. And you say, "Oh, God, what am I going to do with this mountain that is facing me?"

Well, today, we're going to have a lesson in how to remove mountains. Look in God's Word, if you will, in verse 1: "*And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light*" (Matthew 17:1-2). And then go over to verse 20, if you will, of this same chapter, and look in verse 20: "*And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith*

*as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and*—what’s the next word? What is it?—“*nothing...*”—“*and nothing...*”—say it with me one more time—“*and nothing shall be impossible unto you*” (Matthew 17:20). That’s God’s Word: “*Nothing shall be impossible unto you.*”

*Have you any rivers that seem to be uncrossable?*

*Have you any mountains you cannot tunnel through?*

*God specializes in things that seem impossible.*

Jesus said, “Nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing, shall be impossible unto you” (Mark 10:27). I agree that seems pretty big. That seems like, “Well, maybe we’d better water that down, or explain that away.” Why don’t we just believe it? Why don’t we just simply believe what God has said?

Here’s a lesson in mountain moving. This chapter that we’re reading from is a chapter of contrasts. We read of mountains and mustard seeds. We read of glory, and we read of despair. Jesus has gone up to this exceeding high mountain, and He’s transfigured. The word *transfigured* literally means He is “metamorphosized.” There’s a metamorphosis. This word is the Greek word that we get our English word *metamorphosis* from, which means, “a change of form,” but not just a change of form; a change where that which is on the inside comes to the surface. The glory of God was in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that glory burst forth on the mountain of transfiguration. You see, God starts with the inside and goes toward the outside. Satan just covers the outside, because he has nothing on the inside. Satan knows how to masquerade, but Jesus was metamorphosized. That glory that was in Him came to the surface.

And what a day it was! What a beautiful thing it was, as the glory of our Lord shone there on that mountaintop, and His face shone like the noonday sun! His garments glistened as the snow. And God spoke from the glory, “*This is my beloved Son*” (Matthew 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35).

There are three basic things I want you to see as we look in this chapter about moving mountains.

## **I. The Glory That We Are to Anticipate**

First of all, I want you to see the glory that we are to anticipate. Do you have it? The glory that we are to anticipate. What was the reason for this transfiguration? I mean, what was it all about? It was a preview of the greatest event this world will ever know, and that is the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now I want you to look in your Bibles, in chapter 16, and just back up to verse 27: “*For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward*



*every man according to his works*" (Matthew 16:27). That is a promise from the Word of God. Jesus Christ is literally, actually, visibly, bodily coming back to this earth again. Jesus said it, and it will happen. This same Jesus is coming again. But now, look in verse 28: *"Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom"* (Matthew 16:28).

Now some people have thought, "Well, Jesus made a mistake," because all of the apostles died, and He had not yet come. But, oh, no! He never makes a mistake. What He is saying is, "I am going to give you a preview, some of you who are now living; I am going to give you a preview of my coming in glory." And that's what the transfiguration was. It was a preview of the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now there should really be no division between chapter 16 and 17. I remind you that the chapter divisions were put there after the Bible was written. I think they were put there to keep preachers from preaching too long. So these chapter divisions are not a part of the inspired Word of God. I'm happy to have them, but chapter 16 flows right on in to chapter 17. And He says, "There are some who will not see death, till you see the Son of man coming in power and glory," and then it tells of the transfiguration of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now I want you to look at it very carefully, and look in chapter 17, verse 1: *"After six days..."* (Matthew 17:1)—now, why is that recorded?—*"After six days..."* Well, six is the number of man. There are 6,000 recorded years of human history. *"One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day"* (2 Peter 3:8). *"After six days..."* There have been 6,000 years of recorded history. And, friend, we're on the threshold of the seventh day. The seventh day is the thousand-year reign of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We call that the millennium. It's just around the corner. We are living in the closing shadows of the sixth day. There have been 6,000 years of history. There is coming a day when the desert will blossom as a rose. There's coming a day when the lamb and the lion shall lie down together (Isaiah 11:6). There's coming a day when *"the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea"* (Habakkuk 2:14). And Jesus, our Lord, shall rule and reign here on this earth. And His kingdom will come; His will be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10; Luke 11:2). After six days of failure, then the Lord Jesus will appear.

It's a dark hour. It's a dark hour domestically and internationally. It's a dark hour scientifically. For the first time in history, man is literally afraid of what he knows—I mean, afraid of what he knows! His head and his hands have outrun his heart, and we're creating the ability to destroy ourselves. And then, we're afraid because of what we don't know. Have you been reading recently about the plagues that are beginning to bubble up around the earth, strange new diseases? I used to read the Book of the Revelation and read about

those plagues, and I thought, “Well, surely we’ve got penicillin. We’ve got other things. Don’t worry about the plagues.” But it’s a dark hour. But, friend, it is gloriously dark, because our Lord is about to come. We’re living at the close of six days of history, and that seventh day is about to dawn on us.

Somewhere years ago, I read about a man who was spending a night in a chalet in Switzerland. And in the middle of the morning, early in the morning, he heard this noise, this roaring, and this rumbling, and this crackling. He was frightened. He thought maybe it was the end of the world. He told his host—he said, “I was so frightened this morning. What was that?” “Oh,” he said, “it was just the sun hitting the ice slopes, and the ice was cracking and melting as the sun came up in the morning.” He said, “What you thought was the end of the world was the dawning of a new day.” And, friend, what some people think is the end is really the dawning of a new day. There is that seventh day coming. Our Lord is going to come, and He’s going to rule and to reign upon this earth.

### **A. Three Witnesses**

I want you to notice those who were involved this day. Look, if you will, in verse 1: “And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John, and brought them apart” (Matthew 17:1). Who do these represent? Well, these represent the witnesses. They were there to see it. And do you know why they saw it? They were looking for it. They were there when Jesus said, “There will be some of you standing here who’ll not die until you see the Son of man come in glory” (Matthew 16:28). And they were there, Peter, James, and John, and they saw it. Now He had told them; they were looking for it, and they saw it. Some of us are looking for Him to come the second time. And I want to say, friend, that He’s told others that He’s coming also.

You see, God took Peter, James, and John apart from the rest. That’s very interesting. Does God have favorites? I wouldn’t say He has favorites; but He has some intimates. He has those who are on the inside. And, “Surely, the Lord GOD will do nothing, except He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7). I want to say that spiritual men today, all of those that I know, are looking for Jesus to come at almost any moment.

### **B. Two Participants**

There were three witnesses. But then, not only were there three witnesses; there were two participants. Look in verse 3: “*And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with them*” (Matthew 17:3). Now Elias—that’s just the New Testament way of saying Elijah. So here’s the Lord Jesus Christ up there on, I believe, the top of Mount Hermon, a beautiful mountain. And there appears Moses the great lawgiver. There appears

Elijah the great prophet. And there appears, there's the Lord Jesus, the Savior, and Jesus is transfigured before them, and they talk.

Why Moses and Elijah? Well, again, Moses gave the law, and Elijah was the prophet. And Jesus fulfilled the law, and the prophet spoke of Jesus. But I believe there's another reason. Moses and Elijah represent the two groups that will be involved when our Lord comes in power and in great glory. Now, let me tell you what happened to these two. Moses died and was buried. Put in your Bible margin Deuteronomy 34:5-6: *"So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab."* And nobody knows where his grave is. Moses died and was buried. Do you have that? And yet Moses was on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Now, what about Elijah? Elijah never died. He never saw death. Put in your margin 2 Kings 2:11: *"And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven."* Elijah never died. He was caught up in a whirlwind in a chariot of fire. He was raptured. Moses died and was buried. Elijah never died. He was taken up into heaven. And now on the Mount of Transfiguration, which is a preview of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, there is Moses, and there is Elijah.

Now, put this verse in your margin—1 Corinthians 15:51-52. Here's what the Apostle Paul says is going to take place when Jesus comes: *"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep,"*—that is, not everyone is going to die—*"but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."*

Do you see it? There's the Moses crowd: *"the dead shall be raised incorruptible."* There's the Elijah crowd: *"and we shall be changed."* If Jesus Christ were to come today, all of the dead saints would be raised like Moses was, and all of the living saints would be *"changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye."* Those are the two groups that are going to be present with our Lord when He comes to receive His own. There's the Moses crowd and the Elijah crowd.

I used to think I always wanted to be in the Elijah crowd, till I read the other day something Charles Haddon Spurgeon said. Spurgeon said, "I'm so glad. I hope I die before Jesus comes, because," he said, "I want to experience the thrill of the resurrection." Think about it. Think about it—whether you're in the Moses crowd, or whether you're in the Elijah crowd, whether you have died and come out of that grave, or whether you've changed and caught up. That's the reason the Apostle Paul said, "When this comes to pass," *"then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"* (1 Corinthians 15:54-55). The Elijah

crowd will say, “O death, where is your sting? You never stung me.” The Moses crowd will say, “O grave, where is your victory? You can’t hold me when Jesus comes, when Jesus comes in glory.” What a day, what a day that will be! And here we have that story there in a preview of the glory we should anticipate. We should be looking for it.

### C. One Savior

Peter got so excited. He said, “Lord, let’s go into a building program. Let’s just build something up here.” You know, you can count on Peter to do something dumb almost all the time. And look, if you will, in verse 4: *“Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here:”—I’ll say, that’s an understatement—“if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for [Elijah].”* Now Peter made some big mistakes, but this one was king size. *“While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them:”—that was the Shekinah glory of God that overshadowed them—“and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him...”—so you have three witnesses. You have two participants. But you have only one Savior. His name is Jesus—“hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.”* Boys and girls, that means they were scared stiff. *“And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.”* Now, mark verse 8: *“And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save”—or except—“Jesus only”* (Matthew 17:4–8).

Now if you want to know what everything is all about, I mean, if you want to get it in two words, just put a circle around *“Jesus only.”* If you want to know what God is up to, it is this: *Jesus only.*

It’s true in creation. Why the universes? Why did God make it all? It was made by Him and for Him. What’s the world coming to? It’s coming to Jesus. What’s the purpose of creation? Two words: *Jesus only.*

It’s true in redemption. How are we saved? Not by a program, not by a plan, but by a person. You want to understand salvation? You can put it in two words: *Jesus only.*

It’s true in the Bible. You want to understand this book? You want to know what the Bible is all about? Friend, you can put it in two words: *Jesus only.* It’s a Him book. It’s about Him. And you have to read the Bible in the light of Christ, and see Christ in the light of the Bible.

It’s true in prophecy. People want to talk about prophecy. But, friend, *“Jesus is the spirit of prophecy”* (Revelation 19:10). You make a mistake if you read the Bible and study prophecy and try to see what’s going to happen. It’s not about a happening; it’s about a

person. It's about the Lord Jesus. We're not waiting for something to happen, but for Someone to come. What's the key to prophecy? *Jesus only*.

And it's true in the church. I was thinking, Jim, about the music you sang that blessed me so much today about Jesus—about Jesus. We need to love the Lord Jesus, who said, *“And I, if I be lifted up...will draw all men unto me”* (John 12:32). What is the purpose of this church? It is *Jesus only*. He said, *“I will build my church”* (Matthew 16:18). He didn't say, *“You'll build my church,”* or, *“I'll build your church.”* *Jesus only*.

## **II. The Grief That We Must Alleviate**

Now there's the glory we anticipate. But now, wait a minute. There's the grief we must alleviate. Look now in verse 14: *“And when they were come to the multitude...”*—that is, now they've come down from the mountaintop, down from the mountain of glory, down into the valley—*“And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is a lunatick, and sore vexed; for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour”* (Matthew 17:14–18).

Now Jesus comes down from the mountain of transfiguration to the place of misery. And in that valley there was satanic power. There was a boy who was demon-possessed. In that valley there was sickness and sorrow and despair. In that valley there was a father with a crushed and a bleeding heart who had come up against a mountain of difficulty. And in that valley there were some preachers, and they had no power. They'd gone through the ministerial function. They had rebuked the devil. They had shouted. They had prayed. They'd gone through their form and their ritual. And nothing had changed. And then Jesus came and He spoke. There was no struggle, no groaning, no long battle. Satan released his grip on this boy. He was healed. Smiles came back to his face, and a happy boy cuddled in the arms of his father. And the father, whose heart had been crushed, looked into the face of Jesus. And with tears of gratitude he began to give God praise for the victory.

And then the Lord Jesus looked at these disciples. They asked Him a question, in verse 19: *“Then came the disciples to Jesus apart,”*—that means, they had to get Him off in a corner; they were ashamed to ask in public—*“and said, Why couldn't we do it? Why couldn't we cast out that devil? What was wrong with us?”* Why were you able to do it, and we're not able to do it? Here's the answer, in verse 20: *“And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall*

*say unto this mountain...*—what mountain was He talking about? The one He'd just been on, this mountain. He was up on an exceeding high mountain—*“ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you”* (Matthew 17:19–20).

### **III. The Gift That We Are to Appropriate**

That brings me to the third thing I want to say today about moving mountains. There's the glory we should anticipate. There is the misery we must alleviate. And, therefore, there is the gift we must appropriate. Now, what is the gift that we must appropriate? It's faith—it's faith. How do we move mountains? With faith. What kind of faith? Well, look and see what our Lord says here in this marvelous passage of Scripture. Look at it: *“And Jesus said unto them... If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed...”* (Matthew 17:20). Now we say, “Well, pastor, do you believe that?” Well, yes, I believe it—I believe it. I believe that the problem in the twentieth-century church, very plainly put, is a lack of mountain-moving faith. It's a problem in my heart, in my life, when it's not there. It's the problem in your heart and in your life when it is not there.

Somewhere I read about a lady who lived in a house; and in front of her house was an ugly and unsightly hill, and it blocked the view of the valley as she wanted to see it. She came upon this promise in the Word of God, and so she thought she'd try it. So she prayed all night that that hill, that mountain, would be removed that was blocking her view. All night long she prayed and asked God to remove that mountain. When the sun came up, she opened her blinds and looked out—and it was still there. And she said, “Ha, just as I expected—just as I expected.” Oh, friend, we really have never really learned how to believe God.

Now, why did our Lord say that faith is like a grain of mustard seed?

#### **A. The Smallness of the Seed**

Well, think of the size of a mustard seed. It is so small. Think of the smallness of the seed. Now our Lord was not putting a premium upon small faith. Our Lord loved great faith. But what is our Lord saying? He is saying the least amount of faith is greater than the greatest amount of difficulty. He's comparing a mustard seed to a mountain. This is a David and Goliath experience in the Spirit. A mustard seed went to battle against a mountain and slew it—a mustard seed! You know what that says to me? “Adrian, you must not have very much faith. Maybe your faith is not even the size of a mustard seed.” We boast about our faith; but Jesus said, “If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed...”

## B. The Secret of the Seed

The smallness of the seed. But think of the secret of the seed. No man can manufacture a mustard seed. Given enough time, they can make a mountain; but they can't make a seed. Bulldozers can mound up a mountain; but you cannot manufacture or synthesize a seed. Why? Because a seed has one ingredient that is absolutely necessary—and it is life—life, life. A seed has life.

Faith is supernatural. Faith is not positive thinking. Faith is not desiring something and then believing you can have it, naming it and claiming it. You can't claim it until God names it. Faith is the supernatural gift of God. Only God can make a seed. You read about that in Genesis. That's the reason why I don't believe in this monkey mythology called evolution. Friend, it's unmitigated stupidity—unmitigated stupidity—that out of inorganic matter can come life. Life comes from God, and faith comes from God. *"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Romans 10:17). And the Word of God is called a seed. And you've got to open your hand and let the Lord put that seed in your hand, because you can't work it up.

## C. The Sowing of the Seed

There is the size of the seed. There's the secret of the seed—the source of the seed. There is the sowing of the seed. What's a seed for? It's not a museum piece. A seed is to be planted. Now God will give you faith, but God will not believe for you. Is faith the gift of God? Yes. Does that mean God will believe for you? No. Breathing is a gift of God. God gives you air, and God gives you lungs, but you can smother if you want to. God gives you faith; but you must believe. You must take the seed of faith and put it in the ground, because there's life in that seed. And out of that seed there comes life and more seeds. And if you'll take that little seed of faith and put it in the dust of despair, out of that seed of faith will bloom the flowers and the fruits of God's grace and God's glory.

When our Lord said, "Remove this mountain," was He talking literally? No, He was talking figuratively. He's talking about figures: like faith is like a mustard seed, difficulty is like a mountain. It would have done that man there that had a demon-possessed boy no good to move that mountain. But what was up on that mountain? The glory of God was on the mountaintop. What was down in the valley? Despair and heartache. And what was He saying? He's saying, "Get rid of the mountain. Bring heaven to earth—bring heaven to earth. Remove that span between heaven and earth, and get the power of God that's on the mountaintop down in the valley, and get the mountain out in between."

You say, "Well, pastor, I just don't have that kind of faith." Well, I think most of us don't. We ought to have. We could have. We should have. By God's grace, we will have. They said,

“Master, why couldn’t we do it?” He said, *“Because of your unbelief”* (Matthew 17:20). Oh, they believed in Him, in a sense, but they were unbelieving believers: *“Because of your unbelief.”* And then He said, “This kind, these kinds of demons, they don’t come out without prayer and fasting” (Matthew 17:21). Some versions leave out that last thing, *“and fasting,”* but I believe it ought to be there. “This kind doesn’t come out except by prayer and fasting.” Why do we have such little faith? Very simply: we’re not very serious about this matter. God does business with those that mean business.

When are we going to get serious? We’ve got a world that’s in the grip of a personal devil. You say, “Well, pastor, can we believe for other people?” That father believed for his son. As a matter of fact, in the other Gospels, that father came to Jesus and said, “Master, if you can do anything for my son, please do it. I brought him to your disciples, and they couldn’t do anything.” And Jesus looked at him, and Jesus said, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.” And you remember what he said? Here’s what he said. He said, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief” (Mark 9:23–24). Have you ever felt that way? “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief.” He had the faith of a mustard seed. He didn’t have big faith. He just had little faith. But our Lord took the faith that he had and used it.

You don’t have to have perfect faith. *It’s not* great faith *in* God *that you need; it’s faith in a great God that you need.* If you’ve got faith like a grain of mustard seed, plant it, put it in the ground, and begin to believe God and trust God, and you’ll see mountains of hate and despair and difficulty and disease and deprivation and demonism flee away.

## Conclusion

There’s the glory we anticipate: Jesus is coming. There’s the grief we must alleviate: a world is in the grip of Satan. There’s the gift we must appropriate—and it is faith. O God, help us to believe! God, help this pastor to believe! God, help this church to believe! We need in these days, these closing days at the end of the sixth day of history, we need an earth-shaking, mountain-moving, devil-defying faith in God.

*Have you any rivers that seem to be uncrossable?  
Have you any mountains you cannot tunnel through?  
God specializes in things that seem impossible.  
He knows a thousand ways to make a way for you.*

—OSCAR C. ELIASON

There’s no person God cannot save, no disease God cannot heal, no problem God cannot solve, no promise God cannot keep. What a mighty God we serve! Folks, you and I need to work on our faith, amen?



# Mustard Seeds and Mountains— Learning to Think Small

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: August 4, 2002**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 17:20**

*“And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible to you.”*

MATTHEW 17:20

## Outline

Introduction

I. Small Things Make Up a Ministry of Fruitfulness

II. Small Things Are the Measure of Faithfulness

III. Small Things Are a Means of Forcefulness

Conclusion

## Introduction

Take God’s Word and find Matthew chapter 17, a familiar passage of Scripture, verse 20. The disciples were wondering why they had no power, and they came to Jesus; and they wanted to find from Jesus why they were powerless against a demon spirit. And, verse 20 says, *“And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily”—*that means “truly”—*“I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.”* (Matthew 17:20)

Now, a mustard seed is very small, about like that fleck of pepper that was on your eggs this morning, if you had pepper on your eggs—very small. A mountain, of course, is very big. What is Jesus saying? Jesus, I believe, is saying that *the least amount of faith is greater than the greatest amount of difficulty*. Now, what I want us to do tonight is to learn to think small.

† Joyce told me on one occasion, “Adrian, I married you for your brains, not for your looks.” She said, “It is the little things that count.” Just a joke—just a joke.†

But, in the Bible, the Bible puts a big emphasis upon small things. Now, let me say that again: the Bible puts a big emphasis upon small things. Don’t despise something

because it is small because small things have very big consequences. When you take an atom, which is infinitesimally small, and divide it and split it, you have nuclear fission. And, the smallest of entities can cause the biggest of explosions.

¶ I clipped this from *The Commercial Appeal* and put it in my files: “Misplaced Comma Costs”—listen to this—“Seventy Million Dollars.’ A comma in the wrong place of a sales contract cost Lockheed Martin Corporation seventy million, *The Financial Times* reported today. An international contract for the US-based Aerospace Group C130J Hercules had the comma misplaced by one decimal point in the equation that adjusted the sales price for changes to the inflation rate, the London-based newspaper said. (In Europe, commas are used instead of periods to mark decimal points.) “It was a mistake,” the newspaper quoted James A. “Mickey” Blackwell, President of Lockheed’s Aeronautics division, as saying, “but the customer whom Lockheed refused to name held them to the price at an extra cost of seventy million dollars.”

Now, if you have a Bible and there is a comma in it, look down at the comma and ask yourself, “Is that comma worth seventy million dollars?” In the wrong place, it could cost seventy million dollars. Small things are vitally important.¶

And, I say, the Bible puts a big emphasis upon small things.

¶ When I was in school, the teacher told us a little story—and I think we have all heard it. It is talking about a battle that was lost because the blacksmith did not have the proper nail to put the shoe on the horse. And, it goes something like this: “For the want of a nail the shoe was lost. For the want of a shoe the horse was lost. For the want of the horse the rider was lost. For the want of the rider the battle was lost. And, for the want of the battle the kingdom was lost—all for the want of a nail.” You see, when you lost the nail, you lost the shoe, you lost the horse, you lost the rider, you lost the battle, and then you lost the kingdom. Small things have great import.¶

And, Jesus said that the faith of a grain of mustard seed can move mountains. (Matthew 17:20) So, there are three things tonight I want us to learn about small things.

## **I. Small Things Make Up a Ministry of Fruitfulness**

Number one: Small things make up a ministry of fruitfulness. If you want to be fruitful for the Lord, be faithful in the small things.

I was thinking in the Bible about the small things that God used. For example, God used Moses and his rod. And you can read about it there in Exodus chapter 4. God used Moses and his rod to lead the children of Israel out of bondage and out of barrenness and into blessedness. Moses was out on the backside of the desert, and he had been stripped down. Somebody said that Moses spent the first forty years of his life learning to be somebody, the next forty years of his life learning to be nobody, and the

last forty years learning what God could do with somebody who had learned the first two lessons.

And so, there he is, a nobody out on the backside of the desert, just a rod in his hand. And, God said, “Moses, what is that in your hand?” And, he says, “A rod.” “Cast it on the ground, Moses.” And, he did. The rod became a serpent. And then, He said, “Now, pick it up, Moses.” Every word that Moses said came right from his heart because his heart was in his throat. “Pick it up, Moses.” And, Moses picked it up. He said, by the way, “Pick it up by the tail.” That leaves the business end free, doesn’t it? “Pick it up by the tail.” And then, the rod then became a rod again, but from there on out it was no longer the rod of Moses; it was the rod of God that opened up the Red Sea.

Now, I might ask you the question: What do you have in your hand? You say, “It is not much.” Well, a little is much if God is in it. God used David, a little boy with a sling, to go out against Goliath. And, there was Goliath, the original Big Foot, belching out blasphemies against the God of Israel. And, little David had come there. He is just a kid, a little peach fuzz on his chin. The Bible says he was *“ruddy, and of a fair countenance.”* (1 Samuel 17:42) There was Goliath, over nine feet tall. I could not scratch the top of his head without standing on my toes and reaching way out, and then I doubt that I could make it then. And, the NBA would love to have had him. Here is Goliath, and David says, “Why doesn’t somebody go out there and put that guy to sleep?” And, everybody else says, “No, we can’t do that. Look how much bigger he is than we are.” And, David was thinking, “Look how much smaller he is than God is.” And, David took a sling, now just a teenage boy with sling, and went out there and defeated Goliath. Billy Sunday said, “He hit him right on the coco, and he went down for the count of ten.”

Now, if God used Moses with a rod, God can use you. If God used David with a slingshot, God can use you. I read in the New Testament where God took a little lad, his lunch—the Lord Jesus took the lunch that that boy offered to him, with five loaves and two fish—and Jesus fed five thousand men plus the women and children with a little lad’s lunch. If God used that little lad’s lunch, God can use what you have.

I read in the Bible of a woman named Dorcas. And, Dorcas evidently didn’t have a lot of skills, but one thing she did: she was a seamstress. And, she had made little coats and jackets and things for people, and she had sewed herself into the hearts and lives of so many of God’s people, as they wept for her when she went to heaven. Acts chapter 9—you read the story. Now, maybe you are a little seamstress. But, if God used Dorcas, God can use you.

I read in the Bible where God used a woman named Mary who had an alabaster box of perfume, and she took it and broke it and anointed the head and the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ with that alabaster box of perfume. And, they criticized her, and they called it a waste. But, the fragrance of what Mary did has filled the world for two thousand

years. And, Jesus said, “Wherever the gospel is preached, that will be spoken of her” (Matthew 26:13; Mark 14:9)—a small thing in the eyes of many, not small in the eyes of God.

Jesus went to the temple one day and watched the offering being taken. Now, I don’t know what you give, but I tell you, Jesus does. And, when we take the offering, Jesus observes it even today because He is here in the Spirit. And, He watched what people were putting in. And, there came a widow, and she put in a widow’s mite (less than an American penny). She put it in the offering plate. And, Jesus said that that little widow—now listen. There were many rich men there, the Bible says—but that little widow gave more than they all—not more than any of them; more than all of them. Now, why was that? Well, first of all, she gave all that she had. But secondly, did you know that millions and billions of dollars have been given to the cause of Christ through the example of that little widow? Many, many hearts for two millennia have been moved to give because that little widow there did a small thing. But again, little is much when God is in it.

Jesus said, “You can’t even give a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple and lose your reward.” (Matthew 10:42) Did you know that while we are here, our workers are over there in the nursery? Have you ever thought about that? Did you know that this church has a “bawl room”? They are over there bawling, those kids. They are over there. And there, in Scripture, is, “*We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.*” (1 Corinthians 15:51) Those little babies are over there in that place, and we have workers changing diapers and giving cups of cold water in the name of the disciple. Did you know that every time a nursery worker gives a baby a cup of cold water it is recorded in heaven? Did you know Jesus had a ministry where He observed small things?

Jesus was never a college president. Jesus was never a governor. He was never a king. He never commanded an army. Jesus held little children in His hands. Jesus talked about flowers. Jesus talked about seeds. Jesus walked little back pathways. He talked about a lost coin. He talked about a boy who had run away from his father. He said, “I know the very numbers of the hairs of your head.” (Matthew 10:30; Luke 12:7) Jesus was interested in small things. He has transformed the world.

And, all of us have to remember how small we started. All of us started when a tiny little sperm was united with an egg. And actually, you were a winner from the very time you were conceived because there were a lot of sperm there trying to be first, and you were first, so you were a winner. You are a winner from your conception. But, you were so small. And, by the way, when that egg and that sperm come together, that is a child. Somebody said, “Oh, that is not a child any more than a bolt and a nut is a Ford in a Ford factory.” Oh no, friend. All you add, once that egg is fertilized, is nutrition. That’s it. Nothing else is added. You started so small, and baby, look at you now.

†A man came into town, a little town, and he said to somebody standing there, “Any great men born here?” The old timer said, “Nope, just babies.”†

Nobody is born a great man; we are just born babies. But, when God wants to do something, God takes a baby. God wanted to deliver the children of Israel from Egypt. He sent Moses, just a baby. And, he was a goodly child. When God wanted to deliver mankind, He didn't send an army. He sent His Son, a little baby born of a virgin.

No wonder the prophet Zechariah asked this question in Zechariah chapter 4 and verse 10: “*Who hath despised the day of small things?*” (Zechariah 4:10) Don't despise the day of small things. Now, what was happening is they were trying to build the temple, and they were having a difficult time. They were out of finances, and morale was low; and opposition was great, and it looked like they would never be finished. And, their beginning was so small. But, Zechariah was saying, “Listen, don't get discouraged because it is small.”

And we, though we are large church, we don't need to get carried away with bigness and noise and numbers. Elijah was a little discouraged, and God put him in a retreat center up in the mountains. And, God gave him an illustration about what is very important—1 Kings chapter 19, verses 11 and 12. And, here is what God said to him: “*And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains*”—boys and girls, that means “tore” or “shook” the mountains—“*and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake*”—first of all, there was a tornado; then there was an earthquake. And, God is not in either one of these—“*and after the earthquake a fire*”—there was a holocaust; a great forest fire comes sweeping through—“*but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.*” (1 Kings 19:11–12) Now, so many times in our lives we are not satisfied unless we see a cyclone, an earthquake, or a holocaust, but we need to learn to listen to the small voice, to the mustard seed things of God. If you want to be fruitful, I want to tell you that small things are the measure of our fruitfulness.

## **II. Small Things Are the Measure of Faithfulness**

Number two: Small things, friend, are the measure of your faithfulness. The Bible says in Luke chapter 16 and verse 10: “*He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in [that which is] much.*” (Luke 16:10) Now, listen carefully. It doesn't say, “If you are faithful in the least, you can be faithful in the much.” It says, “If you are faithful in the least, you *are* faithful in the much.” Why? Because everything big is made up of small things. It follows, as night follows day, as surely as I am standing this pulpit tonight, if I am faithful in that which is small, I have to be faithful in that which is much because everything big is made up of something small. “Little drops of water and little grains of

sand make the mighty ocean and the pleasant land.” And, it is the small things—it is faithfulness in the small things—that really matter.

And, what God is saying in this passage in Luke chapter 16 is very important. Jesus there is talking about giving. He is talking about money. And, He said, “If you are not faithful in the unrighteous mammon”—that is what He calls money—“who will commit into your hands”—“into your trust”—“the true riches?” (Luke 16:11) So, the true riches are not what you have in the bank but what you have in your heart and in your character—the influence. And, God is saying that if you are not faithful with money, He cannot trust you with spiritual things. Sometimes people think that if we are faithful in spiritual things, then God will trust us with money. It is just the opposite. If you have money, it may be a test. God may be giving you a test. And, by the way, God doesn’t call money the big thing; God calls money the small thing. And, He says, “If you can’t handle money, I can’t trust you with the true riches.”

Now, God measures us, and God may be testing you, with money. God tests you with the small things. Now, it’s a great privilege to be the pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, and I don’t take it lightly. As a matter of fact, I tremble when I think of the responsibility, and I smile when I think of the joy, to be the pastor of this church. But friend, I am not worthy to be the pastor of this church if I cannot be faithful in small things. Somebody asked me one time, “Well, preacher, what is it like to preach to thousands of people on Sunday morning?” I said, “It is exactly like preaching to ten people.” What difference does it make? If a man would not be faithful preaching to ten people, he couldn’t be used preaching to thousands of people.

Sometimes I talk to these preacher boys, and they say, “Well, I don’t have a place to preach. I wish I had a place to preach.” Good night! There are six billion people on the face of the earth. The places to preach are everywhere. I have preached in rescue missions. I have preached in trailer parks. I have preached on bus benches. You don’t have to be introduced in order to preach. You don’t have to be paid in order to preach. If you are faithful in that which is least, you may be faithful in that which is much.

¶ When I was a college student at Stetson University, some of us used to go from Stetson University over to Daytona Beach and preach on the streets. It wasn’t a school activity; it wasn’t required. We just preached because we wanted to preach. And, I can remember one time standing on a bus bench and preaching to people there on the streets of Daytona Beach. They allowed me to be the preacher because I had the loudest voice. And, I was standing on that bus bench, preaching to people up and down. And, we had maybe six, eight, ten people standing there. And, after I preached, I came down, got off the bus bench, turned around, and saw a well-dressed man, a businessman in a gray flannel suit, standing there in front of a hotel.

I approached the man, and I said, “Sir, may I ask you a question?” And, he said,

“Yes, sir.” I said, “Sir, do you know the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior?” He said, “Yes, son, I do.” I said, “You do?” He said, “Yes, I do.” He said, “I know Jesus Christ. He is my Lord and Savior.” What a joy that was! He said, “Who are you?” I said, “I am Adrian Rogers.” I said, “Who, sir, are you?” He said, “I am Doyle Carlton.” And, I said, “Well, I am happy to know you, Mr. Carlton.” He said, “I own this hotel.” He was standing in front of a hotel. He said, “I own this hotel.” And, he said, “What are you doing over here?” I said, “We are just preaching.” He said, “Do the schools send you over here?” I said, “Oh no, they probably wouldn’t like it if they knew we were here.” And, he said to me, “Young man, I want to get know you.”

And, we became friends. Mr. Doyle Carlton, he was the one who was instrumental in my coming to the First Baptist Church of Merritt Island, Florida, where he was a leading member there of that church, and became one of my dearest personal friends and next-door neighbors—as a matter of fact, he was the one who brought a shotgun out when your pulpit committee came and tried to move me away. It was supposed to be a joke, but I am not sure he was joking—but a dear, wonderful personal friend. And, in a very real sense, beyond any exaggeration, I am standing here tonight preaching to you because I was standing on a bus bench preaching so long ago. That was just a part of the plan of God. God takes small things, and God can use small things in a very wonderful way.†

You know, sometimes when I preach, before I preach, somebody will come up to me and say, “Pastor, thus-and-such a person that I have been praying for—my uncle, my aunt, my father, my mother, my brother, my sister, my son, my daughter—is going to be here. Preacher, preach real good.” Hey, folks, I preach the best I can every time I preach—I really do. It doesn’t matter how big the crowd is or how small the crowd is. I do the best I can. If I could do better tonight, I would. I hate to admit it, but this is the best I can do, folks. It is the best I can do. And, it is a shame before God to do less than your best, whether you are preaching on a bus bench or preaching to ten thousand people. *“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in [that which is] much.”* (Luke 16:10) And, we need to be faithful in the small things. The things that make men fruitful are their ability to be faithful in the small things. And, the things that mark men’s faithfulness are the small things.

† I was reading and researching for this message about Michelangelo, the great sculptor. And, a friend came by and saw Michelangelo, who was working on a piece of statuary. And, he was working very carefully. A month later, the friend came back and found Michelangelo working on the same statue in just about the same place and said, “Well”—to Michelangelo—“what have you done? It has been a month. What have you done?” He said, “Well, I smoothed a line here and polished an arm over here, and I took those few flakes of marble off the brow and the forehead, and so on,” he replied. And,

the friend said, “Those are only trifles.” And, I want you to listen to what Michelangelo was reported to say: “True, they are but trifles; but trifles make perfection, and perfection is no trifle.” So, faithfulness in small things is a mark of really extraordinary service.†

### III. Small Things Are a Means of Forcefulness

Now, here is the third thing I want you to see: small things are a means of forcefulness—fruitfulness, faithfulness, and forcefulness. You see, Jesus says that a mustard seed can go to battle against a mountain and remove it. What a mighty force are small things, especially when small things get together. Small drops of water make an ocean. Small flakes of snow make a blizzard, can bring a town to its halt. And, foolishness in small things can lead to disaster.

† Many of us don't watch the small things. Most of us are battling with weight. I mentioned Zig Ziglar a while back. Zig is a personal friend. I have known him for, well, thirty-five years. Zig Ziglar said, “As a younger man, I was, by design, by choice, twenty pounds overweight,” and I thought to myself, “That is a strange thing for anybody, by choice, to be twenty pounds overweight.” And, he said, “You might ask why I was twenty pounds overweight by choice.” He said, “Because nobody ever made me put anything in my mouth. That is, every mouthful, I chose to put there. Nobody ever put a spoonful of food in my mouth; I put them all in my mouth.” Now, you don't gain twenty pounds overnight. I mean, how much food can a man put in his mouth at one time? It is the small things. It is bite by bite that we put on weight.†

Now, you see, small things have a force for good or for evil. Now, think of those who have been faithful in small things and God gave them force in big things. For example, I mentioned David here a while back. Before David became Israel's greatest king, he was a shepherd, and he was faithful to his flock as a shepherd boy. And, because David was faithful as a shepherd boy, God gave him an entire nation to shepherd. And then, as a shepherd boy, one time he killed a lion and a bear—no small thing, but it was a small thing compared to Goliath. And, before David went up against Goliath, David had already gone up against a lion and a bear. Now folks, I don't know what kind of a battle or what kind of a Goliath is going to come against me or against you, but I want to be ready. And, the way to be ready is to be faithful in the small things.

I think of Timothy. Timothy, who was Paul's protégé, and Paul was his mentor—Timothy was faithful in service to Paul. And, later on, he took Paul's place—faithful in the small things.

I think in the Bible about Elisha, who poured water on the hands of Elijah. You know what that means? He was his valet. He just stood there with a basin and poured water



while Elijah washed his hands. And, Elisha became the successor to Elijah and was used mightily with a double portion of the Spirit of God.

I don't know how many preacher boys we have here tonight, but we have some Mid-America students who are here. I want to say to you Mid-America students—and I want you to listen to me—*I have known men too big for God to use. I have never known a man too small for God to use.* God uses small things. And, if you are big in your own sight, I doubt very seriously that God can use you.

Now, I want to say this about small things: When I say, “Despise not the day of small things,” and when I say that God can use faith as small as a mustard seed, God is not saying that we ought to do small things when we can do big things. It is a sin to neglect the small things. It is a sin to do only small things when you could do big things and should be doing bigger and better things.

Soon Bellevue Baptist Church is going to celebrate her centennial. Next year is our centennial year. Bellevue Baptist Church began as a handful of people on Bellevue Avenue in Midtown Memphis, Tennessee, which was then in the outskirts of Memphis, Tennessee—a handful of people, small. I wonder what those people would think if they could be transported here to this campus today. But, thank God that they began small. But, they had a vision, and this church has always had a vision to do big things.

And, I think of the early church. It started as a small entity. And, I did a little research there in the book of Acts. For example, it began with the twelve. And, Jesus chose twelve, and, of course, one of them was a hypocrite. And then, in Acts chapter 1 and verse 15, we learn that those twelve had become 120. (Acts 1:15) That is pretty good growth. But then, in Acts chapter 2, verse 41, we learn that added to the twelve, and then they are 120, that three thousand souls came to know the Lord Jesus Christ. (Acts 2:41) And so, that equals 3,120 souls. And, Brother David, Acts chapter 2, verse 47 says more were being added to the church daily. (Acts 2:47) They didn't wait until Sunday to grow. And then, in Acts chapter 4 and verse 4, we read that five thousand men, plus women and children, families—that would be twenty thousand if you add the women and children, say, a wife and two children—so that makes the early church there in just a few months with twenty-five thousand members. (Acts 4:4) And then, in Acts chapter 5, the Bible says they filled Jerusalem. (Acts 5:28) And then, in Acts chapter 6, verse 7, the Bible says that the number of the disciples was multiplied. (Acts 6:7) They are not adding any more; they are multiplying. And, the church is growing exponentially. One Bible scholar said that the church had a membership in excess of 250,000 in six months.

People ask me, you know, “How big will Bellevue be when it is big enough?” Bellevue will be big enough when all six billion people on earth know the Lord Jesus Christ. You know, if we reach this community, we are going to have to have a lot of

Bellevues. If we reach our world, we are going to have to have a lot of Bellevues. There is nothing wrong with a small church. I have pastored small churches. I love them. There is something wrong with any church that is not growing if it is in an area where there are unsaved people. And, I want Bellevue to grow. So, if we are faithful in that which is least, we will be faithful in that which is much. And, it will be a matter of fruitfulness. It will be a matter of faithfulness. It will be a matter of forcefulness.

Now, God wants us to grow. Listen to John 15, verse 2: Jesus said, *“Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it”*—that means “he prunes it”—*“that it may bring forth more fruit.”* (John 15:2) God is interested in growth. When I interview a staff member for Bellevue Baptist Church, there are two things I want them to have. If they don’t have these, I don’t want them. Well, I don’t want them on our staff. I will love them, but I will say, “Shoo, get away.” Number one: I want them to have a heart for God. I want them to have a burning, blazing, passionate, emotional love for Jesus Christ. If they don’t have that, I don’t care what else they have. Number two: I want them to have an ambition for growth. I want them to have an expansive mind. I want them to see things grow, because Jesus said, “I have called you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit.” (John 15:16) And, if you want to glorify God—John chapter 15 and verse 8: *“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples”* (John 15:8)—much fruit.

Now, if you are one of these that yawns during the invitation and you are not concerned about reaping the fruit, seeing souls saved, there is nothing wrong with you that a good dose of salvation or an old-fashioned revival wouldn’t cure. Now, we don’t despise small things. But, when you are faithful in that which is least, you will be faithful in that which is much.

I read this statistic—I have not done the arithmetic; I assume it is true—that if we would start with one Christian, and that one Christian would win one person a year and teach his disciple to do the same, and that one teach his disciples to do the same, in thirty years, there would be twenty-five million born again, beginning with just one Christian. Now friend, we don’t have twenty-five million Southern Baptists in the whole wide world. I have been here for thirty years. Who should not be able to win one soul a year and teach that soul to reproduce him or herself? You see, *Christianity has not necessarily failed; it has just not ever been tried.* Jesus said you are going to bring forth fruit. A wise man once said, “Any fool can count the seeds in an apple. Only God can count the apples in a seed.” Because, when we teach the principle of multiplication now, we need to think small. But, it is a shame—it is a shame—for us to be doing small things when we could be doing big things.

Dr. Lee—bless his memory—came to this church in 1927, had a great sermon. Some of you old-timers heard Dr. Lee preach that sermon called “Chasing Fleas.”

Morris Mills, are you back there? Lift your hand. Yes. Did you hear Dr. Lee ever preach that sermon on chasing fleas? I am sure you did. I think it is in the book called *Bread from Bellevue's Oven*. And, the text was 1 Samuel chapter 24 and verse 14. It says, "After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea." (1 Samuel 24:14) David is talking to Saul and said, "Saul, why are you bothering yourself with such a small insignificant thing? Why are you chasing fleas? There are better things to do." And, here is what Dr. Lee said: "A king who had a crown, a scepter, and a throne; a king who had an army at his command, doing what? Chasing a flea. Wasting great energies on cheap trivialities. Despising great opportunities. Dishonoring himself with cheap littleness. A king shooting a cannon at sparrows, charging anthills with drawn swords, fishing for minnows with an anchor hook." And then, Dr. Lee warned against becoming slaves to small anxieties, and small ideas, and small ambitions.

¶ What made me think of that is an article I read in the paper a while back. It talked about some whales that were beached in San Diego. And, people tried to free these whales, but they had run ashore and they had run aground. And, they couldn't get them off the beach, and the whales died on the beach. And, what the whales did that got them in that difficulty—they were chasing minnows. Chasing minnows, they beached themselves. And, the headline of the article that I read said this: "Giants Perish While Chasing Minnows." God forbid that this wonderful church will ever perish by chasing minnows!¶

What a mighty God we serve! And, I challenge you, I charge you, I admonish you to be faithful in the small things, but never ever fritter away our time chasing minnows, things that do not matter. There is a lost world out there. God has given us so much, and I pray God that we will learn to appreciate the small things, and therefore we will do big things. Don't minimize small things. That which is despised among men is highly esteemed with God.

## Conclusion

And, I want to say also that the highest place is not necessarily the biggest place, and the greatest ministers are not always in the biggest pulpits. Some of God's greatest preachers are in crossroads churches, overworked, unpaid, underappreciated. But, God knows their name. And, I want to say also that whatever you do, whether it is a small gift, a widow's mite, a cup of water, if you do it in the name of Jesus, no gift is small if it is given in obedience and love. And, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, plant that faith. And, I am telling you that in God's will, in that mustard seed are thousands—yea, millions—of mustard seeds. And again, *the least amount of faith is greater than*

*the greatest amount of difficulty.* ¶

# How to Heal Broken Relationships

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: April 23, 1997**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 18:15–22**

*“Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.”*

MATTHEW 18:15

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## Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and find Matthew chapter 18? And when you’ve found it, just look up here for just a moment. In a moment, we’re going to begin reading in verse 15.

I was driving down the highway one day, and Paul Harvey was talking. And he has little witticisms and things that he says, and he said that there was an ad that appeared in a Midwestern newspaper that said this, or something like this: “Will the party or parties who, on two different occasions, cut my fence, trespassed on my property, and killed some of my cows, please come back just one more time?” What do you do when somebody trespasses against you? Do you invite them back so you can shoot them?

Well, look in verse 15: *“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more”—“one or two more”—“that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.”* (Matthew 18:15–22)

I want to talk to you tonight about how to heal broken relationships. And I think all of us who’ve been in the service of our dear Savior for very long have had somebody who has wronged us, who has trespassed against us.

## I. A Painful Problem

And it is a very painful problem. Actually, the word *to sin* is *hamartia*, which literally means “to miss the mark” or “to be out of bounds” or “to trespass.” Now, this is a painful problem. When somebody sins against another person, trespasses against that person, and a relationship is broken, a fellowship is severed. Now, let me tell you why it’s such a painful problem.

### A. Sin Disgraces the Father

First of all, it disgraces God the Father.

† My daddy had a brother who had never visited our home. That brother lived in Denver. And one day he was going to be in West Palm Beach, Florida, and visit in our home. Mother had stayed up that night to cook a turkey, and I had to sleep in a bed with my grown brother. Both of us by this time were big boys. I was playing football, and he’d come back from the Army. We were sleeping on one narrow bed because we had

company in the house and the other bed was given to the company. And my brother rolled over in the middle of the night and pulled the blanket off of me. And I rolled over and pulled it back off of him. And then he gave me a knee, and I gave him an elbow. And it was dark in that room, but two grown boys were up there in a fistfight in the middle of the night. And I'm sorry to tell you this, folks, but that's the kind of preacher you've got. And we were in a fistfight, making a ruckus.

Mamma was up late at night basting that turkey. She threw open the door and turned on the light. And boy, that time, my brother had a big mouse up here on his eyebrow, and the blood was coming down, just like that, down his cheek. She looked at me. She had a basting spoon about that long in her hand. And she said, "Look what you've done to your brother!" I said, "Mamma, he started it." She said, "You be quiet," and she hit me with that spoon right up here. And she hit me with the side of it and left a crescent mark right up there, a cut right up there, on my head. And when she saw that, she reached up and bit the back of her hand, like, "Oh, look what I've done to Adrian!"

Folks, it was a bad night. The next morning, when we came to breakfast, my brother came to breakfast with a great big knot upon his head, and I had this half-moon scar on my head. There was my daddy's brother, first time in our home, looking across the table at us. My father was mortified; my mother, humiliated—and well they ought to have been. I wonder if there's not shame in heaven over the way some of God's children act. I mean, we shame God the Father when we don't get along as brothers and sisters.†

### **B. Sin Discourages the Faithful**

It disgraces the Father. It also discourages the faithful. There's nothing worse than being in a church where there's not harmony, nothing sweeter than being in a church where there is harmony. "*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*" (Psalms 133:1) Our Lord Jesus, in John chapter 17, prayed, "Lord, that they might be one, that the world might believe that you've sent me." (John 17:21) Did you know that our unity is a form of evangelism?

### **C. Sin Delights the Foe**

But not only does it disgrace the Father, and not only does it discourage the faithful, but it delights the foe. Oh, how Satan loves to see brothers and sisters who cannot get along! The cause of Christ is hurt more by church squabbles and fusses, I believe, than by false doctrine. So I'm certainly not making it easy for false doctrine, but I'm just simply saying that this thing is a perplexing problem.

## **II. A Proper Perspective**

Now, if you're going to solve that problem, you're going to have to get a proper perspective. Look, if you will, in verse 15: "*Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against*

*thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.*" (Matthew 18:15) Now, when I'm talking about a proper perspective, I want to mention three things.

### **A. Consider the Relationship**

The very first thing you need to do is to consider your relationship to this person who has sinned against you. He is your brother. He's speaking here using masculine terms, but it could well be a sister. But what this literally means is "somebody out of the same womb." That's what the word *brother* literally means: somebody that has come out of the womb of grace, somebody who, along with you, calls God "Father." And you need to consider that relationship.

"Well," you say, "maybe he's not a brother. Maybe he's never really been saved. Maybe he just has his name on a church roll." Well, if he's not a brother, then he's lost and he's blind; he's on the road to hell; he all the more deserves your pity and your prayer. But if he is a brother, then to harm him is to harm you because you're both not only brother and sister, or sister and sister, but you are members of the same body. So just consider that relationship. No matter what an individual does or no matter how they trespass against us, they are to be loved.

Put these verses down. First John chapter 3, verse 16: "*Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren*"—"we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." (1 John 3:16) And listen to Galatians chapter 6, verse 10: "*As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially [those] of the household of faith.*" (Galatians 6:10)

### **B. Consider the Responsibility**

So, when you're getting this proper perspective, first of all, consider the relationship: this is a brother. Now secondly, consider the responsibility. Look, again, if you will, in verse 15. He says that "*if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.*" (Matthew 18:15) Every failing Christian is another Christian's responsibility. When one brother fails, it's up to another brother, another sister, to lift him up, because the Bible says in Galatians chapter 6 and verse 1: "*Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*" (Galatians 6:1) So, consider your relationship, and consider your responsibility. If somebody trespasses against you, it is your responsibility to try to make it right.

### **C. Consider Yourself**

And when you consider your relationship and you consider your responsibility, how



important it is for you to consider yourself! Listen to Galatians 6:1: *“If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself.”* (Galatians 6:1)

Now, how do you consider yourself? Well, you have to ask yourself, if you’re trying to straighten somebody else out, are you sinning in a similar area? The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans chapter 2, verses 1 through 3—listen to this: *“Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?”* (Romans 2:1–3) I mean, how dare we go to anybody and try and straighten anybody out if we ourselves are failing likewise?

And then we have to consider also, have we been praying for this individual who sinned against us? Now, Samuel said in 1 Samuel 12, verse 23: *“God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you.”* (1 Samuel 12:23) And we have to ask ourselves about the individual that we want to go straighten out, have we set a good example before him? Are we ourselves an example in that area? Hebrews 12, verse 13: *“Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way.”* (Hebrews 12:13) That is, if you don’t walk straight, somebody else is liable to be turned out of the way.

### **III. A Prescribed Procedure**

All right, we’ve talked about a problem. We talked about a perspective. Let’s talk about a procedure. What is the prescribed procedure if somebody trespasses against you?

#### **A. Visitation**

Well, first of all, you go see them. You lovingly visit and confront them. Look in verse 15: *“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone.”* (Matthew 18:15) How are you to visit him?

##### **1. Visit Privately**

You visit him privately. Somebody sins against you, you don’t tell another soul on this earth. You go to that individual; don’t tell anybody else. Well, why should you not tell somebody else? Well, they might take up an offense, and the Bible says that it’s wrong for people to take up an offense. Proverbs chapter 16, verse 28: *“A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends.”* (Proverbs 16:28) And Proverbs 25 and verse 9 says, *“Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another.”* (Proverbs 25:9)

Now, if Jim Whitmire sins against me, I go to Jim. Or if I perceive that Jim has sinned against me, I go to him. I don't need to tell Bob Sorrell. I don't need to tell anybody else. I go to Jim, and I speak to Jim alone about it. Why do I do this? Well, maybe Jim didn't really sin against me. Maybe I just thought he did. Maybe I'm wrong in my facts. And sometimes we can be wrong.

¶ I may have told you about the little boy who went to a birthday party. His mother said, "If you misbehave, I've asked Ms. Jones to send you home, and you'll get a spanking when you get home." He hadn't been gone ten minutes before Ms. Jones came walking him back to the house. She snatched him up and spanked him and said, "Now, what did you do wrong?" He said, "I didn't do nothing wrong. That party ain't 'til tomorrow."¶

Now, sometimes we just assume things that are not true. And so, if I go to an individual, and I confront him, and he says, "Now Adrian, that's what you think; but now, let me give you the facts..."

## 2. Visit Lovingly

I am to visit him privately, and I am to visit him lovingly. The greatest test of love for a brother is, are you willing to confront him if and when he does wrong? Proverbs 27, verses 5 and 6: "*Open rebuke is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.*" (Proverbs 27:5–6) Now, when you go to this brother, this sister, you don't go to tell him off. The Bible tells us clearly, in verse 15, that we're there to gain our brother. (Matthew 18:15) You go to win him, not to condemn him.

Now, if somebody sins against you and somebody trespasses against you, do you know what human nature is? Human nature is this: human nature says, "He sinned against me. If he wants me to forgive him, let him come to me." Isn't that what human nature says? "If he comes to me and asks me to forgive him, I'll forgive him. But am I to go to him and seek him out?" Absolutely! "Why?" Because the Bible says we're to be "*kind...tenderhearted, forgiving one another*"—how?—"as God for Christ's sake [forgave us]." (Ephesians 4:32) I want to ask you a question: Did God come and seek you out? Indeed, He did. We love Him why? Because He first loved us. "*God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners...*" (Romans 5:8) Now, if somebody sins against us, we do not have the luxury of waiting for them to come to us. We go to them. And the Bible is very clear about this.

## 3. Visit Humbly

So how, in this thing of visitation, how do we do it? We visit him privately. We visit him lovingly. We visit him humbly. Again, in Galatians chapter 6, verse 1, he says, "*If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of*

*meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*” (Galatians 6:1) When you’re trying to straighten somebody else out, you’d better pray a whole lot, and make certain that you go very humbly because you yourself are not perfect.

## **B. Restoration**

So, what do we do? First of all, there is visitation, and hopefully there is restoration, because verse 15 says, *“If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.”* (Matthew 18:15)

### **1. Forgive Freely**

Now, Simon Peter, who was listening to all of this, got to thinking of all of that. And evidently, Simon Peter had been sinned against by some fellow quite a bit. And this guy kept coming back to Simon Peter and saying, “Simon, I’m sorry.” Or maybe Simon had been going to him and confronting him, and he’d been confessing and repenting and saying he was sorry. So, Simon wants to know, “Where are the limits?” Go down to verse 21: *“Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?”* (Matthew 18:21) Remember the sermon the other night? Seven, being the perfect number—*“Till seven times?”* (Matthew 18:21) Evidently, there must be some limit. And I think what Peter was thinking: “The more a person sins, the less possibility there is for forgiveness.” I mean, after a while, you get saturated with this thing. You say, “That’s it!” Peter is wondering where that is. What the Lord says is, “This is not a matter of mathematics. When you’re considering forgiveness, forget the arithmetic.” And so Jesus says, “No. Seventy times seven.” And what Jesus meant when He said, *“seventy times seven,”* I thoroughly believe, is, “You forgive him to infinity. If he repents, then you forgive him, not seven times, but until seventy times seven.”

### **2. Forgive Fully**

That’s a very interesting thing, because the truth of the matter is, if you forgave him one time, and you truly forgave him, then that sin is gone. It is dissolved. It is obliterated. You forgive him the next time—that sin is gone, forgiven, obliterated, buried in the grave of God’s forgetfulness. And if that is true, you’re not keeping a record; so every time you forgive him, it’s really the first time. It’s the first time. It’s not the seventh time or the eighth time because the other times don’t count. They’re gone. You’re not keeping score. Love does not keep a record. So you forgive that brother freely before it becomes an infection. You forgive him fully.

By the way, if you go to a person and ask for forgiveness, make sure it’s forgiveness that you get, because a proud person will say, “Oh, that didn’t matter. That’s all right. Forget it.” Say, “No, I want you to forgive me.” Don’t just take his shrug and say, “It doesn’t matter.” It does matter, for your sake and for his sake, that there be some

closure. And if he just says, “Oh, just forget it,” forgetting comes as a result of forgiveness, and there can be no forgetting until the slate is clean.

### **3. Forgive Finally**

And don't be sloppy when it comes to getting forgiveness. Forgive freely, forgive fully, and forgive finally. I mean bury it in the grave of God's forgetfulness. We are to forgive one another *“even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven [us].”* (Ephesians 4:32)

#### **C. Confirmation**

Well, that brings up a problem. What if the individual will not hear you, as frequently is the case? He might say, “I did not do wrong. I don't owe you an apology. I don't need forgiveness.” Or he might say, “I'm doing wrong. So what? Get out of my face.” Then what do you do? Well, you have to get some confirmation. First of all, there's visitation, then restoration. But what if that doesn't work? Then you get confirmation. So you get some people to go back with you. Look in verse 16: *“But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more”—“one or two more”—“that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.”* (Matthew 18:16) So, you need to get somebody to confirm what's going on.

Now, the Bible makes it very clear that two or more are necessary to witness and to confirm something, because you could be wrong and he could be right. We all have blind spots. I have some. If I knew where they were, they wouldn't be blind spots. We all have them. And so, it's good, if we can't get this thing done, to bring somebody else there for some confirmation. Now, this is not the Baptist Gestapo, these that you're bringing. They are to come, not to witness against him, but to witness to him, to try to win this individual back.

#### **D. Confrontation**

Well, suppose he turns a deaf ear to these. Suppose he stonewalls these. You've gone to him privately. You have gone to him humbly. You've gone to him lovingly. He won't hear you. You take some godly friends back with you. They confirm that he's done wrong, and he won't hear them. Then, after visitation and confirmation, then what do you do? Well, then you tell it to the church. It gets more and more serious. Look in verse 17: *“And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church.”* (Matthew 18:17) Now, this is getting very serious. The matter now is brought to God's leadership there in the church. And this individual is confronted with spiritual leadership. Again, the desire is not to condemn him, not to expose him, but to reclaim him. This ought to cause an individual who is challenged now by the church to go into deep self-examination. And the church ought to examine and say, “Have we truly ministered to this individual? Have we prayed for him or her? Have we lovingly entreated this individual?”

## E. Excommunication

Well, suppose he will not hear the church. Then what happens? Well, he must be excommunicated, put out of the church. Look, if you will, at the last part of verse 17: *“But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.”* (Matthew 18:17) It doesn’t say, “Republican”; it says, “publican.” Publicans were the tax collectors of that day, and they were, most of them, dishonest people. And it was an epithet, almost a word synonymous with a shyster, a charlatan, a crook. A heathen man was a man outside the household of faith. That is, he needs to be told, “We’re sorry, my friend, but you cannot continue to live that way, to disgrace the Father, to distress the faithful, to delight the foe. You cannot do that and be in communion with this church.” And the Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Thessalonians chapter 3, verses 14 and 15: *“And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.”* (2 Thessalonians 3:14–15) Don’t just keep fellowshiping him. Don’t let him feel that he’s still in the communion, in the fellowship. Admonish him. Love him. Pray for him. But don’t let him continue to disgrace God.

In the Corinthian church there was a man who was living in incest; actually, he was sleeping with his father’s wife. I take it to mean by that language, when it doesn’t say his mother, but his father’s wife, that this was his stepmother. It was a terrible thing. Paul said, “Why, we don’t even see the heathen acting that way.” Here was a man, a member of the Corinthian church, and Paul said in 1 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 5: *“To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”* (1 Corinthians 5:5) Now, what that meant—“to deliver him to Satan”—was to take away that umbrella of protection. And he’s excommunicated, he is turned out, not because we don’t love him, but because we do love him. We’re talking about the destruction of the flesh here; we’re talking about, actually, his physical body, or that carnal fleshly nature. It could be one or the other. It could be both.

Paul had another man that he dealt with, and two of them, Hymenaeus and Alexander. First Timothy 1, verse 20: *“Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.”* (1 Timothy 1:20) They had been members of the fellowship, but they had been living now in spiritual sin, blasphemy. So we are to excommunicate, or to put out of the fellowship.

Now, this is to be done as the last resort. It is not, if we find somebody who has failed, that we’re to put them out of the fellowship. I mean, people—all people—fail. You do, don’t you? Nod your head. I see some of you not nodding. You do, don’t you? Nod your head.

† One man said he was so distressed with evil in the world today he got to talking

with God, and he said to God, “God, why don’t you destroy these evil people?” And God said, “All right, I will. I’ll start with you.” That is what he imagined hearing God say: “I’ll start with you.”<sup>f</sup>

I mean, all of us, even the best of us, fail. And *a church is not a museum of saints; it’s a hospital for sinners*. Romans 14:1, in a paraphrase, says, “Receive a brother into the church, even if he scarcely believes Christ can save him.” (Romans 14:1) And we ought to take babes in Christ; weak, stumbling people; people who fail; people who get into sin, and love them, confront them, help them, build them up—not exclude them. They need the church. But what this is talking about is a recalcitrant person, a stubborn person, an obdurate person, a person who says, “No, I will not change. This is my chosen way. This is my lifestyle. I repudiate this love. I am stubbornly set in my own way. I will not hear a brother who’s come to me. I will not hear a committee that’s come to me. I will not hear the church that has challenged me.” And we say with a broken heart, “We’re sorry, brother. We’re sorry”—“We’re sorry, my sister. We’re sorry”—“but you cannot continue to live that way and be in the fellowship of this church. We count you as a heathen.”

Well, what do you do with a heathen? You love them and try to win them to Christ. It doesn’t mean that we’re not concerned about this individual. We love them and try and win them to Christ, but we do not let them poison the fellowship. We don’t let them hurt and distort the cause of Christ.

And so, if there’s somebody that has sinned against you, don’t make it a matter of gossip. Don’t come and tell me what some church member has done wrong. Go to that individual. Pray. Consider yourself. Go lovingly, humbly, gently, and try to win your brother. And if he won’t hear you, get a few trusted friends, spiritually mature people, and go back. And if he won’t hear them—she won’t hear them—then bring it to the church, and the church must confront. And if they won’t hear the church, it would break our heart, but we would have to treat them as though they’ve never met and known the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and attempt with all of our heart to win them to Christ.

## Conclusion

I say that to say this. Some years ago, I told our deacons that I was not satisfied with the way that we’re practicing church discipline. We do practice church discipline, and we have practiced it, and we will continue to practice it. And we’re trying to find even better ways to practice church discipline in our church because what we want is a holy church, amen? We want a holy church. We don’t want a church where we think we’re better than other people. We don’t want a church that has no room for those who have fallen and are hurting. We want to help those kinds of people. But we want a church that, when we say, “O God, bless America, and send revival to America,” God won’t have to

say to us, “Why don’t you clean up your own act, first of all? And why do you allow, and why do you countenance, things that I have clearly and forbidden in my Word?” So we’re going to be coming to you shortly with a plan that we’d like for you to know about that will help you, to encourage you, to deal with people that you’re burdened about, brothers or sisters that trespass.

Now, you may or may not know that we already have in our church an arbitration committee. Sometimes people—good people—just fall out. They need a third party to listen. We do that. Wonderful things have happened through arbitration here in the church. So I just wanted you to know this so you’ll be praying about it, and let you know that the one thing I don’t want in this church is a sanctimonious group of people who are a self-appointed one-person sin-seeker committee trying to find fault in other people. That’s not what we want. We want to help those who are struggling and those who are fallen. But we do, on the other hand, want our church to set some standards and hew to those standards.

You know, so many churches today, rather than being a sheepfold, they become a zoo, where everybody gets in, and nobody gets out. So we just want you to know this and to be praying with us about it, and you’ll be hearing even more about it later on.†

# The Power of Forgiveness

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** September 24, 2000

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 18:21–35

*“Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?”*

MATTHEW 18:21

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Reasons for Forgiveness

- A. We Should Forgive One Another, Because God Has Forgiven Us
- B. If You Do Not Forgive, You Shut Out the Forgiveness of God
- C. An Unforgiving Spirit Will Do Us Great Emotional Damage
- D. Forgiveness Destroys a Broken Fellowship

II. The Requirements for Forgiveness

- A. Forgive Freely
- B. Forgive Fully
- C. Forgive Finally

III. The Results of Forgiveness

- A. Release
- B. Reconciliation
- C. Revival

Conclusion

## Introduction

Find Matthew chapter 18, and while you're finding it, I remind you there was an evangelist who was the Billy Graham of his day, Dwight L. Moody. Moody did not have a seminary education, but he had a great mind and a penetrating insight into the things of God and human nature. Dwight L. Moody said, "I believe that the sin that is causing Christians more difficulty than any other is the sin of an unforgiving spirit." And, he said he believed that that sin, more than any other sin, was holding back the power of God in prayer in the hearts and lives of people. Now, I cannot prove that he is right. I think, most likely, he is. But, for him to even say that means that forgiveness is a problem that many people have not properly dealt with. Perhaps tonight your heart is harboring some heartache or some hurt that somebody has given to you and you don't know how to deal with it.



Well, I want you to find in Matthew chapter 18 a story that the Lord Jesus told, and I'm going to begin reading in verse 21: *"Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents"—*now, how much is that? Well, the Bible that I have says here in the margin that if that were silver it would be \$52,800,000. Now, if that is true, Jesus must have said that with a twinkle in His eye, because that was more than the entire taxes of the nation for that year—*"But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me what thou owest"—*and the margin of the Scripture that I have right here, the notes say that was about forty-four dollars. Now, there's a vast difference, I submit, between fifty-two million dollars and forty-four dollars—*"And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, that he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."* (Matthew 18:21–35)

Now, let me say that many people in this building and outside this building who are listening by radio are chained in a prison. And, some are chained there by the chains of guilt, and others are chained by the chains of bitterness. Now, those who are chained by the chains of guilt are chained there because they have done wrong and they have not yet gotten forgiveness. Those who are chained by bitterness are chained in a prison, not because they have done wrong and have not yet gotten forgiveness, but somebody has wronged them and they have not forgiven that individual. And, I want to speak to those who may not yet have forgiven somebody who has wronged you, and I want to say that bitterness is a terrible prison. I believe that bitterness has caused murders. It has caused wars. It has caused divided churches. It has caused divorces.

And, we need to learn how to deal with bitterness. We need to learn how to forgive one another.

Now, one of God's greatest gifts to us is forgiveness. Thank God He has forgiven us. Thank God for His grace that forgives us. Now, *to forgive* literally means "to release a debt." When we sin, we sin against God, and heaven has sued us for damages. There's a debt that we cannot pay. When forgiveness comes, the debt is cancelled. If, for example, you owe me a thousand dollars, and you cannot pay, and I say, "I forgive the debt," it cost me a thousand dollars to forgive that debt. There are no free pardons. Forgiveness costs. The forgiver forgives the forgivee, and the forgiver pays the debt. And so, there are no cheap forgivenesses. When the Lord Jesus Christ forgave us, it was not cheap. Although our forgiveness was free, there was a price paid. For example, Ephesians chapter 1, verse 7 says: "*In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.*" (Ephesians 1:7) Remember what we said? Grace is "God's riches at Christ's expense." It cost the precious blood of Jesus for God to forgive us.

## I. The Reasons for Forgiveness

Now, I want you to think of somebody who has wronged you. And, if you are harboring a hurt in your heart—there's somebody who's done you wrong, truly done you wrong—and you've not settled that thing in your heart, I want to give you tonight some compelling reasons why you ought to forgive that individual.

### A. We Should Forgive One Another, Because God Has Forgiven Us

Now, first of all, we ought to forgive one another because God has so willingly forgiven us. That's what this parable is all about. We're the ones that had the fifty-two-million-dollar debt, and God, in the riches of His mercy, forgave us. Now, if God has forgiven me, then I ought to forgive you. Ephesians 4 and verse 32 says: "*Be ye kind...tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*" (Ephesians 4:32)

† I received a letter some time ago from a woman who was in the hospital here in Memphis. She was from Rome, Georgia. She said, "I was away from home over here. I needed surgery. Some young men from your church who did not even know me came to the hospital and donated blood on my behalf, and they left a note." And, here's what the note said: "We gave our blood for you because Jesus gave His blood for us." Wasn't that beautiful? "We gave our blood for you, because Jesus gave His blood for us." I don't know who those young men are, but I can tell you, that was a wonderful testimony.†

I want to say that I need to give forgiveness to you because Jesus gave forgiveness

to me. That's the reason, number one, that we ought to forgive.

### **B. If You Do Not Forgive, You Shut Out the Forgiveness of God**

Number two—here's another reason you ought to forgive: If you do not forgive, you shut out the forgiveness of God. Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew chapter 6, verses 14 and 15: "If you don't forgive men their trespasses against you, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses against Him." (Matthew 6:15) Now, in plain English, an unforgiving spirit is unforgivable. As long as you have an unforgiving spirit in your heart, you cannot get the forgiveness of God. You, in a very real sense, destroy the very bridge over which you must travel. How dangerous it is to fail to forgive one another! The only person who can afford not to forgive is the person who never ever really needs forgiveness.

### **C. An Unforgiving Spirit Will Do Us Great Emotional Damage**

Let me give you a third reason that we ought to forgive: we ought to forgive because if we don't forgive, the unforgiving spirit that we have will do us great, great emotional damage. The Bible calls this unforgiving spirit "bitterness," and bitterness is an acid that destroys its container. So many times, people don't want to forgive because they feel that they ought to take revenge; they feel that they ought to get even. And, as I've told you many times, that's exactly the wrong thing to do, is to get even, because some live on the hellish level, and that is to return evil for good; some live on a human level—that is, to return good for good and evil for evil; and some live on the highest level, the heavenly level, and that is to return good for evil rather than evil for evil, or good for good, or even good for evil. So, there are three levels of life: there's the heavenly level, the human level, and the hellish level.

Now, if you're up here right with God and living with God, and somebody sins against you, and you say, "I'm going to get even, " what do you do? You lower yourself. You come to their level when you get even. You see, why not just continue to hate? Because hate will boomerang on you. It will come back to you. It is an acid that will destroy its container. Not only do you forgive an individual for their sake, but you forgive an individual for your sake. Now, that's very hard to human nature, because if somebody has truly hurt you—I mean, truly hurt you—human nature doesn't want to let them off the hook. But, what you don't understand is that you also are on the hook. When you forgive, you set a prisoner free and discover that that prisoner is you.

### **D. Forgiveness Destroys a Broken Fellowship**

Now, here's another reason that you ought to forgive: not only has God forgiven you, not only is an unforgiving spirit unforgivable; not only does an unforgiving spirit eat you like a canker, like a cancer, like an acid to destroy you; but when you do forgive,

forgiveness restores a broken fellowship. If there's a person that you have an unforgiving spirit to, you have a broken fellowship. That's the reason Jesus said in Matthew chapter 18, verse 15: *"Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother."* (Matthew 18:15) Again, Matthew 5, verse 24—Jesus is talking about bringing your gift to the church, and He says, if, when you're there, you recognize that there's a broken relationship between you and a brother, He says, *"Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."* (Matthew 5:24)

† A brother is a very precious thing. I had a brother—not a brother in the flesh, but a dear brother, preacher brother, that I loved very much and still do love very much. He wronged me. He did something that was wrong. He ought not to have done it. And, there was something that rose up in me that said, "I'm finished with him. I can't trust him. He's been dishonest." And then, I thought to myself, "Now, why should I do that? I love this man. He is a brother. I refuse to let his mistake ruin what has been a good relationship." I prayed about it, gave it to God, went and restored the relationship, and today that man—I'll not tell you his name—is a precious brother and a friend.†

"Well," you say, "what if the man who has wronged me is not a brother?" Well, he is still a potential brother. Now, if he is not a brother, he's a potential brother, and if you have an unforgiving spirit toward him, then what chance do you have to bring him to Christ? Would you let your sense of revenge, the attempt to get evil, cut off an opportunity to bring him to the Lord Jesus Christ? Let me tell you about the person who has wronged you: that person who has wronged you is more than a person who has hurt you; he is a person who needs you.

## II. The Requirements for Forgiveness

Now, these are reasons to forgive, and they are all Bible reasons. Now, those are the reasons, but let me talk to you about the requirements. Remember what I told you that forgiveness costs? The king, it cost him fifty-eight million dollars or whatever the number was, when he forgave. It cost him 52,800,000 dollars, according to the margin here, to forgive. And, when God forgave us, it cost the silver of Jesus' tears and the gold of His blood. Forgiveness is costly. Jesus is the model for our forgiveness. *"Be ye kind...tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven [us]."* (Ephesians 4:32) Now, how should you forgive? Listen to me.

### A. Forgive Freely

First of all, forgive freely. Have you ever wronged a person and needed forgiveness, and after they stuck the knife in and twisted it, after they berated you, after they

castigated you, after they scorned you, after they excoriated you, after they whipped you up and down and poured salt in the wound, finally they said, “Well, that’s okay; I’ll forgive you”? I feel like saying, “Never mind. I’ve already paid.” No. Forgive freely, not after you’ve collected your revenge. And, forgive freely before the wound gets infected. Cleanse it quickly. That’s what Jesus did. And, as a matter of fact, when Jesus was on the cross, while they were crucifying Him, Jesus was praying for their forgiveness. We should be so anxious to forgive people that, not only do we forgive them if they come to us and ask forgiveness, but we should literally seek them out to forgive them.

In this same chapter, go back to verse 15 and look at it: *“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.”* (Matthew 18:15) Now, don’t go to tell him off; go to get him back. Go to gain your brother. Do it freely. Take the initiative. Is there somebody who has wronged you? I challenge you, in the name of Jesus, to say, “I will go to that person. I will not wait for that person to come to me.”

### **B. Forgive Fully**

Not only forgive freely, but forgive fully. Don’t forgive half-heartedly. Don’t pretend, “Oh, it didn’t matter.” If a person says to you, “Would you forgive me?” and you say, “Well, that’s no big deal. Don’t worry about it,” no, that’s not forgiveness. The reason we say that it’s not a big deal and not to worry about it is our pride. We don’t want to admit how deeply we have been hurt. Don’t ever let a person say that if you come to that individual for forgiveness and they say, “Never mind, just forget it.” No, it cannot be forgotten until it is cleansed. And, if somebody asks you to forgive them, don’t just act big and magnanimous. Truly forgive them. Make sure it is forgiveness that you get. Don’t merely apologize if you’ve done wrong. Ask an individual, in the name of Jesus, to forgive you.

### **C. Forgive Finally**

Forgive freely. Forgive fully. And, forgive finally. Once you forgive, bury it in the grave of God’s forgetfulness and don’t bring it up again. It costs to forgive. You have to taste a little bit of Calvary when you forgive, and the way to do that is to let the Spirit of the Lord Jesus be in you. It is not in me by nature. By nature, I want to get even. By nature, I want to strike back. But it is only when the nature of Jesus Christ has free reign in my heart that I can truly forgive.

This brings up a real question. Peter asked the question, “How often shall I forgive my brother?” (Matthew 18:21) Notice in verse 21: *“Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.”* (Matthew 18:21–22) Now, that’s Matthew, but I want you to put in your margin “Luke chapter 17”—and Jesus is speaking on the same subject—“verses 3 and 4”: *“Take heed*

*to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him”—now, notice this—“and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.” (Luke 17:3–4)*

What if somebody did the same thing to you seven times in one day, but each time they come, they say, “I’m truly sorry; I repent”? Jesus says that you’re to forgive. Now, you say, “That’s absurd.” I imagine that most of us have come to God seven times in a day and asked Him to forgive us, have we not? *“And be ye kind...tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”* (Ephesians 4:32) But, here’s the verse that I want you to notice—verse 3. This is Luke 17, verse 3: *“Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.”* (Luke 17:3) You cannot forgive anybody that has not repented. God does not forgive without repentance, neither should we. And so, that’s a very interesting thing. If I’m to seek out a brother, and that brother has wronged me, and I need to forgive him, how can I forgive him if he says, “I’ve done nothing wrong,” or if he says, “I have done wrong, and I’m going to continue to do wrong,” and there’s not a repentant spirit? How can I forgive him? It’s a very big question. What you need to do, and what I have done, is to forgive in this sense: that I give forgiveness out of my heart, and I put it in the bank on escrow. I unload it. I download it. I refuse to carry that burden in my heart. Even if the individual cannot receive that forgiveness, I have offered it. I have given it. It is there. All they need to do is to write the check of repentance and faith, and they can lay hold on that forgiveness. I have put it in the bank in escrow for them.

Is that not what Jesus did for us when He died on the cross? He provided forgiveness for us. It is there, but we can’t receive it, though He has given it, until we repent and receive it by faith. So, you can download it even if they don’t load it. Even if they don’t receive it, you get it off of your heart. And, even if they don’t repent, you can in your heart refuse to carry that spirit of bitterness.

### **III. The Results of Forgiveness**

Now, what happens when you truly forgive?

#### **A. Release**

First of all, there will be release. The results are this: when you forgive, you are set free from the prison of bitterness. When God forgives you, you’re set free from the prison of guilt. And, there’s not a reason on earth that you should start tomorrow dragging the chains either of bitterness or guilt.

Now, I’m not a perfect person. God knows that I fail in many ways, but I give Him glory. And, I thought about it before I preached this message. There’s nobody on God’s

green earth that I have resentment or bitterness against. And, so far as I know, there's no unconfessed, unrepented-of sin in my heart and in my life. You say, "Well, you think you're somebody." No, that's normal. That's the way a Christian ought to live. That's just plain, average Christianity. That's not super-normal, like I'm saying, "Hey, look at the big guy up here who says that he doesn't have any bitterness or any guilt." That's just the grace of God. That's the way we are to live.

What fools we are to drag these chains with us! We can start every day as clean and pure as the driven snow. There's no reason for us—none whatsoever—to live in a prison house of bitterness, or a prison house of guilt. If you're guilty, if there's some unconfessed, unrepented-of sin, the Bible says, in 1 John 1:9: *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* (1 John 1:9) If He didn't do it, He'd be unfaithful, a liar. If He didn't do it, He'd be unjust, a crook. God is not a liar, and God is not a crook. *"He is faithful and just to forgive us, and to cleanse us"*—not from some, but—*"from all unrighteousness."* (1 John 1:9) And, we are to forgive our brothers. If they won't repent, then we just put forgiveness in the bank for them. Whenever they come along and write the check of repentance and faith, they can receive that forgiveness.

## **B. Reconciliation**

Now, there's going to be release when you do that. And, most likely, there will be reconciliation. You're going to gain some brothers, some sisters, and they're going to be precious. Those people that have been restored by forgiveness will be your dearest and nearest friends.

## **C. Revival**

And, I believe that when there's release and reconciliation, there will be revival. Some of you knew Miss Bertha Smith, one of the great Christian premier missionaries that Southern Baptists have ever had. She was a dear and a precious friend to Joyce and myself. Others of you knew Dr. Charlie Culpepper, who taught missions at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary. Both Charlie Culpepper and Bertha Smith were in the great Shantung Revival in China. Both of them said that when the missionaries on the field who had been out of sorts with one another over petty things began to confess their faults one to another, and pray one for another, and to ask for forgiveness and to give forgiveness, that a great and a mighty revival was set loose. And, I believe, in your family, a revival can take place like that—I believe, in a business; I believe, in a school, in a church, in a community. When people begin to believe in the Bible, the Word of God, and begin to practice it, then they are set free.

So, question: Is there anybody—anybody—that you're harboring hate against, anybody that you are carrying a grudge against? Is there bitterness in your heart? In the

name of Jesus, deal with it, because if you don't, you have destroyed the bridge over which you yourself must travel. If you don't, you will have in your life an acid that will destroy you, that will hinder your prayers, and that will keep you from having genuine spiritual revival in your life.

## **Conclusion**

Now, let's bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. And, would you just pray over the message for a moment? Would you say, "Lord, you know so-and-so. I've really harbored bitterness toward that person. They've hurt me so bad"—maybe it's a former husband, a former wife; maybe it's a mother, a father; maybe a schoolteacher; maybe a former business partner; maybe somebody has stolen money from you; maybe somebody has hurt your child, molested a loved one, and you just have such bitterness in your heart. Friend, give it to Jesus. Unload it. Get rid of it—not just simply by saying, "I'm not even going to think about it any more." You can't handle it that way. You can't just stuff it. Give it to Jesus, and let Him take it away. And, if you need to go seek that brother out to forgive them, that sister out to forgive them, that unsaved person out to forgive them, tell the Lord that you'll do it. Make up your mind that you'll do just that.

Lord, show us how to react to this message. In the name of Jesus. Amen. 



# Forgiveness

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: July 9, 1989**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 18:18–35**

*“Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.”*

MATTHEW 18:21–22

## Outline

Introduction

- I. We Have Been Forgiven
- II. We Are to Forgive Others
  - A. The Grace Factor
  - B. The Guilt Factor
  - C. The Grief Factor
  - D. The Gain Factor
- III. How to Forgive
  - A. Forgive Freely
  - B. Forgive Fully
  - C. Forgive Finally

Conclusion

## Introduction

Take God’s Word this morning and find Matthew chapter 18. In a moment we’re going to begin reading verse 21. Most of you have heard of an evangelist named Dwight L. Moody. Dwight L. Moody was the counterpart of Billy Graham today. He was America’s best-known evangelist. And God gave Moody a great insight into the Word of God and into human nature. Dwight L. Moody said there’s one sin, one failure, that’s doing more to hold back the power of God in revival in the lives and hearts of Christians more than any other sin. Do you know what he said it was? He said it was the sin of an unforgiving spirit. I want to talk to you about forgiveness. And the title of the message is simply that: “Forgiveness.”

Now I begin reading here in Matthew chapter 18, verse 21: *“Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king,*

*which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.”* And then, the Lord Jesus makes this application. He says, *“So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses”* (Matthew 18:21–35).

That’s what the Lord said. Let me give you the background for what he has said. The Lord Jesus was talking, in Matthew chapter 18, about a brother in the church who sins. And then he said, if we have a brother who’s sinned, we should go to that brother to gain that brother (Matthew 18:15). In verse 15 of this chapter, he told us to obviously seek out that brother and forgive him. Well, Simon Peter got to thinking about that. Simon Peter was wondering. Perhaps Simon Peter had somebody who had wronged him and he had forgiven him several times. And Simon Peter thought surely there must be some limit to forgiveness; surely, I mean, we just can’t keep on forgiving people for the same things over and over again. So Simon Peter asked the Lord a question. He said, “Lord, how many times if a man sins against you should you forgive him: once, twice, three, four, five? Oh,” he said, “I know what it must be. Seven, that’s the perfect number. How many times shall we forgive him? Seven times?” The Lord said, “No, not seven times; seventy times seven.”

Now our Lord did not mean 490. By using that idiom, he meant, as many times as he sins forgive him—or out into infinity. Forgiveness is not a matter of mathematics. Just forget the arithmetic. It’s a matter of the heart, not of the head. It is not a matter of totaling up and figuring up. Every time he comes in repentance and says, “I repent,” you are to forgive him. You say, “But look how many times I’ve forgiven him.” No, you don’t say that, because you’re to forgive him as God forgave you. And when God forgives, He

does what? He forgets. So every time you're forgiving him, how many times is that? It's always the first time, because all the other times have gone. Isn't that wonderful? See? You always forgive the first time, because all of the other times are gone. When God forgives us, He always forgives us the first time, because all of those other sins are buried in the grave of his forgetfulness. And so you don't keep records. You just simply forgive as many times as forgiveness is needed.

Then the Lord Jesus told this story. He said, "Let me let me show you what I'm talking about." He said there was a man who owed his master an astronomical term, 10,000 talents. Now when the Lord Jesus said 10,000 talents, He must have said this with a twinkle in his eye, because that was more than the total taxes of the entire country for the year. I mean it was an incredible amount of money. In today's standards, it is multiplied millions of dollars. No one could pay it unless he was a king himself. And so here was a man who owed all of this money. How he got into such debt, who knows? But it was there. And he owed it to his master, and he couldn't pay it. So he cries out for mercy. And the lord, the master, says, "All right, you can't pay it. I will forgive you." And he does forgive this man. And then the man who's been forgiven this astronomical sum goes out and finds another man who owes to him several pence, a few hundred dollars; and he takes this poor man by the throat and says, "You pay me what you owe me." He says, "I can't." He says, "And into prison you go." And it was told to the king what had happened. And the king found this man who'd been forgiven the multiplied millions and put him also in prison and delivered him to the tormentors. And then the Lord Jesus made this application: "So shall your heavenly Father do to you if you forgive not every man his trespasses against you" (Matthew 18:35).

Now, dear friend, there are two basic thoughts that are in this entire story: number one, we have been forgiven; number two, we are to forgive others.

## **I. We Have Been Forgiven**

Now you think of your sin as a debt that you owe God. Have you ever thought about being in debt to God? Why are you in debt to God? Number one: He created you. Number two: He redeemed you. Number three: He takes care of you day by day. The earth that you walk on, the air that you breathe, and the food that you eat, has all come from God. And by creation, Calvary, and care we're indebted to God. And we've not fulfilled our obligations to God. We've become poor stewards. We've not given Him the honor. We've not given Him the glory. We've not given Him the praise. We've used His resources. We've abused His love. And we're in debt. And we have been hauled into heaven's court. And we have been sued for damages. And we have found that we are guilty and in debt. And we are assessed with an astronomical sum that we cannot pay. The Bible says, "Our sins have mounted up to the heavens" (Ezra 9:6). So sin is a debt  
|

owe.

Secondly, sin is a debt I cannot pay. Morally and spiritually, I am bankrupt before Almighty God. I have nothing to offer. You say, "Well, I can offer Him something." What are you going to offer Him? Even your righteousness is as filthy rags in his sight (Isaiah 64:6). Sin is a debt I owe. Sin is a debt I cannot pay. Sin is a debt that God has fully paid for me.

Now, listen. When that king forgave that servant that 10,000 talents, what did it cost that king? Ten thousand talents. You listen to me, dear friend. There is no such thing as God overlooking sin. That king did not simply overlook that debt. That king absorbed that debt. When that king said, "I forgive," at that moment it cost him dearly. God does not overlook your sin. God has paid for your sin. And therefore He forgives. I owed a debt I could not pay, and therefore Jesus paid a debt He did not owe. I owed a debt I could not pay, and therefore Jesus paid a debt He did not owe. With the silver of His tears and the gold of his blood He purchased my redemption.

It costs to forgive. There's no such thing as free forgiveness. There are no bargain pardons. When you forgive a person, whatever that person did, you absorb the cost into yourself. On the cross, Jesus was paying the debt that I owed, that you owed. God did not just simply cancel the debt. He could not until He first of all paid it, because He's a righteous and a holy God. Now He paid that price. Do you know why He paid that price? It was worth it to Him. It was worth it. Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 2 says, "For the joy that was set before Him, He despised the shame and endured the cross" (Hebrews 12:2). It was worth it. Have you ever noticed that, if you pay for something that you really want, you don't mind paying the price? But have you ever bought something on a bargain that really, even though it was a bargain, you were sorry that you bought it, later on?

A businessman told me something. He said, "The most expensive suit I ever bought cost me ninety dollars." The man's a member of this church. I said, "Tell me about it." He said, "I bought a suit off the rack." He said, "I knew I didn't like it when I bought it." But he said, "I bought it because it was marked down to ninety dollars." He said, "I wore it one time." And he said, "It cost me ninety dollars to wear a suit one time." He said, "That's the only time. I never took it out again." He said, "I didn't like it when I bought it." And he said, "It was expensive because it was cheap."

Listen to me, my dear friend. *The bitterness of poor quality lingers long after the sweetness of cheap price has been forgotten.* If you buy something, and you like it, and it's worth it, after a while you will say, "Yes, I paid a big price, but look what I got." My dear friend, forgiveness is costly. It's not cheap, but it's worth it. It's worth what you pay for it. Jesus, "for the joy that was set before Him, despised the shame, endured the cross and went to Calvary" (Hebrews 12:2). It costs to be forgiven. Sin is a debt I owe.

Sin is a debt I cannot pay. Sin is a debt that the Lord Jesus Christ paid for me. Horace Bushnell said that, “Forgiveness is man’s deepest need and God’s highest achievement.” Thank God because of Calvary the old account was settled long ago.

## **II. We Are to Forgive Others**

Now the second thing I want you to notice—I have been forgiven a great debt: now what the Lord Jesus Christ is saying in this passage of Scripture is, because we have been forgiven, we are to forgive others. Now this man who had been forgiven the multiplied millions was legally right to demand this man pay him who owed him a few hundred dollars. But he was morally wrong.

And I want to give you, dear friend, some moral reasons why he should have forgiven this man who owed him a few hundred dollars.

### **A. The Grace Factor**

Number one: There is the grace factor. Have you got that? The grace factor. You see, here was a man who had received grace, and therefore, “*Freely ye have received, freely give*” (Matthew 10:8). Ephesians chapter 4, verse 32: “*And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you*” (Ephesians 4:32). You pass on what you have received. God forgives you. You forgive others. The grace factor.

There was a man in a large business, who embezzled a sum of money. They did an accounting. They did a survey and audit. The blame was fixed upon a certain man. That man knew that they’d found him out. The senior partner in that large firm sent for that man and said, “Come into my office.” He went into that office with trembling, because he figured, “Number one, I’ll be fired; number two, I’ll probably spend some time behind bars.” He stood before the senior partner. And the senior partner said, “Is it true? Have you done thus and such?” The man bowed his head, knowing he’d been found out, and said, “Yes, it is true.” Then the senior partner in that firm said, “I want to ask you a question.” He said, “If I forgive you and you keep your job, can I trust you from henceforth.” He said, “Oh, if you would forgive and let me keep my job, I promise you can trust me. Oh, yes, you can trust me.” Then, he said, “Very well, I forgive you. And we will retain you. But before you go I want you to know something. You’re not the first in this business to ever make that mistake.” He said, “I made the same mistake years ago and was forgiven. And,” he said, “the grace I have received is the grace that I give to you. May God have mercy on us both.”

### **B. The Guilt Factor**

You see, dear friend, there’s the grace factor. I’ll tell you another reason that we need to forgive: not only the grace factor, but the guilt factor; because if I don’t forgive, I

myself am guilty. I mean, if I don't forgive you, I don't get forgiven. Jesus said, "If ye forgive not men their trespasses against you, neither shall your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses against Him" (Matthew 6:14). An unforgiving spirit is unforgivable. The man, the woman, who will not forgive destroys the bridge over which he or she must travel. Your guilt remains. Your debt remains when you refuse to forgive others.

### **C. The Grief Factor**

My dear friend, there's a third reason: not only the grace factor, not only the guilt factor; but the grief factor. What happened to this man who refused to forgive the man who owed him a few hundred dollars? When his lord found about it, he said, "All right, take him, cast him into the prison, and deliver him to the tormentors till he's paid all."

Now you think of the grief that this man had because he would not forgive. First of all, he was cast into a prison. There are many people who are listening to me in this place by television, or by tape later on, and you find yourself right now in a prison of your own. You are making a prison house of bitterness and out of bondage. You have become a slave, imprisoned and captured. You can't live a productive life, because you're enjoying the luxury of an unforgiving spirit.

But not only was he cast into prison; dear friend, he was tormented. How many people are tormented with high blood pressure, memory, and emotional problems? How many are tormented because they cannot forgive and forget and release, and are back in debt. There is the guilt factor that adds to the grief factor because of the burden of that you now have a double debt. You have a debt that you owe to God because your sin is not forgiven. And you have a debt that you owe to the man who owes you a hundred dollars. Do you know what we do? Somebody wrongs us, and we just write in our mind a little I.O.U.: "I owe you for that. And I'll get you." We put it in our pocket. But have you ever thought about it? When we have those little I.O.U.'s, then we're in debt to them. I mean, they're supposed to be in debt to us, and we say, "I'm going to pay you back for that." We get in debt to them. And it's an incredible thing that we end up ourselves the debtors, not only to God, but we are in debt to those who've sinned against us, because we're trying to pay them back. So there's the grief factor.

### **D. The Gain Factor**

But, dear friend, there's another reason that we ought to do it: what I call the gain factor. You see, if we do forgive, we've gained our brother. Now I told you, Jesus Christ is talking about how to gain a brother who's sinned. And notice in Matthew chapter 18—you're still there, go back to verse 15. And He says, "*Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother*" (Matthew 18:15). An unforgiving spirit makes foes. A forgiving spirit makes friends. How should you forgive? Ephesians chapter 4,

verse 32: *“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you”* (Ephesians 4:32).

### III. How to Forgive

Let me tell you how to forgive.

#### A. Forgive Freely

First of all, you are to forgive freely: *“Freely ye have received, freely give”* (Matthew 10:8). Now when I say freely, I mean you’re to be so ready to forgive somebody that you don’t wait for them to come to you and ask you to forgive them. You go to them. You run them down in order to forgive them. You catch them in order to forgive them. Isn’t that what Jesus said there in Matthew 18, verse 15? Go to your brother. It doesn’t say, “Wait there for your brother to come to you.” Go to your brother. Tell him in secret his fault between you and him alone. And if he will hear you, you have gained your brother. Isn’t that the way God forgave us? When Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden, what did God do? Did God wait there in heaven until Adam came and said, “Oh, God, would you please come back and have fellowship with me?” No, God came walking in the midst of the garden, and He cried out and He said, “Adam, Adam, where are you, Adam?” It wasn’t the voice of a detective. It was the voice of a brokenhearted God seeking that man out that he loved.

Has somebody wronged you? Would you take the spirit of Jesus and go seek that person and forgive them? Do you know what we do? We wait around for a while and we say, “Let them stew in their juice.” I mean, let them be like a worm in hot ashes. And so, finally, we criticize them, we castigate them, we bruise them, we blister them, we burn them, we bash them, and we batter them. And then we finally say, “Okay now, I forgive you.” You say, “Never mind. I’ve already paid—I’ve already paid.” Listen. You forgive before that bitterness becomes an infection. You forgive freely.

You say, “No matter if they haven’t even repented?” Oh no, if they haven’t repented, you can’t forgive them. Let me just make a point here. There is no such thing as forgiveness, number one, without payment. Somebody must pay. And there’s no such thing as forgiveness without repentance. Somebody must repent. God does not forgive without repentance. The Bible says, *“Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish”* (Luke 13:3). Never forgive anybody if they don’t repent. You can’t forgive them if they don’t repent. It is immoral to forgive them if they don’t repent.

Let me give you a verse to put in your margin. Write this down please—Luke chapter 17, verse 4. Now, you write it down. Let me read it to you. Jesus said, *“And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him”* (Luke 17:4)—I mean, if he does it one, two,

three, four, five, six, seven times in a day. How many of us think that a person who's done the same thing seven times a day ought to be forgiven? Human nature doesn't say so, but Jesus says so; not only seventy times seven, but seven times a day, the same thing—but only if he repents. There is no forgiveness without somebody paying a price. And there is no forgiveness without somebody repenting. The one who does the forgiving pays the price, but the one who is forgiven must repent.

“Well,” you say, “Brother Rogers, if I therefore don't forgive them, does that mean that I'm to be brittle, harsh, hateful, and hurtful to them?” No, no. You're to love them. You're to have the spirit of forgiveness. What is the spirit of forgiveness? That's what Jesus Christ had when they were nailing Him on the cross. Jesus did not say, “I forgive you.” Why? Because they'd not repented. They were in the act of their sin. But what did He pray? He prayed, “*Father, forgive them*” (Luke 23:34). You see? He wanted their forgiveness. He sought their forgiveness. And so should you.

And, my dear friend, the attitude of forgiveness is what I'm talking about. Even before you forgive there should be the attitude of forgiveness. The attitude of forgiveness will free you. The act of forgiveness will free them. But you must have the attitude so hopefully one day the act can come. Hopefully, one day he will come and say, “I repent; I'm sorry; I turn; I was wrong,” and then when he or she says that, then that attitude becomes an act. And not only are you free now, but he or she is free. You're to forgive freely.

## **B. Forgive Fully**

The second way you're to forgive is you're to forgive fully. Now what so many times we do is this. When somebody has wronged us, and then they finally come to us and confess it, do you know what many of us are prone to do? To make light of it. Do you know why? Our pride wants not to let it be known how badly we've been hurt. And so, what do we say? “Oh, never mind. That's okay. It's okay.” Hey, folks, that's not forgiveness. That won't do them any good, and it won't do you any good. When there's a wrong that's been done, there needs to be confession, repentance, and forgiveness. Don't just gloss over it. Don't say, “Oh, forget it.” Friend, it cannot be forgotten until it's been forgiven. Forgetting is the result of forgiveness. Make certain that it is full forgiveness that you get and that you give. When I wrong somebody, and I come to them and I say, “I'm sorry; I did you wrong, and I want you to forgive me,” and they say, “Oh, never mind,” I say, “No, wait a minute. I do mind.” Look at me and tell me you, “Forgive me.” That's what satisfies the heart—my heart and their heart as they forgive me.

## **C. Forgive Finally**

You see, we're to forgive freely. We are to forgive fully. And then, my dear friend, we



are to forgive finally. I mean, you see when God forgives, God forgets. It's over, it's done, it's gone, and it's paid. What happens to forgiven sin? The Bible says that God removes our sins from us *"as far as the east is from the west"* (Psalm 103:12), not as far as the north from the south. You can measure from the North Pole to the South Pole. But you go east just as far as you can go. You go west just as far as you can go. That's how far He's removed our sins from us. The Bible says He's cast them behind His back (Isaiah 38:17). Isn't that wonderful? Do you know where your sins are? Behind God's back. He turns around. He can't see them. They're still behind His back. They're gone and out of His sight. He hath buried them in the depths of the sea and posted a *No Fishing* sign. Friend, they're gone—they're gone. When God forgives, God says, *"Their iniquities will I remember no more"* (Hebrews 8:12).

Now, listen. Intellectually, God doesn't forget. God can never forget anything. For that matter, He can't learn anything. *Has it ever* occurred *to you that* nothing *ever occurs to* God? I mean, God is God intellectually, and He knows everything. If He forgot, He'd change. He can't change. But what He says is, "I will remember them against you no more." When you forgive somebody, it doesn't mean you get amnesia. I mean, you know it happened. But, you see, that is removed from the account side of the ledger. It's not like you keep saying, "You owe me; I'm holding this up before you." No, no, you don't do that anymore. You forgive it, and you let it go. And at the moment you free that other person, at that moment, my friend, you become free.

I heard of a businessman who liked to keep records in his office. He kept records of almost everything, especially his correspondence. His files were bulging. His secretary said, "Look, we've got to clean these files. How about letting me go through the files and pull out this stuff and put it in the shredder?" Reluctantly, he said, "Okay, okay, you can do it. But before you do that, make a copy of everything."

Have you done that: said, "This goes in the shredder, but I've got the copy over here"? Oh, you forgive, my dear friend, freely, fully, and finally. Bury it in the grave of God's forgetfulness. Cut it loose, and let it go. And if he does it again, she does it again, it's the first time you're forgiving that offense. So you don't keep numbers. It's just the first time. And if it happens seven times a day, and if he repents, she repents, you don't judge and say, "You did it six times; you don't mean it." Listen, dear friend. That's fatalism and cynicism. There must always be the time that you're going to believe that individual is going to mean business with you and mean business with God.

Now, how are you going to forgive? I mean, you don't have the strength to forgive. Dear friend, forgiveness is not an emotion. It is an act of the will. And it is an act of the will that is aided by the will of God. *"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure"* (Philippians 2:13). The emotion follows. But you must decide that you want to forgive, and then call out to God and ask God to help you. It takes two

to forgive: you and Jesus. Someone wrote a long time ago: "To err is human. To forgive is divine."

Corrie Ten Boom is a woman whose testimony we've all heard. She hid the Jews in Holland from Hitler's storm troopers. As a result, she found herself in a Nazi concentration camp in Ravensbrück. Corrie Ten Boom and her sisters suffered unmentionable brutality, indignity, horrors, humiliation, and saw friends and loved ones die. But, by the grace of God, she was kept. A spirit of forgiveness was working in her heart.

In 1947, Corrie Ten Boom, after the war, was in West Germany. She was speaking on the subject of forgiveness like I'm speaking on it this morning. But when she'd finished, there was a man in her audience who had been a prison guard in that concentration camp. The Spirit of God had convicted that man of his need for forgiveness. And he came up to Corrie Ten Boom; and when he approached, she looked at him. She remembered his face. It had been molded into her consciousness and riveted into her soul. That was the face of the one who had brutalized and humiliated her, and now he was coming with his hand extended asking for forgiveness. Corrie Ten Boom said, "I froze. I knew what I ought to do, but," she said, "I knew I could not do it." She said, "It was like my hand was paralyzed. I could not reach out and take that man by the hand." She cried out to God, and she said, "Oh, God, I can't forgive him. But, Lord, you can. Help me, God." By an act of her will, she placed her hand in that man's hand. She said, "When I did that, my body became warm, and my spirit was filled with light," as Almighty God did in her, through her, and for her what humanly she could not do.

## **Conclusion**

My dear friend, God not only commands us to forgive; He enables us to forgive. Again, let me tell you something. There are some in this building that have been so wronged against by parents, husbands, wives, and employers that in order for you to forgive you're going to have to have your own private Gethsemane and your own private Calvary. But if you'll do it, you'll have your own private Easter. I promise. It costs. But it's worth it.

# Sacredness of Marriage

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: November 30, 2003**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 19:1–11**

*“Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”*

MATTHEW 19:6

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Marriage Is Made in Heaven
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  - II. Marriage Is Marred by Hell
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- Conclusion

## Introduction

Find Matthew chapter 19 in the Word of God. We spoke last Sunday night about the Bible and what it would say about something called same-sex marriage. And anybody who is alive, with his eyes open, who can read black print on white paper, knows that such a thing as a same-sex marriage is really, in God’s sight, an impossibility. And we talked about that. But I want us to go further on and not only talk about what is not right, but to talk about what is right. And I want us to think tonight about marriage as God intended: one man for one woman ’til death do them part.

I asked Joyce—I said, “Sweetheart, will you love me when I’m old and wrinkled?” She said, “Of course I do.” She’ll say later, “Adrian, I didn’t say that. You just said I said that,” which is true.

But I want us to read here, from the Word of God, Matthew chapter 19, verses 1 through 6: *“And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coast of Judaea beyond Jordan; and great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there. The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every*

*cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain”—or “they two”—“shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain”—or “two”—“but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.” (Matthew 19:1–6)*

Now, I want to talk to you about the sacredness of marriage. We see marriage, as we know it, as God intended it, to be unraveling. And experts tell us that soon half of all children will grow up in single-parent homes and most mothers will work outside the home. Much of this problem is caused by divorce. In the first three verses of our chapter, the matter of divorce comes up, and the disciples ask Jesus, “Can a man just divorce his wife for any reason?” And Jesus, in answering that question, tells us about what marriage is intended to be: one man for one woman 'til death do them part: “*For this cause shall a man leave [his] father and [his] mother, and...cleave [unto] his wife...they twain shall be one flesh...[and] what God hath [therefore] joined together, let not man put asunder.*” (Matthew 19:5–6)

Divorce is an American tragedy because divorced parents produce broken children, and broken children produce broken homes, which produce broken children, which produce broken homes, which produce broken children. It is a vicious cycle. God has said in His Word, in Malachi chapter 2 and verse 16, that He hates divorce. (Malachi 2:16) God literally hates divorce.

Now, I know that the intellectuals of our day have different ideas. They have taught us that sex between unmarried people really is incidental; it causes no moral problems. And, you young people in the choir, let me tell you, God absolutely, totally, forbids any kind of sexual liaison outside of the bond of holy matrimony. We’ve been taught also that homosexuality can be accepted as normal, what they call today “an alternative lifestyle.” We’ve been told today that unmarried motherhood really poses no serious problems. And we’ve been taught that marriage is not sacred because really, nothing is sacred. And our great commandment today is “Thou shalt not be judgmental.” And so, the new god in America is the god of tolerance. I believe it’s time that somebody spoke up for the family and for family faithfulness.

## **I. Marriage Is Made in Heaven**

And so, I want you to see, first of all, that real marriage did not come from the swamps of immorality, or by evolution, but marriages are made by heaven. Look in verse 4: “*And he answered*”—these are the words of Jesus now—“*And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall*

*cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?”* (Matthew 19:4–5) Now, all marriage counseling, all marriage preaching, all marriage design can be summed up in three words that Jesus just gave: *leave, cleave, and one flesh*.

### **A. The Priority of Marriage**

Now, what your job is as a parent—and many of you are parents who have children who are getting to be marriageable age, or you have little children who one day will be marriageable age—your chief assignment from God, so far as that child is concerned, is to prepare that child to leave home; that is, to work yourself out of a job to where that child no longer needs you.

Now, I’m so grateful for the home. I’m grateful for the home that I had, where it never, never ever entered into my mind that my father might leave my mother. And, of course, he did not. I cannot tell you the security that I had as a child. Now, I did not come up in a wealthy family. As a matter of fact, I suppose our family would be classified as lower middle class. I was born during the Great Depression. And the Great Depression began in 1929. I was born in 1931. I have a real good idea that I was not planned. As a matter of fact, I got bold enough to ask my mom about it one day, and she just smiled; and I knew the answer. I was not planned, but I was in God’s plan. And I came along back in those days, and work was hard to find. Money was hard to come by. Some of you who are older know something of what it was like in the Great Depression in those days. And it still bothers me to death to go into a restaurant and have one of my children order a hamburger and take a bite out of it and leave the rest on the plate. It gets all over me, not because I’m stingy, not because I don’t want to spend money; I just cannot bear to see things go to waste. That’s the way we were raised.

But we had some wonderful times as a family. We lived in Florida, which was wonderful. I was born and raised in paradise and didn’t know it. And really, I mean, I was a grown man before I’d seen snow. The first time I saw it, I thought it was grits all over the ground. I didn’t know what it was. But because my dad sometimes did not have work—he was never a lazy man—but there would be times when we would go over to a place called Singer Island right off the coast of Florida there with the Lake Worth Lagoon between West Palm Beach and Singer Island. We would go over there—the most beautiful, pristine beaches you’ve ever seen—and we kids would search for minnows so my dad could fish. My mother would bring some Crisco and a big black frying pan and some bread, and my dad would catch fish. We’d build a bonfire there on the beach, and fry those fish, and eat those pork and beans, or whatever they called it—Van Camp’s Pork & Beans. I remember one time we had a can in the fire, and it exploded and hit us all with hot beans. I’ll never forget that. But, you know, I look back on those experiences. The best times I ever had as a child I had because my parents

didn't have much. When we were together as a family, when Dad worked, Mom stayed home. We sat down at the table together and had a meal together, and had family fellowship, and lived together as a family.

Now, those are wonderful times, but you can't live that way all the time. And so, my father taught reliance. He taught us to work. We had to work. He didn't give us a lot of things. So many times parents are saying, "You know, I want to give my children things I never had." Well, if you can do that, I'm happy for you. But I hope that you can give your children the things you did have, that you learned from your parents, those things of honesty and decency and industry and fidelity and faithfulness, and know what it is, if you do wrong, to be carried out to the woodshed, and have the board of education applied to the seat of knowledge. That happened in our home. But a parent comes to the place where that parent has to work that child out of a home. The child has to learn to leave father and mother and cleave to his or her wife. Now, that's difficult.

Anna Mow wrote an interesting article that I read one time, and I've never forgotten it. She said, "In child-parent relationships, there are two kinds of love. There is *need love*, and there is *need-to-be-needed love*." A little baby is going to love father and mother, not because father and mother are wise or gentle or kind or anything else; the baby just loves the parent because the baby needs the parent. And that is *need love*. Parents have children because they need to be needed. I met a family today who is going all the way over to China to get a little baby. And I thought to myself, "That's wonderful!" Why do they do that? Because they want somebody to need them. They want somebody that they can pour out love on because that person needs them. And so, we come into this world with *need love*, and parents have children—they need to be needed. And so, when you get *need love* and *need-to-be-needed love*, that is a wonderful relationship between parent and child—and that's the way God intended. But then, that child will grow.

I looked at this group of young men here standing here. Jim, I saw you smiling at them. I saw you thinking, "That's wonderful." And it was wonderful. And Ken, you've done a great job training them. These young men standing up here, I've known many of them since they were babies, and now they're growing up. And I just sat over there, and I looked; and I said, "They're turning into young men, these kids that I've known that were knee-high to a grasshopper. Now they've grown up." Well, they're becoming now more and more self-sufficient. They are coming more and more to a time when they want to establish their identity. They're coming more and more to a time where they want to have some autonomy of their own. And that's not bad. That's exactly what they're supposed to do. That's what they're supposed to be. They're supposed to be, finally, men who can say, "*As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD*" (Joshua 24:15)—to start a new family, to have a godly seed. That's what we're trying to raise

them to do: to step out of the nest, out of the home, where they don't have mother and father to watch over them.

Sometimes parents, when a young man begins to assert his independence, his autonomy—sometimes, and it mostly is the mother, but sometimes the father—we have this *need love*, and so we begin to create artificial needs to keep them dependent upon us, to keep the apron strings tied. And we don't want them to go off and find somebody else and marry somebody else. And mothers sometimes just commit emotional incest to keep that child dependent, because while the child no longer has the *need love*, the parent still has the *need-to-be-needed love*. And so, when the child is trying to break away, to grow up, to assert his or her independence and autonomy, the mother is making rules now that are maybe unnecessary and the father is building hedges that ought not to be there.

Now, there are some restrictions that ought to be there. A man told me one time—was a businessman—he said, “Adrian, raising children is like building executives in business. You let them make mistakes; you just don't let them make any big mistakes.” Now, you have to allow your children, if he wants to buy that old clunker car with his savings and you know it's wrong—maybe that's the lesson he needs to learn: that he's about to pour money down a rat hole. You need to let him make some of those small mistakes like that. But you don't let him marry the wrong girl, if you can help it. I've seen Joyce pray my kids away from some, but there's that *need-to-be-needed* and there is that *need love*.

Now, when a child doesn't have that *need love* as much as he or she ought to and they begin to assert themselves, sometimes a parent will say, “You are rebellious”—and they're not rebellious. But by calling it rebellion, you sometimes engender rebellion and make rebellion out of something that ought not to be rebellion at all. Folks, I'm telling you what we do as parents—and it's something contrary to human nature—is this: that we work ourselves out of a job, but not out of a relationship. The tighter you hold them, the more they're going to want to get away. But when you release them, they don't want to get away. Oh, they may go off and get married. That's what you want. But when you release them, they will come back as the best friends you've ever had. You work yourself out of a job, but you don't work yourself out of a relationship.

Now, “*for this cause shall a man leave [his] father and [his] mother.*” (Matthew 19:5) The highest relationship—the highest relationship—in human relationships is not parent-child. The highest relationship is not child-parent. The highest relationship of human relationships is husband and wife. God says that is one flesh. (Matthew 19:6) We leave father and mother, but we cleave unto our mate. Now, this is God's plan for us. Parents are not the supreme commitment, therefore. Your parents are not your supreme commitment. Now, you're to honor your parents. And if your parents are old

and feeble, and there's no one else, and they don't have the means, it's your responsibility, your duty, to take care of them. And the Bible says, if you don't do it, you're *"worse than an infidel."* (1 Timothy 5:8) But your parents are not your supreme commitment, and your children are not your supreme commitment, according to the Bible. Mate-to-mate is higher than parent-to-child, or child-to-parent.

Now, I want to say to you men, you businessmen, your business is not your supreme commitment. I'm sick and tired of seeing these corporations move people around to the hurt of the home. A man is not a success when he has a divorce at twenty-eight, an ulcer at thirty-five, and a cardiac arrest at fifty. He may have a pocket full of money, but God's plan is that a man puts his wife first of all human relationships.

## **B. The Permanence of Marriage**

*"For this cause shall a man leave father and mother"*—leave is the first word—*"and shall cleave unto his wife."* (Matthew 19:5) That's the second word: *"cleave unto his wife."* (Matthew 19:5) The word *cleave* means "to weld" or "to glue." You know, when a thing is welded together, it's many times stronger at that part than it is at any other time. Divorce is never even to be thought of. When you get on the matrimonial airplane, you throw away your parachute. You show me couples who think of divorce as an option, and I will show you a couple that already have a great potential for the disintegration of the marriage. But you show me a couple who have just, as it were, clipped the word *divorce* out of their dictionary, and I'll show you a couple who are going to stand together. Now people, whether they stay married or whether they get divorced, they all have problems. I tell our young people when I counsel with them, "There are no problems too big to solve; there are just people too small to solve them."

## **C. The Purpose of Marriage**

So, our job is to leave father and mother. Our job is to cleave to our wives. That is, we become mentally, morally, psychologically, and spiritually one flesh. And then, the Bible says, that we are one flesh. That's the third word: "one flesh." *To leave* speaks of the priority of marriage. *To cleave* speaks of the permanence of marriage. And *one flesh* speaks of the purpose of marriage: that we come to be one flesh. Now, we're one flesh. Why? What does that mean? Why one flesh? This is why homosexual marriage is such a misnomer.

### **1. One Flesh Physically**

One reason for the one-fleshedness is for multiplication. God said, *"Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth."* (Genesis 1:28) Malachi chapter 2, verse 15: *"And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed."* (Malachi 2:15) I tell our young people when they're planning to get married, "I hope you plan to have children." Children are meant to be a blessing. We have something happening in America today



with a growing number of young married adults who have decided not to have children. Do you know why they've decided not to have children? They think they're going to have more freedom. They think that they're going to have more possessions if they don't have children. They say, "Children are too costly; and if we have children, we're going to have to decrease our standard of living." Now friend, there is no higher standard of living than to have blessed children. What a blessing children are! They call these people who are doing this "DINKs": double income, no kids. That's right. They've named it. That's their philosophy.

## 2. One Flesh Psychologically

No! Why are we one flesh? For multiplication. "*Be fruitful, and multiply.*" (Genesis 1:22) Not only for multiplication—that's physically—but psychologically we are one flesh for communication. Not only are we to be lovers; we're to be friends. Your wife is not to be your competitor; she's to be your completer. She is your helpmeet.

† A husband and wife are like a bow and a violin: separate, they don't make music; together, they make wonderful music.†

## 3. One Flesh Spiritually

And then, we're to be one flesh, not only physically, and one flesh psychologically, but we're to be one flesh spiritually. Joyce is my soulmate spiritually. We pray together. We prayed together this morning for you and for this service, and we pray every day for our children, for our grandchildren. And we have that communion and that love, that spiritual love. If people don't know that, I feel sorry for them. These kids who are having sexual liaisons, and they talk about "going all the way," that's the one thing they don't do—they don't go all the way. You haven't gone all the way until you have that commitment, that love that leads to that physical, psychological, and spiritual union and communion together, the spiritual communion.

I feel sorry for these people who think they're smarter than God. Madalyn Murray O'Hair, who died a few years ago—and most think that she was murdered—but she was the famous atheist. She acted so self-sufficient. But they found her diaries, and somehow they became public property. As a matter of fact, her diaries were auctioned off to pay her tax bill. But in her diary, many, many, many times was this statement, or something like it: "Somebody, please love me." Isn't that sad? "Somebody, please love me." Now, here was a person who acted so self-sufficient, but she needed love. "Somebody, somewhere, love me."

Now, marriage is a divine institution made of God. "*For this [reason] shall a man leave [his] father and mother, and...cleave [unto] his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh.*" (Matthew 19:5) *To leave, to cleave, one flesh.*

## II. Marriage Is Marred by Hell

Now, if that is true that marriage has been made by heaven, marriages have also been marred by hell. Look, if you will now, in verse 7: *“They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?”*—that is, Moses, in the Pentateuch, gave provision for divorce. And they said, “If God’s plan is one man for one woman ’til death do them part, why did Moses make this provision for divorce?” And notice Jesus’ answer in verse 8—*“He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you”*—or allowed you—*“to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so”*—that is, what was allowed was not God’s primary purpose, not what God intended, not what God wanted. And then Jesus said—*“And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication”*—that word comes from a Greek word, *porneia*, which means “sexual immorality.” It could be before or after marriage. Here He’s talking about the context of marriage because He says, *“putting away a wife”*—*“except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery. His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given.”* (Matthew 19:7–11)

Now, the devil is working against our homes. And, of course, I want to say that the chief thing that the devil wants to do, in my estimation, is not begin homosexual marriages, but to destroy Christian marriages and to wreck our homes. And perhaps there needs to be much preaching about homosexual marriage and its fallacies, but God knows—God knows—that we need to emphasize the home in this church and in all churches across America. And after the first of the year I’m going to begin a series of Sunday night messages on the home and on the family, God willing.

Now, in this passage, God allowed divorce in a case of fornication, but God did not command divorce. If you have an unfaithful wife, if you have an unfaithful husband, that does not mean that ipso facto, necessarily, you’re to be divorced. Forgiveness, restoration, is far better than divorce. Read the story—read the book of Hosea and read about Hosea and his wife Gomer. Gomer had many lovers. Actually, she became a prostitute, but Hosea found her, forgave her, restored her, and restored the home. (Hosea 1–14)

Now, there are many reasons that people give for divorce, and they’re fallacious reasons. They will not pass at the judgment bar of God. For example, there are people who say, “Well, we’re getting divorced because the love has gone out of our marriage.” Now, if you don’t hear anything else, I want you to hear what I’m about to say now: it is not love that keeps your marriage together; it is your marriage that sustains your love. Now, remember that. Don’t just simply get the idea that, because something called love

has gone away, then you are free to get a divorce. Jesus has commanded us to love. Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 25—He says, “*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it*” (Ephesians 5:25)—or literally, “gave Himself up for it.”

Sometimes a man will come to me and say, “I’m going to get a divorce.” I say, “Why?” “Because I don’t love my wife any more.” He doesn’t get any sympathy from me. I say, “Well, choose to love her; learn to love her. God has commanded that you love.”

¶ Now, what kind of a God would command me to do something I cannot do? Suppose God says to me, “Adrian, jump over this church building. If you don’t do it, you’re a sinner.” Can God command me to do something I cannot do and then blame me for not doing it?¶

If God says, “*Husbands, love your wives,*” (Ephesians 5:25) that means that you can love your wife. You see, love is a choice. As a matter of fact, the older women are to teach the younger women to love their husbands. We’re not talking about romance here. Listen to Titus 2, verse 4, speaking of the older women: “*That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children.*” (Titus 2:4) We are commanded to love.

Now, we need to understand, therefore, the difference between what the world calls love and what the Bible calls love. The Bible word *love* goes far beyond emotion. Do you remember when you were dating, when you were in high school, or college, or wherever it was, and you were looking for a mate? If you were like the average person, this is what you were looking for: you were looking for someone who was popular, someone who had personality, somebody who thought your jokes were funny, somebody who had a beautiful face, somebody who had a nice figure. And you, if you had a chance, you would say to that person, “I love you.” But that probably was not accurate. It’s certainly not accurate according to the Bible word *love*. What you were really saying is “I want you. I want you to satisfy me.” And she, if you were a man, would respond to you the same way, because we see in this other individual certain qualities, and we think, “If I can acquire those qualities, then those qualities are going to make me happy.” But that kind of love is conditioned upon those qualities: personality, intelligence, popularity, the face, the figure. But if that’s why you get married, then you see what a trap that is? I mean, when you married her, she was beautiful, but now she’s fat and forty, and he’s bald and bulging. And all of those things that you thought were so important, they’re not there any more.

And so, what happens to the marriage? You see, that’s a conditional love. And if you have that conditional love, it’s going to engender some attitudes, and we see these all the time in marriage. First of all, there’s fear: “I’ve got to keep up the conditions that caused this man to love me to begin with.” That’s what keeps Walgreens in business,

and this dependency upon the beautician and the cosmetician, and the man who cannot grow old gracefully because he says to himself, or she says to herself, “I’ve got to maintain this condition.”

Or, if it doesn’t bring fear, it’s going to bring guilt. You’re going to say, “I have failed. I no longer have what it takes. I have a Supreme Court figure: no appeal.” And you feel guilty. You feel you’ve let your mate down. And if it doesn’t bring fear and it doesn’t bring guilt, it’s going to bring anger when that person no longer loves you because you don’t have those particular qualities that you used to have.

¶ And you’re going to feel used, like a man who takes a sweet Valencia orange, takes his penknife, cuts a plug out of that orange, puts it up to his lips and squeezes it, and says, “I just love oranges—just love them,” but then, when the juice and the sweetness is gone, he wipes his mouth and throws it on the ground like a piece of garbage. That’s what happens sometimes to some marriages when people feel that they have been used, because that love is conditional love.¶

Now, the Bible says that a husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the Church—and that love is an unconditional love. It is not performance-based love. “*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*” (Romans 5:8) And Romans 5, verse 6: “*For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*” (Romans 5:6) When you have this unconditional love as Christ had for the Church, let me tell you what it’s going to do for your home. It’s going to give security in the place of fear. It’s going to give peace in the place of guilt. And it’s going to give joy that’s going to replace this anger.

This kind of love is an act of the will. How does God love us? Do you think God loves us romantically? Do you think God loves us because we’re lovely? No, God loves us as an act of His will. James 1, verse 18 says, “*Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.*” (James 1:18)

Now, to the world, love is just a series of emotions: “I love you because you make me feel good. I love you because you make me happy. You’re pretty. You’re soft. You’re good. You’re strong.” Read the glamor magazines. No, don’t read them. I don’t read them. Why am I saying that? See what the world’s standards are. The world has not got the foggiest of what real love is. Ask them to explain it, they’ll say something like a grasshopper on roller skates. No, real love has strength in it. Real love is commitment. You are to love your wife as Christ loved the Church.

C. S. Lewis was a brilliant man. I don’t agree with everything C. S. Lewis had to say, but he was brilliant. He had some penetrating insight into love and marriage, and he loved his wife dearly. And here’s what he said: he said, “There’s a difference in loving and being in love.” Now, the kids talk about “being in love.” You kids in the choir, listen to this. Don’t go to sleep on me. Here’s what C. S. Lewis said: “Being in love is a good

thing, but it is not the best thing. There are many things below, but there are also many things above it. You cannot make it the basis of a whole life. It is a noble feeling, but it is still a feeling. Who could bear to live in that excitement for even five years?”—he said if you tried to live with the excitement that you had as teenagers in love, or young marrieds, he said you couldn’t do that—“But, of course, ceasing to be in love does not mean ceasing to love. Love, in a second sense, love, as distinct from being in love, is not merely a feeling”—listen to this. He’s talking about real love—“It is a deep unity maintained by the will and deliberately strengthened by habits, reinforced by the grace which both parents ask and receive from God”—“which both parents ask and receive from God”—“They can have this love for each other even at those moments when they do not like each other”—now, say “amen” right there. Now listen, they can have this same love even when they don’t like each other. I know there are times when Joyce does not like the way I’m acting, but I know, I’ve never doubted, that she loved me. Listen to this—“They can have this love for each other even at those moments when they do not like each other, as you love yourself even when you do not like yourself”—have you ever said, “I hate myself for doing that”? But you never stop loving yourself. You see, there’s a deeper love. Now, Lewis goes on to say—“They can easily retain this love even when each would easily, if they allowed themselves to, be in love with someone else. Being in love first moved them to promise fidelity. This quieter love enables them to keep the promise. It is on this love that the engine of marriage is run. Being in love was the explosion that started it.” That’s the reason I said to you, friend, *it is not love that keeps your marriage; it is your marriage that keeps your love*—the deeper kind of love.

Now, sometimes people say, therefore, “Well, you know, we’re going to get a divorce because we don’t love each other any more.” Friend, that doesn’t wash. And then, sometimes people say, “Well, you know, we’re going to get a divorce because it would be better for the children.” I’ve heard that ’til I’m sick of it. “It would be better for the children than for the children to hear us wrangle and fuss and fight. For the children’s sake, we’re going to get a divorce.” Now friend, I want to see you look God in the face and tell God it’s for the children’s sake. It is not for the children’s sake. It is your selfishness that causes you to do that. If it were for the children’s sake, you would get together, and you would solve this problem, if the children were really in mind. If you think it’s for the children’s sake, ask the children, and see what the children think about it—and you’ll come up with a different idea.

Someone says, “Well, I owe it to myself to be happy.” No, you don’t. *God’s plan is not for you to be happy; God’s plan is for you to be holy.* If you’re happy, that’s a fringe benefit, but you don’t owe it to yourself to be happy. There’s no such thing as an American right to be happy. Let me tell you what you owe: you owe it to your wife or

your husband to keep your word when you made a marriage vow. You owe it to your children that they will have their own parents. You owe it to yourself to be a man of honor. And if you put away the wife of your youth, you've lied to God. You have dishonored yourself. You don't owe it to yourself to be happy. You owe it to yourself to keep your word.

"Well," you say, "God is telling me, pastor, to get a divorce." No, He's not. God does not have a special dispensation for you. When you pick up the Bible and read it, God doesn't tell you that you are a special exception. When you get married, as I say, you get on the matrimonial airplane, you throw away your parachute.

Now, you can make a decision to do something about a bad marriage. Marriages are not generally healed overnight, but the direction of a marriage can be changed. Why did you get married to begin with? I've seen couples who in many areas have a wonderful marriage but ten percent of the marriage is wrong, and because ten percent of the marriage is wrong, they throw away the other ninety percent. You know, they get married looking for a new deal, and then it becomes an ordeal, and they want to throw it away.

### **III. Marriage Can Be Marked by Hope**

Now, let me come to the conclusion here. Marriage is made by God. Marriage is marred by divorce. But marriage can be marked by hope. I'm talking to many people who are listening through radio, and many in this building, whose marriages have already failed. And if you think I'm trying to make you feel bad, I am not. If you have children—and I've met some already today whose homes have been broken—I know your parents have hearts that have been broken; I know that. I'm talking to some of these kids in the choir whose parents are divorced; I know that. If you think that I'm trying to be a heavy and make you feel bad, I am not. And I want to tell you this: that divorce is not the unpardonable sin.

Now, listen to me carefully. Divorce is not a dead-end street. God does not hold a grudge. God is not angry with you. There are those who would like to make divorced people second-class citizens, somehow not equal to the rest of us. Friend, if you've failed in marriage, just like if you failed in any other way, God is a God of mercy and God is a God of forgiveness. And nobody has sinned themselves beyond the love and grace of God. And once you come to God, and you fail, and you confess that sin, whether it be divorce or any other kind of sin, and honestly repent of it, and receive Jesus, the Bible says, in Romans 8, verse 1: *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."* (Romans 8:1) And again, the Bible says in 1 John 1:7: *"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ*

*[God's] Son cleanseth us from*—what?—*“all sin.”* (1 John 1:7) And those of you who have friends who've been divorced, who've come from broken homes, don't you look upon these people—if they've come to God for forgiveness and cleansing—don't you look upon them as second-class citizens. *“The blood of Jesus Christ [God's] Son [cleanses] us from all sin.”* (1 John 1:7) And there's not a mother's child in this building who is not a sinner who has needed the grace of God and hopefully has received the grace of God. The Bible says also in Isaiah 1:18: *“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”* (Isaiah 1:18)

And there are divorced people. They might come to Bellevue and say, “Well, Pastor Rogers is against divorce.” Yes, I'm against divorce because God is against divorce, but that doesn't mean that you're not welcome here. I have a friend down in Florida, Peter Lord, who has a sign above his church door—he did when he was pastor there—and you walked into the church, there was a sign that said, “Sinners only welcome here.” *This church is not a museum for saints: it's a hospital for sinners.* And we've all sinned and come short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)

I remember reading in the Bible about a woman taken in adultery—in the very act. They brought her to Jesus. They wanted to stone her, but Jesus said, as they went away realizing their own sin, “Doth no man condemn thee?” She said, “No man, Lord.” He said, “Nor do I; go, and sin no more.” (John 8:10–11)

I remember reading in John chapter 4 about a woman who'd been married five times. A thirsty woman had gone from husband to husband trying to find security and happiness and joy, and she never found it. She had a washed-out, broken life 'til she came to Jesus, and Jesus saved her, and Jesus changed her. (John 4:1–42)

God is the God of new beginnings. First Corinthians 6, verses 9 through 11: *“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.”* (1 Corinthians 6:9–10) That is, if you're living a life of sexual immorality, this is your lifestyle, this is your practice—there's no compunction, no remorse, no guilt, no shame, no repentance—God says you're going to hell. But notice what He says in verse 11: *“And such were some of you”—not such are; were—“but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”* (1 Corinthians 6:11)

Now, when we see people who have broken lives and broken hearts and broken homes, what should we do? We need to do exactly what Jesus would do. Jesus was a friend of sinners. Jesus received them. Sure, divorce is wrong, and we're never going to lower the standard here at Bellevue Baptist Church—not because we're mean, but

because we're kind, because we want to set a standard for these kids in the choir, and other kids. We want to say, "This is God's plan: one man for one woman."

¶ And so, if this were a cliff and we didn't want our kids to fall off the cliff, we would build the wall as high as we could. But suppose some fall off, and they fall on the rocks down below. If this were a cliff, a mountain cliff somewhere, what is our job as a church? Our job as a church, friend, is to build this wall as high and strong as we can, but also to have an ambulance service down there at the bottom of the cliff to go down there to pick up the bruised and the broken and to tell them, "God loves you, and we love you, and it is never too late for God."¶

And we cannot afford to wrap our robes of self-righteousness about us and say to these people whose lives have been broken, "There's no room for you here at Bellevue Baptist Church."

## Conclusion

Now, let me just wrap this up. If you are now married, you make very certain that Christ is the head of your home and that your home is not built on mere romance or conditional love, that you have an unconditional love for your mate. Let Jesus give you that love.

Secondly, continue to feed your love day by day. Never take it for granted. I tell my wife—I try to tell her every day, many times, "I love you, darling. You're precious to me. You're beautiful to me." I try to give her a number of hugs and a number of kisses every day to assure her of my love. You men, never flirt with another woman. Never cease to flirt with your own wife. Let her know that you love her, not necessarily for those physical traits, though it's always wise to say something about those. But love your wife. If you don't love your wife more now than you did when you married her, the chances are you love her far less.

Number three: If you have failed, if there's immorality, if there's been a divorce, ask God to forgive you. And if you are the one in the divorce, and it wasn't your fault, and you were opposed to the divorce, forgive the partner. "Well," you say, "they're still doing wickedly." Then ask God to give a spirit of forgiveness in your heart. And if you're married and have a Christian home, make it a testimony to the world.

You know, I've had people tell me, "Adrian, what you preach about the home is not as important as what I see you practice." Your home can be a testimony. Make your home a testimony in your neighborhood. These kids, this world, need to see a godly home personified. That may be the greatest lesson that you'll ever give: just to let others see what a godly, Christian home ought to be. There are kids today, many of them grown up in the ghetto or wherever, they have not got a clue as to what I'm talking about. Find some. Invite them into your home, and let them see what a real home ought



to be. And to you kids in the choir who are yet to be married—forgive me for turning my back—guys and gals, you listen to your pastor. In the name of Jesus, you keep yourself sexually pure, and you only marry a child of God. The Bible says you're not to be *“unequally yoked together with unbelievers.”* (2 Corinthians 6:14) *If you marry a child of the devil, you're going to have the devil for a father-in-law.* You marry in the Lord. Keep yourself pure and wait—wait for the right person.

I told my granddaughter the other day—I said, “I want you to know something: it's better to marry a man worth a million who doesn't have a cent than to marry a man who has a million and not worth a cent.” Now, if you can find one who has a million and worth a million, you've done good. But marry in the Lord.†

# Same-Sex Marriage and the Word of God

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: November 23, 2003**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 19:1–6**

*“And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?”*

MATTHEW 19:4–5

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Homosexuality Is a Moral Problem
- II. Homosexuality Is a Spiritual Problem
- III. Homosexuality Is a Social Problem
- IV. Homosexuality Is a Solvable Problem

Conclusion

## Introduction

Take God’s Word and find, if you would, please, Matthew chapter 19, and I want us to read here, in just a moment, some Scripture. We in America are in a moral free fall, and unless something happens, unless people speak up, we’re going to hit the bottom with a sickening thud.

Now, most Americans would rather not spend time talking about homosexuality, much less homosexual marriages, but we’re, in a way, forced into a corner. The fallout is like a mushroom cloud that covers the land, and it is impossible to escape and unwise to be silent. All the major newspapers and the television news shows have reported the stunning news that four—I say, four—judges in Massachusetts have set the stage for same-sex marriage in America. This ruling ignores the history of our country. It ignores thousands of years of norms of Western civilization. And it is certainly, beyond the shadow of any doubt, contrary to the Word of God.

Matthew chapter 19—I begin in verse 1: *“And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coast of Judaea beyond Jordan; and great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there. The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him”—or “testing him”—“and saying unto him,*

*Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?”—now, they wanted some information about marriage and divorce. But, Jesus goes back to the root of the matter in verse 4—“And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said”—this is Jesus now—“For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain”—or “they two”—“shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”* (Matthew 19:1–6)

Now, if people disagree with that standard for marriage—and there may be some here tonight, or listening through radio—I would submit that it would be better for you to take it up with Jesus than to take it up with me. Just read the Word of God and tell God that this is wrong.

Now, some people say, “Well, it’s nobody else’s business who is married to whom. In America, anyone ought to be permitted to marry someone else, if they wish.” Well, that’s not true in America, and it never has been. For example, an adult can’t marry a child. No adult is permitted to marry a child. In America, you cannot marry a close blood relative. It is forbidden. In America, the law says you can’t marry someone who is already married. In America, the Bible teaches that you can’t marry a group of people. In America, you can’t marry an animal. Now, before long, somebody will want a law that allows a man to marry a monkey. You think that’s funny, and it sounds funny; but somebody will say, “Keep the government not only out of my bedroom but out of my barn.” And, the Bible, of course, speaks against bestiality and cohabiting with animals. No. In America, even now we’re not free just to marry whomever or whatever we wish. And, since the founding of this country, and in Western civilization, and pretty much all around the world, you are prohibited from marrying a person of the same sex.

Now, we don’t allow these things for a good reason. *Biblical marriage is the joining together of a man and a woman to bring the next generation into the world and provide those children with mothers and fathers who will assume unique obligations and responsibilities.*

Now, after forty years in America of this moral relativism, American people still have the understanding of this basic truth that God means for marriage to be between a man and a woman. Pew Research recently has released studies that show that the public rejects homosexual marriage by a margin of fifty percent to thirty-two percent. And interestingly, nearly eighty percent of all Republicans oppose homosexual marriage. Governor Romney of Massachusetts, who is the governor of Massachusetts, where these judges made their ruling, said a few days ago, on November 18, “I agree with three thousand years of recorded history. Marriage is an institution between a man and a woman, and our Constitution and laws should reflect that.” And our President, George

W. Bush, issued a statement recently from London, England, when he was there meeting with Tony Blair, and he said this: “Marriage is a sacred institution between a man and a woman. Today’s decision of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court violates this important principle.” Then our President said, “I will work with the congressional leaders and others to do what is legally necessary to defend the sanctity of marriage.” So, the governor of Massachusetts and the president of the United States have spoken clearly, and I hope that other wise people will speak clearly on this matter.

Now, this cultural storm has been brewing for the last decade, and a handful of power-obsessed judges have determined to force the homosexual agenda down the throats of the American people and to change the legal definition of marriage. I do not have a vocabulary strong enough to state as clearly as I wish the dangerous ramifications of what is happening in the United States and other Western nations.

For thousands of years, traditional marriage has been celebrated by every culture on earth as the cornerstone of society. But think what has happened recently in America. In the late sixties and early seventies, we had something called a “no-fault divorce,” which is an oxymoron. And then, we had radical feminism. I’m not talking about women needing and wanting and expecting equal rights, which they should have; I’m talking about radical feminism that hates marriage and the home. And then, we had a sweeping social revolution led by Hugh Hefner and his ilk—this sexual revolution began, and it has carried on ’til today. We’re reaching the apex—or the bottom—of the pit, whichever way you claim to describe it, that is literally ripping apart the home and dismantling the society that we’ve known, before our eyes.

Now, on top of all of this, we see other straws in the wind. In the middle of this past year, July 28, the New York Board of Education announced the creation of a gay-oriented high school in New York City. That is, the high school is set up especially for homosexuals. And the mayor of New York, Mayor Michael Bloomberg, said, “Everybody feels that it’s a good idea.” Well, he’s wrong about that. And, if you’ve noticed—I guess maybe you’ve noticed; I haven’t; I’ve read this because I don’t watch the television sitcoms; I love my wife’s husband too much for that—but in the sitcoms today so many of them now feature a homosexual character in a positive light.

Now, the legal acceptance of homosexual marriage was little more than a pipe dream just a few years ago, but now it seems to be taking on the proportion of a tidal wave. And the reason for that is that we have lost our moral anchor. We’re back in the time of the Judges, where the Bible says, “*Every man did that which was right in his own eyes*” (Judges 17:6; Judges 21:25)—not which was wrong in his own eyes; “that which was right in his own eyes,” because he has no anchor, no moral standard, so he does what he thinks is right. But the Bible says, “*There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.*” (Proverbs 16:25) G . K. Chesterton

said this: he said, “The danger, when men stop believing in God, is not that they will believe in nothing, but they will believe in anything.” And that’s where we’ve come today. So, there are those who want us to be accepting of a homosexual lifestyle. And most of these, or many of these, who believe that believe in natural evolution. And because they believe in natural evolution, they also believe in cultural evolution. In last Friday’s *Commercial Appeal*, Ellen Goodman wrote an article, and she said this, and I quoted it—I’m quoting it verbatim: “The evolution of gay rights and marriage laws now merge into the definition of marriage written by the Massachusetts court.” What she’s saying is that laws evolve, just like the human race has evolved. And so, we are expected now to accept what they call an “evolution process.”

Well, what we’re going to do tonight is look into the Word of God and see what the Word of God has to say about homosexuality, and then briefly see what the Word of God has to say about marriage. Now, I want to give you some scriptures, and you may jot these down.

## **I. Homosexuality Is a Moral Problem**

I want you to see, first of all, that homosexuality in itself is a moral problem. That’s the first point: homosexuality is a moral problem. Now, what does the Word of God have to say about homosexuality? Now folks, I’m going to give you some black print on white paper, something that it would take an awful lot of fancy footwork to equivocate over. Here it is. Leviticus 18, verse 22: *“Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination.”* (Leviticus 18:22) Now, who said that? God said that. And again, to those who may want to quibble or argue with me, or call me intolerant, or call me a homophobe, or whatever, I would ask you, please, to take it up with God, and read this back to God, and just simply say, “God, that is wrong; I don’t agree with that.”

Again, Romans chapter 1, verses 26 through 28—God speaks of His judgment upon an ancient civilization, and He says this: *“For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections”*—underscore the phrase “vile affections”—*“for even their women did change the natural use”*—underscore “natural use”—*“into that which is against nature”*—underscore “against nature”—*“and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman”*—underscore “natural use of the woman”—*“burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly”*—underscore “unseemly”—*“and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet”*—or “fitting”—that is, these kicks have a kickback. They receive “in themselves that recompence of their error”—*“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient”* (Romans 1:26–28)—or “not fitting.” It is a reprobate mind that argues for this lifestyle. And the reason that people argue for this lifestyle is they do not like to retain God in their mind.

Now, the Bible makes it clear that this is a sin against God, and unless it is forgiven like any other sin, it will be judged at the Final Judgment. Notice 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verses 9 through 11: *“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not”*—now, underscore this—*“shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators”*—what is a fornicator? That’s a person who practices sex outside the bonds of holy matrimony. Fornication, even if you’re not married, is a sin against the person you will marry. Fornication is adultery against the person you will marry. All sexual activity outside the bonds of holy matrimony is called fornication, and it’s clearly forbidden—*“Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters”*—and this is the worship of anything other than the Almighty. And we have today our sex idols. It’s remarkable here that God would mix idolatry into this list of sins; but when you understand how the ancients perverted their religion and actually made sexual gods like Baal and Aphrodite and others, then you can understand why He put idolaters here—*“nor adulterers”*—an adulterer is somebody who has extramarital sexual liaisons, who has a sexual relationship with someone other than his or her spouse—*“nor effeminate”*—the word *effeminate* here is translated in many Bibles “homosexuals”—*“nor abusers of themselves with mankind”*—and then he goes into another litany—*“nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners”*—now, listen to this—*“shall inherit the kingdom of God.”* (1 Corinthians 6:9–11) Now again, that’s black print on white paper. If this is your lifestyle, if you are a fornicator, if you are an adulterer, if you are a homosexual, and this is your lifestyle, God says, “Don’t deceive yourself: you’re not going to heaven.” That’s what God says. Again, you can’t make it say anything else but that.

“Well,” you say, “Pastor Rogers, I’ve committed adultery. Is there no hope for me?” “I’ve committed fornication. Is there no hope for me?” “I am a homosexual. Is there no hope for me?” Of course there’s hope for you, because the next verse, verse 11, says, *“And such were some of you”*—don’t you like that?—*“And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”* (1 Corinthians 6:11) God never says that it’s hopeless. God never says, if you’ve failed, if you’ve sinned, there’s no hope for you. But God says if you blatantly, willfully, arrogantly continue on in an unholy, ungodly lifestyle, it means that you’ve never met the God of grace and the God of glory that Eddie sang about, and you need to be saved. In the Old Testament, in the New Testament, and in historic Christianity, homosexuality has always been treated as a sin, and the Bible is explicitly clear. Now, the homosexual community may say that it is not, and the homosexual community may say what I’m saying now is unloving, and hate speech, and certainly not politically correct; but that still doesn’t change the Word of God. The Word of God is still there, and we don’t have today morality by majority that changes the Word of God.

Now, let me say that homosexuality is a sin of choice. Nobody is a victim of homosexuality, as such; but like any other sin, homosexuality is a sin of choice. Adultery is a sin of choice. Fornication is a sin of choice. Lying is a sin of choice. Prejudice is a sin of choice. These things are wrong. There is only one physical, sexual relationship that is sanctioned and hallowed by Almighty God, and that is one man married to one woman in a marriage that is a lifetime commitment 'til death do them part. And that is God's unchanging standard. I'm not about to change it. I couldn't if I would. I wouldn't if I could. And it makes no difference what the Massachusetts Supreme Court has to say about it. Adultery, fornication, lesbianism, homosexuality, bestiality, and other deviation is a breaking of the Seventh Commandment, that says, "*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*" (Exodus 20:14)

Now, someone says, "Well, what if a person is born a homosexual? What if the problem is in his genetics? Are we to blame people who are helpless victims?" Well, friend, I want to say that homosexuality, as I'm going to point out, is not a genetic problem, as such. Someone may be born with proclivities toward that kind of sin, and some people may be born with proclivities toward adultery or alcoholism. We'll deal with that in just a moment. But the point I'm making is that, according to the Word of God, homosexuality is a moral problem.

## **II. Homosexuality Is a Spiritual Problem**

Number two: Not only is homosexuality a moral problem; it is, therefore, a spiritual problem. The seeds of this sin come from the heart. It is a spiritual problem. Put in your margin "Mark chapter 7," and begin in verse 21: "*For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man.*" (Mark 7:21–23) Now, if a person says, "I have these urges, so therefore it must be all right for me to do them," I would say, "Do you think it's all right for you to commit adultery because you have that desire? Do you think it's all right for you to commit fornication because you have that desire? Do you believe it's all right for you to commit murder because you have that desire? Do you believe it's all right for you to be a thief because you have that desire? Do you believe it's all right for you to be covetous because you have that desire? Do you believe that it's all right for you to do wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, have an evil eye, blaspheme, and be filled with pride and foolishness because you have that desire?" These things are a spiritual problem. They come out of the human heart. All of us have a potential for all kinds of sin because we're human beings. That doesn't make it right.

We hear much today about "latent homosexuality." And a person says, "I have latent homosexuality; therefore, it must be all right." Well, some people have latent adultery.

Some people have latent thievery. Some people have latent murder. Some people have latent lying. There are all kinds of perverse desires in the human heart. But that does not remove the guilt, nor does it remove the responsibility to respond to our sinful nature in a positive and redemptive way. That's what redemption is all about. That's why the Apostle Paul said, *"And such were some of you."* (1 Corinthians 6:11) Here's what the grace of God does to those things, those latent desires that human beings have. Number one: He forgives the sin. Number two: He changes our human nature. Number three: He imparts to us power to live a godly life.

Now, I grant you that some people have a greater propensity to one kind of sin and others to another kind of sin. Very frankly, I've never had a propensity toward homosexuality. I've had a propensity to sin—but not that. Other people would not have a propensity to do some things that I've had a propensity to do. But whatever propensity a person may have does not excuse the sin. Some may have a great propensity for incest, or for child pornography. They may be driven by it. That doesn't make it right. Some people may be genetically inclined to alcoholism. Some people can drink with seeming impunity. Other people have a genetic weakness toward alcoholism. But that doesn't make it right. Others seem to have an inborn desire for adultery. Let us all confess that we're all born with an inclination to sin, but that does not make any individual sin right that God condemns. Do you think that God would cripple someone and then blame them for limping? Do you think that God would give a person an uncontrollable desire and then say, "If you do that, you have sinned"? No.

### **III. Homosexuality Is a Social Problem**

Homosexuality is a moral problem, and homosexuality is a spiritual problem. Now, you say, "It's nobody else's business." Well, let me say, thirdly, that homosexuality is a social problem. The problem affects and defiles an entire nation. Leviticus chapter 18, beginning in verse 22—God is speaking to His people going into the land of Canaan, and here's what God says to them: *"Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination. Neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith."* (Leviticus 18:22–23)

When I said you can't marry an animal, you tittered a little bit, but in today's society where we have humanized animals and animalized humans, who is to say, if I want a monkey for a mate, that's not all right? Who's going to tell me what I can or cannot do? *"Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination. Neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith; neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto: it is confusion. Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you."* (Leviticus 18:22–24) God said, "This is the reason I destroyed and cast out the Canaanite



civilization.” They had gone into sexual perversion to such a degree that they were actually cohabiting, ultimately, with animals, pushing back the frontiers of sin. Genesis 19 tells us of the history of Sodom and Gomorrah, their open and vile homosexuality, and the resulting annihilation of these nations. And the Bible tells us that God left Sodom with its smoking ruins as an example to *“those that after should live ungodly.”* (2 Peter 2:6) God left them as an example.

Homosexuality was the downfall of Jerusalem. In 1 Kings chapter 14, God tells why He brought judgment to Jerusalem back in those days, beginning in verse 24. The Bible says, *“And there were also sodomites in the land: and they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD cast out before the children of Israel”*—that’s why God cast them out. And then, the Bible says—*“And it came to pass in the fifth year of king Rehoboam, that Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem”* (1 Kings 14:24–25) because those who were living in Jerusalem had taken on the very habits, the very lifestyle, of those that God drove out so that there could be a Jerusalem to begin with.

Anybody who studies secular history can find in a study of secular history what has happened when homosexuality overcomes a nation. Greece reached its apex as an empire three hundred years before Christ. If you visit Greece, as some of us have done, go to the Parthenon, the Acropolis, see that beautiful building that came out of the Golden Age of Pericles, perhaps the most architecturally perfect building in the world, and realize that that was an antiquity in the times of Christ. We have nothing like that in modern society that we can point to for beauty. But Greece, at the peak of its national glory, allowed homosexuality to become an important influence, and then the Grecian Empire, the Greek Empire, began to die.

The same thing happened to Rome. Rome was the greatest empire the world ever knew. The Roman Empire was unparalleled in power and pomp, but it began to decline because of sexual morals. Fourteen Roman emperors were homosexuals. Nero, who led his nation to the graveyard of nations, was controlled by homosexual passions, and they were unbridled. I’ve been to Pompeii and Herculaneum in Italy. The ashes covered it all, but when they uncovered the ruins there of these opulent civilizations, you see the most grotesque and vile depictions of sexual deviancy. Was Vesuvius the judgment of Almighty God?

I’m talking about homosexuality being a social problem. Think of the diseases that we’re faced with, not only because of homosexuality, but because of heterosexual unfaithfulness. Think of all of the diseases here in our city: epidemics of syphilis, gonorrhea, and herpes among heterosexuals who fail to keep God’s law of one man for one woman. Study history and see that God has rewarded chastity with good health, and God has punished promiscuity with disease and death. We’ll say more about that

later on. Four out of five AIDS victims are homosexuals, according to the latest statistical report that I have received. Of the rest, many are victims of contaminated blood donated by homosexuals. Some are intravenous drug users who share needles with homosexuals, some are women who have been infected by bisexual men, and some are children who were born to women who've been infected by these practices. The AIDS epidemic could be radically, dramatically changed, and ultimately cured, if all we would do is live by this book. That's it—just live by this book! God's plan: one man for one woman 'til death do them part.

“Well,” you say, “Pastor Rogers, it makes no difference what two consenting adults do so long as no one gets hurt.” That's the problem. People do get hurt. And we as a society carry the baggage. We pay the debt, and we have innocent people who are hurt. Someone says, “Do you believe, therefore, that AIDS is the judgment of God?” No, no. God knows how to judge a whole lot better than that. The Judgment is coming. Do you think a little baby that dies of AIDS is under the judgment of God? No. That baby is suffering because some people think they're wiser than God, and transgress the laws of God and the laws of nature, and do that which the Apostle Paul spoke about there in Romans. They do that which is contrary to nature; and so, others get hurt.

¶ If a man takes a baby in his arms and steps out of a twenty-story building, the man is going to be hurt; the baby is going to be hurt. It's not the baby's fault, but that doesn't mean that it's all right, therefore, to step out of a twenty-story building with a baby in your arms.¶

No. Others get hurt. Now, when God judges, judgment is going to come at the Judgment Day, and it will be with exactitude. But sin is an equal opportunity employer, and people get hurt. It's a sin against society.

Now, there are people who will argue with me. I've been preaching long enough to know that I'll get some hate mail and I'll get some arguments—and I don't want that, but I'm not afraid of it. You see, there are people who don't want to hear. Romans 1, verse 26: *“For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature.”* (Romans 1:26) Now, people are free to choose. They're not free not to choose, and they're not free to choose the consequences of their choice. They choose, and then their choice chooses for them.

Now, I want all people to have the right for the freedom of speech. If a person believes I'm wrong, or believes the Bible is wrong, or believes the Bible is a bundle of blunders, or believes that I have twisted and misrepresented the Bible, that individual is certainly free to say so. But I do not believe that a person has a right to a social lifestyle that may destroy the family and bring disease and death that is associated with it.

Now, homosexuals have learned that Christians—so-called Christians—who confront them are bigots, and the American religion today has become the religion of

tolerance. Now, what is the proper attitude? Well, number one, we will always have compassion to those who are struggling with this moral failure as we would with a person who's struggling in any area, whether it be drugs, whether it be alcohol, whether it be promiscuity, whether it be pornography. They're people who need help, and we're here to help them. But it's one thing to help people who struggle against a sin; it's another thing to give in to people who parade it and promote it. We won't allow that to be paraded and promoted before our children, if we can help it. We will help those who need help, but we're certainly not going to aid and abet those who want to push their lifestyle upon us. Romans 1:32—it speaks of these, *“who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.”* (Romans 1:32) Today we live in a society that gets its pleasure from watching moral perversion.

You know what the last legs of a nation are? Turn to Isaiah chapter 3 for a moment. Look in verses 8 and 9 of Isaiah chapter 3. God speaks of what happened to His ancient people Jerusalem. He says, *“For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen: because their tongue and their doings are against the LORD, to provoke the eyes of his glory”—now, listen to this—“The shew of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not. Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves.”* (Isaiah 3:8–9) *Sin that used to slink down back alleys now struts down main streets with pride.* *“They [show] their sin as Sodom, [and] they hide it not.”* (Isaiah 3:9) Now, God goes on to say, *“Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him. As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths. The LORD standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the people.”* (Isaiah 3:10–13)

Somebody needs to speak. Yes, we will have compassion with those who are struggling. Yes, we will resist those who want to normalize this and make us accept their lifestyle or be called wicked or intolerant. Those who want to worship here who need help are always welcome, and they will be treated with kindness and compassion. Those who want to push their lifestyle will find godly resistance. Those who suffer will find compassion. If a person has a disease, how he got that disease is not as important as the fact that he has it and needs help. He's suffering, and we need to show compassion and help to the best of our ability. But we need to protect our families. We need to protect our children. We need to speak without stutter, stammer, or apology.

#### **IV. Homosexuality Is a Solvable Problem**

Now finally, I want to say that this is a moral problem; it is a spiritual problem; it is a

social problem; and I want to say it is a solvable problem. Homosexuals need to know that we love them and that God loves them. They need to learn, again, that their situation is not helpless or hopeless. First Corinthians chapter 6, verses 9 through 11: *“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God”*—but now, listen—*“And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”* (1 Corinthians 6:9–11)

There was an editorial in today’s paper that tried to liken homosexual marriage to the civil rights struggle. Very frankly, if I were a black, I would resent that. I have known of some ex-homosexuals. I’ve never known of an ex-black. It’s not the same. Homosexuality is a lifestyle, and the Bible does not—even our Constitution does not—guarantee conduct rights. It does guarantee civil rights.

Now, some would say it is genetic. Dr. George A. Rekers, Professor of Neuropsychiatry and Behavioral Science at the University of South Carolina School of Medicine—not some Baptist preacher, but this man with his credentials—said, and I quote: “There’s no such thing as a natural inclination toward homosexual involvement. Instead, there are adverse situations in a child’s life that can lead to homosexual temptations.” There is hope. There is power in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

## Conclusion

What is God’s plan for the family? *“For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they [two] shall be one flesh... What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”* (Matthew 19:5–6) Who are the people of marriage? *“Have ye not read, that [God] made them [in] the beginning...male and female[?]”* (Matthew 19:4) What is the priority of marriage? “A man will leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife.” (Matthew 19:5) The marriage relationship comes even before the relationship of parent and child. It is the highest, most holy of all relationships. That is the priority.

What is the purpose? That a man and a woman become one flesh. And, of course, that is demonstrated and shown in our offspring; and God’s plan is that there be a godly seed. Granted, there are some people who are married who cannot, for whatever reason, reproduce, but God’s plan and desire overall is that there be a godly seed. The people: a man and a woman. The priority: leave father and mother. The purpose: one flesh. The permanence: *“What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”* (Matthew 19:6)

I read a silly editorial in today’s paper, or yesterday’s paper. And I won’t call the

man's name, but you go back and read the paper—you'll know whom I'm talking about. And he said, "Rather than worrying about homosexual marriages, we ought to be worried about our heterosexual marriages that are coming apart." He's partly right, but totally wrong. *When you take half of the truth and try to make half the truth all the truth, that half of the truth becomes an untruth.* The fact that our matrimonial ship of state may be slowing sinking in the water doesn't mean that we put on a load of elephants. Because we're failing in one area doesn't mean that we increase the problem. We need to get to work on our homes. God knows that we do.

I want to say I'm not angry. Somebody will say, "Boy, he preached a bellicose, angry sermon." I'm not angry. Look up here. I am sad, and I am concerned. And I think it's time the people of God prayerfully but steadfastly said, "Enough is enough."<sup>f</sup>

# Treasuring Marital Fidelity

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: May 1, 1994**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 19:1-6**

## Outline

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## Introduction

**T**ake the Word of God and find Matthew chapter 19, verses 1 through 6. We're told that America has gone through a sexual revolution. In a sense, that is true, but it is not a revolution. *Devolution* is a better word than *revolution*. It's been a disaster. I can remember when air was clean, and adultery was dirty, can't you? Times have changed in America, but God's Word has not changed. The message today is to help you as parents to keep your children from being sucked down into swirling sewers of depravity, led by the money-grabbing, adulterous generation in Hollywood. The message today is a serious message and a needful message: "Treasuring Marital Fidelity." *"And it came to pass, that Jesus finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came unto the coasts of Judaea beyond Jordan; and great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there. The Pharisees also came unto*

*him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female...”*—may I just say parenthetically that Jesus believed in divine creation, and Jesus believed in the separation of the sexes. Now, look at this—*“he...made them in the beginning male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder”* (Matthew 19:1–6).

## **I. The Provision of the Married Life**

Now there are several things I want you to notice, as we look into God’s Word, about treasuring marital fidelity. The very first thing I want you to see with me today is the provision of the married life. God made them in the beginning male and female. God ordained marriage in the Garden of Eden. Marriage is not old-fashioned. It is not out of date. It is not worn out. It’s not like the kerosene lamp or the Model-T Ford. It has not become obsolete.

Think with me for a moment about God’s provision of the married life.

### **A. The Plan for Marriage**

It is a plan of God. It is a plan divine in creation. Look again in verse 4: *“And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female...?”* (Matthew 19:4).

Marriage is the first institution ordained of God. Marriage came before laws. Marriage came before civilization. Marriage came before government. Marriage even came before a system of worship and the church. It is the primary—the primary—institution of God. And, regardless of the tragic failures of the past, or our generation, the hope, the desire, for marriage is born anew in every generation, because it is something that God Almighty has put in the hearts and minds and constitution of people.

Now we have modern sociologists who are trying to disprove this. As a matter of fact, one of our college students handed me a paper this past week of a sociology course being taught at the University of Memphis. The paper handed to this student by the professor said this: “Family is a product of any given society at a particular time in history. As the social structure of society changes, so too must the form or structure of families and the function and role that families play in society.”

Now, what is that saying? That the family is just the product of society. It is the product of the times. It is the product, perhaps, of some evolution; but marriage did not originate in some primordial ooze, some prehistoric swamp of immorality. Marriage was ordained of

Almighty God in the Garden of Eden, and Jesus said, *“What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder”* (Matthew 19:6; Mark 10:9). And the ultimate authority of marriage rests with God, and not with man or society.

## **B. The Priority of Marriage**

That’s the plan. Now, the priority. Marriage is supreme above any other earthly commitment. Look in verse 5: *“For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh”* (Matthew 19:5). Parents are not the supreme commitment. We’re to honor our parents; but the Bible teaches that a man is to leave father and mother, and cleave unto his wife. That means that the purse strings and the apron strings are to be cut.

Children are not the prime commitment. We’re to love our children and care for our children; but you make a tragic mistake if you’re a wife and you pour all of that devotion into those children and not into your husband, because the children sooner or later are going to leave the home. Mate-to-mate is a higher relationship, in the Bible, than child-to-parent. That’s what God’s Word teaches. *“For this cause shall a man leave [his] father and mother, and cleave unto his wife.”*

The business life is not the supreme commitment. Many of you are in danger of sacrificing your home on the altar of your business. Many business people today are expected to give that supreme loyalty to their business.

*One man was told by his company that he had to transfer and go to another place. His wife thought that would be terribly upsetting. He said, “Well, she’ll just have to get used to it. If she wants to stay with me,” he said, “she ought to realize that my job is important. I can always find another wife.”*

You know, it’s a strange thing. I didn’t mean that to be funny. There’s a little murmur that went through, because, you see, that that was too close to reality—that was too close to reality. I can always find another wife. We think that a man is a success if he has a divorce at twenty-eight, an ulcer at thirty-one, a cardiac at forty-five, and a big job.

## **C. The Permanence of Marriage**

Think of the plan. Think of the priority. Think of the permanence of marriage. Look in verse 6: *“Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder”* (Matthew 19:6)—one man for one woman till death do them part. In spite of this, a judge at a national conference in a symposium said, “Let’s just face facts. I suppose we will just like to allow our young people to have two or three marriages before they settle down.” God forgive—God forbid—our throwaway marriages. One man for one woman till death do them part. That is the permanence.



## D. The Product of Marriage

What is the product of marriage? Look again in verse 6: *“one flesh.”* Nothing more beautiful, nothing more intimate. A man and wife are like a violin and a bow. One is inadequate and incomplete apart from the other. Together, they make wonderful music.

Over here on a mountaintop is a little rivulet, a little stream, that begins to trickle down; over here in a distant mountain there bubbles up from a spring another little rivulet, and it begins to trickle down; and these take all kinds of courses coming down the mountainside, and then those two rivulets meet, and the water intermingles, and from then on they become one stream.

Now that’s like marriage. *This* and *this* become one flesh. Now, don’t get the idea that holy matrimony is some sort of a penalty. We talk about a monogamous marriage, and some say, “Oh, that’s a monotonous marriage.” They think of holy wedlock as deadlock. But you see, friend, God’s plans are for your good and your welfare. God loves you. *“The LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly”* (Psalm 84:11).

*When God says, “Thou shalt not,” He’s saying, “Don’t hurt yourself.” When God says, “Thou shalt,” He’s saying, “Help yourself to happiness.”* Incidentally, a new survey has recently been done and commissioned by the Family Research Council. That’s a pro-family lobbying group in Washington, D.C. And this is what that council found. Listen to this. People most likely to report that they’re very satisfied with their current sex life are married people who strongly believe that sex outside of marriage is wrong. Now, listen. People who keep God’s laws concerning sex, as a rule, enjoy more sex and enjoy sex more than those who break God’s law.

The poll found out that seventy-two percent of these married traditionalists—that is, one man for one woman till death do them part—seventy-two percent of married traditionalists report sexual satisfaction. This was thirty-one percent higher than unmarried non-traditionalists. Don’t let anybody make you envious of Hugh Hefner, or—I hate to profane my mouth—Madonna—excuse me. Hey, you’re not being left out of the hook. I’m telling you that God has a wonderful plan for you, and it operates best according to instruction.

First Corinthians chapter 7, verses 3 thorough 5—put this in your margin: *“Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency”* (1 Corinthians 7:3–5).

What does all of that mean? That means, friend, that God gave us sex, not only for procreation, but God gave us sex for fellowship, communion, joy, comfort, mutual love. In the Bible, when a husband and wife would come together sexually, the Bible would use this phrase: “thus-and-such a person knew his wife.” What does that mean? It means that sex is a form of communication that cannot be put into words. It is a way of saying “I love you” that you cannot say any other way.

Listen to me. When God has said in His holy Ten Commandments, “*Thou shalt not commit adultery*” (Exodus 20:14), and when God has said in the Epistles, “*Flee fornication*” (1 Corinthians 6:18), God is not trying to keep sex from you. God is keeping sex for you. Did you get that? You see, sex is a wonderful, beautiful gift of God. It is one of God’s most loving, wonderful gifts. And so, when God says, “*Thou shalt not commit adultery*,” it is because the married thing is so wonderful God does not want you to adulterate it.

If you had a Rembrandt, or Van Gogh, chances are you wouldn’t have that hanging in your family room wall. It would be in a vault somewhere. And God has protected this thing of sex because it is so intrinsically beautiful and wonderful. And when God says, “*Thou shalt not*,” He is not negative concerning the sexual life. He is very positive concerning sex rightfully given.

So sex is like the sod in your yard. It’s beautiful there. Take a shovel and put it on your living room floor—and it’s just dirt. In its place, it is right. Out of its place, it is so wrong.

## **II. The Pollution of the Married Life**

So that brings me to the second thing. First of all, I’ve talked to you about the provision of the married life: “*Have ye not read, that [God who] made them at the beginning made them male and female...?*” Now I want to talk to you about the pollution of the married life. Look in verses 7 through 9: “*They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication,*”—that word means, “sexual immorality”—“*and shall marry another, commiteth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery*” (Matthew 19:7–9).

What is our Lord saying? Our Lord is saying that adultery is a sin that pollutes the married life. *To adulterate* means, “to make impure.” And, again, God does not want you to make impure something that is so pure and so wonderful. When a man or a woman commits adultery, what kind of a sin do they commit? Let me tell you what kind of sin.

## A. Adultery Is a Sin Against the Self

First of all, they sin against themselves. They sin against their own body. I'm going to give you a number of scriptures in the rest of this message. Please don't turn to them, because we frankly do not have time. But I want you to note them on a piece of paper. First of all, he sins against himself. First Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 18—the Bible says, *"Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body"* (1 Corinthians 6:18). That means there's something absolutely unique about the sin of immorality. There is no sin more harmful spiritually, mentally, physically, and emotionally than the sin of adultery. It is unique in all of the list of sins. When you commit that sin, you sin against yourself.

Dr. Billy Graham, whom we all know and love, said, "I was speaking recently with the head psychiatrist at a great Eastern university, and that psychiatrist said that over fifty percent of all of the university students there are suffering psychological problems because of immoral relationships." It's an interesting thing. We know that today there are social diseases, and they are based primarily in immorality. And we're wondering what we can do about the AIDS epidemic. I can tell you what we can do about it. Just begin to obey God's Word—just that simple. All this blabber about safe sex: sex is not meant to be dangerous. Think about it. It is sacred sex, not safe sex: God's plan. Oh, you can sow your wild oats if you want, but you'll also reap them. *Many people want to spend six days a week sowing wild oats, and then come to church on Sunday and pray for crop failure.* God forgives. Nature never does.

Lord Byron, the playboy poet of England, lived fast and loose, and while he was still a young man, he wrote these words:

*My days are in the yellow leaf,  
The flowers and fruits of love are gone;  
The worm, the canker, and the grief,  
Are mine alone!*

—LORD GEORGE GORDON BYRON

What happened to him was this: Satan lied to him.

## B. Adultery Is a Sin Against the Home

Adultery is a sin against the self. Adultery is a sin against the home. Listen to me. The lives of innocent children are being torn apart every year in America because of adultery. The man who commits adultery tells his child this: "Your mother is not worth much, and your father is liar and a cheat. Furthermore, honor is not nearly as important as pleasure.

In fact, my child, my own satisfaction is more important than you are.” That’s what he tells his children when he commits adultery.

Monogamous marriage, one man for one woman, was given by God the Creator for the protection and the development of the deepest psychological, physical, and spiritual needs of humanity. Marital fidelity is the glue that holds the family together, and the family is the core of society. The family has been established to provide for love, physical care, social and spiritual development of the children. And marital fidelity is the glue that holds that unit together. Now you can understand why Satan has leveled his fiery darts against the home through sexual immorality.

### **C. Adultery Is a Sin Against the Church**

Thirdly, not only does the man sin against himself, or the woman against herself; the adulterer sins against his or her own self; they sin against the home; it’s also a sin against the Church. If you’re a member of this church and you’re committing adultery, you’re sinning against me and against every other member, because we’re in this together. First Corinthians chapter 3 and verse 16: *“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy”* (1 Corinthians 3:16–17). We’re in it together. The context of this verse speaks of immorality, and Paul is saying, “How can you commit immorality and so sin against the Body of Christ?” Adultery is a sin against the Church.

### **D. Adultery Is a Sin Against One’s Nation**

Adultery is a sin against this nation. Adultery is an act of treason. It hurts every one of us. Listen to Proverbs 14, verse 34: *“Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people”* (Proverbs 14:34). Listen to this verse—Deuteronomy 22, verse 22: *“If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they both of them shall die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman:”—now, listen to this next phrase—“so shalt thou put away evil from Israel”* (Deuteronomy 22:22). In the Old Testament, under the theocracy—which we do not have today a theocracy—but in the Old Testament, under the theocracy, the sin of adultery was worthy of capital punishment. They would be put away. They would be put to death. Why? To *“put away evil from Israel.” “Righteousness exalteth a nation.”*

Let me tell you one of the most inane things that I’ve ever heard. People say, “What does character have to do with the ability to lead a nation?” May I tell you what it has to do with it? You want to know? Everything! Everything! Not part of it. That is it. “It doesn’t matter what the man’s character is, so long as he can lead the nation.” My friend, how foolish we

are! This is a sin, not only against the self, not only against the home, not only against the church; it is a sin against the nation.

And I want to say something else. And, by the way, if you'll study history, you'll find out that it was immorality that led to the downfall of Greece, immorality that led to the downfall of Rome, immorality that led to the downfall of Egypt, immorality that led to the downfall of Babylon; and when they write the epitaph for America, unless we repent, they'll have to say this was the sin that brought this nation down.

You see, the enemy of the home is the enemy of the nation. Why? Because people who treat sex lightly always treat other people lightly. People who treat sex lightly always treat other people lightly. And there can be no society, there can be no government, without this respect and mutual undergirding of one another.

#### **E. Adultery Is a Sin Against the Lord**

But listen to this. Adultery is a sin against the Lord. I said, is it sin against the self? Yes. Against the home? Yes. Against the church? Yes. Against the nation? Yes. But put all those aside now for a moment and listen to this. Adultery is a sin against Almighty God. It is a clinched fist in the face of God.

When David committed adultery, he rightly said, in Psalm 51 and verse 4, *"Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight"* (Psalm 51:4). Why? Because God has said without stutter or stammer, in the Book of Exodus chapter 20 and verse 14, *"Thou shalt not commit adultery"* (Exodus 20:14). Adultery shows contempt and disrespect for Almighty God. When you commit adultery, you break both God's law and God's heart, because God is a loving God but He is a holy God.

You can be absolutely certain that God will judge the sin of adultery. Jot these scriptures down. Hebrews 13, verse 4: *"Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. You can carry that to the bank. Adulterers and whoremongers, God will judge"* (Hebrews 13:4). Job 31, verse 11: *"For this is an heinous crime; yea, it is an iniquity to be punished by the judges"* (Job 31:11). Leviticus 20, verse 10: *"The man that commiteth adultery with another man's wife, even he that commiteth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death"* (Leviticus 20:10). Again, that is under the old economy, but it shows the attitude of Almighty God.

You say, "Well, it won't make any difference to me." But Proverbs 6, verses 27 and following: *"Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes be not burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet be not burned? So he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife; whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent"* (Proverbs 6:27-29). Proverbs chapter 6 and verse 32:

*“But whoso commiteth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul”* (Proverbs 6:32). First Corinthians chapter 6, verse 9: *“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived:”—oh, listen. Don’t be deceived—“neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind”* (1 Corinthians 6:9)—God says, “If this is your lifestyle, don’t bank on going to heaven, because you’re not, unless you repent.” Ephesians 5:5: *“For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.”* Revelation 21, verse 8: *“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death”* (Revelation 21:8).

When God gave the Ten Commandments, He was giving law, not advice. And law without penalty is only advice. It doesn’t matter who rationalizes it. It doesn’t matter who glamorizes it. It doesn’t matter what Hollywood says. It doesn’t matter what makes Jay Leno laugh. God’s Word is there. It is a sin against Almighty God. You say, “Well, God hasn’t judged me.” No, because you haven’t come to judgment yet. The Bible says, in Romans 2, verse 5, *“But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath”* (Romans 2:5). The day of wrath is not yet here. It will come.

### **III. The Preservation of the Married Life**

Now here’s a third thing I want to say. I’ve talked to you about the provision of the married life. It is a gift of God. I’ve talked to you about the pollution of the married life. Because it is such a wonderful gift, Satan has leveled all of the artillery of hell against it: the chief weapons and its holster are those things associated with sexuality. But here’s the third thing I want you to see—I want to get on a happy note—and that is the preservation of the married life.

God has given us a plan. Look again in verse 4: *“And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?”* (Matthew 19:4–5).

Let me give you six words that begin with the letter *d*, just as a memory device to help you to get your marriage tracking and to keep it tracking—to keep yourself pure.

#### **A. Decision**

The first one is decision—decision. Make a decision that you’re going to live for God. Now God will not force His will upon you. Listening to sermons will not change you unless you decide to obey the Word of God. *“Choose you this day whom ye will serve”* (Joshua

24:15). Give your heart to the Lord. God is not going to force Himself on you. Give your life to Christ.

## **B. Dependence**

Number two: dependence. It is not enough to decide, because you do not have the strength. He is able to deliver you if you will trust Him. *“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it”* (1 Corinthians 10:13).

## **C. Devotion**

Thirdly: devotion. Begin to love the Lord with all of your heart, with all of your soul, and love your wife with yourself. Love with a supernatural love. After this decision, and after this dependence, let God pour His love through you. You are to love your wife, not if you feel like it, but because God commands it. Husbands, love your wives. Women are to be taught to love their husbands. And a love for your mate comes out of a love for Almighty God, primarily. My wife does not mind being second place in my life. She knows that, because Jesus Christ is first in my life, I love her with a love I could not love her with had Jesus Christ not been first in my life.

## **D. Development**

Fourthly: development. Continue to feed your love from day to day. You must nurture your love.

*Love is not like an exquisite gem that you have and hold and look at and treasure as it sparkles with its beauty to be possessed. Love is a growing thing. It's more like flower that needs to be cultivated. It needs to be nurtured. It needs to be protected. And its full beauty can be developed through life.*

If you don't love your wife now more than you loved her when you got married, you probably love her a lot less. I can give this testimony. I love my darling wife now far more than I loved her when I got married. And when I got married, I loved her with all of my heart. But I love her more and more. And she's not here today. I wish she were. But last night I got down on my knees and with tears thanked God for my precious wife. Continue to nurture your wife.

Gentlemen, learn to flirt. Learn to flirt, but not with any other woman—just the girl you're married to. Keep that flirtation going through all of your life. Never call the waitress, “sweetheart,” “honey.” She's not your sweetheart. You've got one sweetheart—just one. Never call somebody else “dear” or “darling.” They're not your dear. They're not your

darling. There is one who needs to know beyond a shadow of any doubt she is sweetheart, she is darling, she is number one. And develop that love, and keep it growing.

### **E. Discipline**

Next: discipline—discipline. Guard your company. Twenty-seven times in the New Testament we're told to run: "*Flee fornication*" (1 Corinthians 6:18). Don't put yourself in bad company. Don't watch garbage. You wouldn't put garbage in your mouth, would you? Why put garbage in your mind? When I was in college, I kept on my desk a motto that said this: "He that would not fall down ought not to walk in slippery places." Keep yourself clean. Keep yourself pure. Watch what you set before your eyes. There needs to be a discipline. And, generally, if you're disciplined in other areas of life—in your sleep, in your diet—you'll find it more easy, natural, to be disciplined in your sexual life also.

### **F. Determination**

Number six: determination—determination. I mean, just get it settled once and for all. Job said, "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look upon a maid" (Job 31:1). The Psalmist said, "*My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed*" (Psalm 57:7)—just absolutely determined.

You know, when I go away to a hotel or a motel somewhere, I don't have to make up my mind whether I'm going to watch filth in that hotel. I don't make a lot of little decisions. I don't make up my mind whether I'm going to consort with somebody else. I've already made up my mind. One big decision will take care of a lot of little decisions. Just make up your mind.

That doesn't mean that you do it in arrogance. That doesn't mean that you're not depending upon the Lord. I've already talked about that when I talked about decision and dependence and devotion. But there needs to be a determination to say, "By the grace of God, I will be pure. I will be clean. My heart is fixed on God, trusting in thee. Friend, it will be worth it.

## **Conclusion**

Now you say, Pastor Rogers, I wish I'd heard this message five years ago, ten years ago. I failed. Yes, but God is a God of grace, and God is a God of forgiveness. When that passage over there in 1 Corinthians says that adulterers shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven, it goes on to say, "*And such were some of you*" (1 Corinthians 6:11). Don't you love that? "*Such were some of you.*" We confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin, and to cleanse us from all—all—iniquity (1 John 1:9). And "What God has called clean, let no man call unclean" (Acts 10:15).



Oh, I'm not trying to minimize the sin when I say that, but I'm maximizing the grace. One of my favorite stories in the Bible is that woman taken in adultery. Jesus said to her, "Does no man condemn you?" She said, "*No man, Lord.*" And He said, "Nor do I" (John 8:11). "The Son of man has not come to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:17). But then He also said what? "*Go, and sin no more*" (John 8:11). Our God is a God of a second chance.

# Family Faithfulness

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: February 14, 1999**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 19:1-9**

## Outline

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Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take your Bibles and turn to Matthew chapter 19. We're going to be talking about "Family Faithfulness"—keeping love alive. I asked Joyce, "Will you love me, Joyce, when I'm old and unattractive?" She said, "Of course I do!" We want to keep love alive. You know, there's something very sad in today's world, and what it is this: we have so many who have what I call throwaway marriages. Somehow it just doesn't work out, so they just throw it away. As somebody said, they start, they get married, as an ideal. Then, that ideal turns to an ordeal. And then, they're looking around for a new deal. That's sad—that's sad.

I can remember when families really were traditional. I came from a traditional family. I married a girl who came from a traditional family. We lived together. Mothers took care of the home. Fathers went off to work. We ate our meals together. We went to church together. We fussed together. We played together. We were a traditional family. That's not true anymore. In the typical family in America both husband and wife work. Another six million-plus households have, not a father and mother, but a single parent. And that means one out of four families are led by a single parent. And experts tell us, in the coming years half of all children will grow up in homes with a single parent, and most mothers will work outside the home.

Now a lot of this is caused by divorce. And I was reading in *Newsweek* magazine. Listen to this: "The landscape is littered with victims of the divorce epidemic,"—notice this is not some Baptist preacher, but it's *Newsweek* talking about a divorce epidemic—"exA wives

raising their children alone, former husbands trying to start new lives and still be good fathers to kids they see only on specified days, and the children themselves often torn between two warring parents.” And this *Newsweek* article went on to talk about a study of sixty divorced middle-class families in Northern California. There was a psychologist—her name was Judith Wallerstein—and she found out, of these sixty couples, only ten percent—only ten percent—of the ex-spouses said they had succeeded in improving their lives. Only ten percent said this divorce made things better. And then she went on to say—Wallerstein says this—“Divorce is seen as a wrenching experience for every family I have seen. And, of course, we know the devastating effect on the children. Broken homes produce broken lives, which produce broken homes, which produce broken lives—and on and on it goes.” No wonder God says, in the Book of Malachi chapter 2 and verse 16, “I hate divorce.” (Malachi 2:16) That’s what God says. God says, “I hate it.”

Now we have the sophisticated intellectuals of today that will tell us that, “We’ve come way past, Adrian, what you believe in, and what you Christians believe in.” So we’re being told today that sex between unmarried couples is normal and acceptable. We’re told that homosexuality is just an alternate lifestyle. We’re told that unmarried motherhood has no great shame to it. We’re told that marriage is not sacred, because nothing is sacred. And the only law today in America, the chief code in America, is, don’t be judgmental. That’s the way we live today.

Well, let’s see what God’s Word has to say. Matthew chapter 19, beginning in verse 1: *“And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judaea beyond Jordan; and great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there. The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him,”*—that means, “testing him”—*“and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?”* That is, “If she’s not attractive, or if she cannot cook, or if she has mismanaged the finances, or if she’s irritable, can I just put her away?” *“And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read...”*—and, by the way, Jesus expects you to read the Bible, my friend—*“Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female...”*—and let me say this: one of the most damning things today that the devil has done is to blur the distinction between male and female. He—*“made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain”*—that is, “they two”—*“shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you”*—or “allowed you”—*“to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his*

wife, except it be for fornication,”—that means, “sexual immorality”—“and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.” (Matthew 19:1-9)

Well, I’m going to stop reading right there for a moment, and I want to lay some things on your heart, because I think in America today somebody needs to speak up and say a word about family faithfulness. We need this more than I can possibly say. Now there are three things I want to lay on your heart this morning, and I pray God that he will write them indelibly upon your heart.

## I. Marriage Is Made by Heaven

The first thing I want you to understand is that marriage is made by heaven—marriage is made by heaven. Look, if you will, in verse 4: “Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?” (Matthew 19:4) Now marriage did not come from sociology. It did not come from the primordial ooze of evolution. Marriage is not some cultural innovation. Marriage is made by heaven. It is God’s plan.

Now, if you could take the best carpenter in the world, and give him the assignment to build a house, but if that carpenter doesn’t know what a house is, there’s no way he can build it—no matter how good a carpenter he is. You can take the best people in the world and say, “Build a home,” but if they don’t know what a home and a family is according to God, there’s no way possible that they can build it, because they have no guide.

Now God gives us the guide here, and in all marriage problems all marriage counseling is all built around three words here—three verbs. Number one is the word *leave*. Look at it: “For this cause”—verse 5—“shall a man leave father and mother,”—underscore that—“and shall cleave...”—underscore that; and then finally— “and they...shall be one flesh”—underscore “they...shall be one flesh.” (Matthew 19:5) And there it is: “leave,” “cleave,” “be one.” That’s what marriage is. You leave and you cleave.

### A. Leave: The Priority of Marriage

Now when God says you are to leave—listen to me—that speaks of the priority of marriage. Now, if you’re making notes, write that down. “Leave” speaks of the priority of marriage. You know what you have as a parent? You know what your task is as a parent? Your task as a parent is to get your children ready to leave the nest.

And the Bible uses this idiom: “as an eagle stirs her nest.” (Deuteronomy 32:11) You know what the eagle does? It has little eaglets there in the nest, and it has a nice place there. The mother has lined it somewhat softly with feathers and bark and leaves; and that

eaglet there is up there high on that crag in that nest, and the mother is bringing the little eaglet a mouse and a nice juicy worm, and everything is fine. But there comes a time when that mother knows that little eaglet has to fly, has to leave the nest; and so she begins to go in there and beat that little bird with her wings and flap over that bird and get it up on the precipice and finally push it over; and it begins to fall, and tumble and tumble, and scream and screech. Finally, it stretches its little wings and catches the wind. And if it looks like it's going to fall, she'll just sweep under it, catch it on her wings, bear it up on her wings, and bring it back into the nest. But what she's doing is teaching that little bird to fly. That's the same thing you do with your children. You're going to have to teach them to leave the nest.

And you know what my responsibility has been as a father, and your responsibility is? If you still have children in your home, it is really to work yourself out of a job. I am successful when my children no longer need me. You are successful as a mother when your children no longer need you. Now it's against human nature to want to work yourself out of a job. You know why we have children to begin with? I'm not talking about biologically; I'm just talking about what the emotional need is. We have a need to be needed. God built that into us. We have a need to be needed. We want somebody to depend upon us. So we have a need to be needed, and so the love that you have for your child is that need to be needed. When your baby is born, you look down at that baby: you've never met them before, you don't know anything about them, but you love them, right? You love them. That is called *need-to-be-needed* love. And then, the little baby, she loves mother. Now, does she love mother because mother is charming, because mother is beautiful, because mother is so intelligent, or has a good sense of humor? No, the baby needs more. And so the baby has *need* love, and the mother has *need-to-be-needed* love. So you take *need-to-be-needed* love and *need* love, and there is a bonding.

And so there comes a time, however, when mother is not needed as much as she needs—as she wants to be needed. There comes a time when a child will grow up and will reach a particular age when they don't need mother to make every decision, and to fuss over them, and to care for them, and to guide them, and say, "You must do this," and, "You can't do that." That's normal. That's natural. That's the point we're trying to bring them to: when they no longer need mother; they no longer need father; they can get out in this world and operate on their own. As Jesus said, "*For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife.*" (Matthew 19:5)

But sometimes a mother who needs to be needed at that point will begin to create artificial needs to keep that child tied to the apron strings. Why? Because she needs to be needed. And what will the child do? The child is trying to untie those needs, because he has needs to be an individual himself, and so he's trying to break free. And what do parents

sometimes do? They say, "You are a rebellious child." A child may not be rebellious at that point; but it can turn into rebellion if the parents don't understand that there is a legitimate *need-to-be-needed* time, and there is a legitimate *need* time, but there also comes a legitimate time when that little eagle needs to learn how to fly, isn't that right? And that's very hard for us to work ourselves out of a job like that.

But let me tell you something. When they get to a certain age, they're like a bar of soap. If you squeeze them too hard, they'll pop out of your hand. But you hold them gently, and you understand when that right time is, and you learn this: while you work yourself out of a job, you don't work yourself out of a relationship. And when you let them go as children, they will come back as friends, and they will be the best friend you ever had. I'll tell you, Bob, I'd rather be with my family than be with you, Bob Sorrell. I'll tell you the truth, I really had. And he's my dearest friend on this earth. But I want to tell you something. There's something about your family, as they come back, and they come back as friends. It is absolutely wonderful when we learn what God has said, that, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife."

Now sometimes we talk about mother-in-law problems. You know what mother-in-law problems often are? And especially it's the mother of the groom that causes the problem so many times. It's two women in love with the same man. I mean, she is trying to control him; she still wants him to be her little boy, and the daughter-in-law says, "Hey, he's my husband." And that's where that problem comes from. So, don't commit emotional incest. Let them go!

Now, listen to me. Marriage, in physical relationships, is the supreme commitment. You are to honor your parents; but your parents are not your supreme commitment. "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother." You are to love your children; but your children are not the supreme commitment. Mate-to-mate is a stronger commitment than children-to-parents, and parents-to-children. Now we better learn that. "For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother."

Listen. Business is not your supreme commitment. Some of you businessmen are sacrificing your family upon the altar of your business, and the corporation is just moving people around; and so often that is the cause of great distress. A man sacrifices his family for the corporation. In my estimation, a man is not a success when he has a divorce at twenty-eight, and also at thirty-one, and a cardiac arrest at forty-five. Everybody says, "But look what he did! What a success he is!" To me he's not necessarily a success.

## **B. Cleave: The Permanence of Marriage**

Now, look, first of all: to leave—that is what? The priority of marriage. Now, secondly, watch: and to cleave—to cleave. That is the permanence of marriage. The word *cleave* means “to weld” or “to glue.” When you get married, friend, it is a lifetime contract, not an optional one. You show me two kids who consider divorce as an option, and I’ll show you a family that has a great potential for disintegration. You show me people who do not consider divorce as an option, and I’ll show you a family that will hang together and stay together. Listen to me. Those families who stick it out and those who don’t have basically the same kinds of problems—they have basically the same kinds of problems. There are no problems too big to solve, just people too small to solve them. If we would learn to attack the problem rather than one another, we could work it out.

## **C. Be One Flesh: The Purpose of Marriage**

You see, he says that we’re to leave. That’s the priority of marriage: *“leave father and mother.”* We are to cleave. That is the permanence of marriage. It literally means, I say, “to weld” or “to glue.” And then, he says we are to be one flesh. That is the purpose of marriage—the purpose of marriage. We’re to be one flesh. Now it’s talking about more than sexual union. When you got married, you married a whole person: body, soul, and spirit. And see, you’re no longer an individual; you’ve become one flesh. God’s arithmetic is, one plus one equals one. That’s God’s arithmetic. Marriage is a romance in which both the hero and the heroine die in the first chapter, and a new person comes into being, and that new person is one flesh.

Now we’re to be one flesh physically. And sex is not dirty or impure; it is a wonderful gift of God. Hollywood has made sex dirty. Somebody asked, “Can you remember when the air was clean and sex wasn’t dirty?” Sex is a gift of God. When God says, *“Thou shalt not commit adultery”*; (Exodus 20:14) when God says, *“Flee fornication”*; (1 Corinthians 6:18) when God says, *“Marriage is honourable...and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge,”* (Hebrews 13:4) God is not trying to keep us from sex; God is trying to keep sex for us. It is God’s gift, and so God has put some high walls to protect it and to preserve it. It’s God’s wonderful gift so that a husband and wife can know one another in the most intimate of relationships. As a matter of fact, when husband and wife would have this relationship in the Bible, the Bible would say they “knew” one another. It’s a way of saying “I love you” that cannot be put into words. And the devil has tried to take this which is so wonderful and beautiful and to trivialize it.

Do you know what gives me a great heartache today? The President of the United States broke his marriage vows—and here’s what really breaks my heart: people say, “Well, it’s

only about sex”—“it’s only about sex.” Do you see what this says to the minds of our children? Do you see how this trivializes the whole thing? You know what they’re saying? “Oh, that’s not an important thing”—“that’s not an important thing.” My dear friend, listen to me. That is so radically, fundamentally, indispensably important. Read your Bible. See what God is saying. My God, what has happened to us? Read the Ten Commandments one more time.

So, what is the purpose of marriage? That we might be one flesh physically; that we might be one flesh emotionally. Not only should we be sweethearts; we ought to be friends. My best friend, I said, was Bob. No, you’ve slipped down another totem. My best friend is Jesus, and my next best friend still comes behind my best friend, who’s Joyce. She’s my friend; she’s a friend. She is my lover, she is my sweetheart, but she is my friend because we are one flesh physically, we’re one flesh emotionally, and we are one flesh spiritually, because we love the same Lord, we’re members of the same body, His body. Now, friend, that’s what God wants for marriage—is that wonderful unity. And so Jesus says, “Here’s what marriage is: marriage is made in heaven.” He gives us, dear friend, the purpose of marriage. He gives to us, dear friends, the very essence of what marriage is.

## **II. Marriage Can Be Marred by Hell**

But now here’s the second thing I want you to look at with me today. I want you to see that, not only is marriage made by heaven, but marriage can be marred by hell—marriage may be marred by hell. Look, if you will, in verses 1 to 3: *“And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judaea beyond Jordan; and great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there. The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?”* (Matthew 19:1–3) That is, just as I said, we’re going to be looking for a new deal. Go on down to verse 7. Jesus said, *“They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.”* (Matthew 19:7–9)

Now God desires that marriage be a permanent union. The only reason that Jesus allowed divorce was for immorality, for fornication. Put in your margin Matthew 5, verses 31 and 32. Jesus said, *“It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: but I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for*



*the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.” (Matthew 5:31–32)*

Now, let’s look at this very carefully here. Moses permitted divorce; he never commanded divorce. Jesus said, “From the beginning it was not so; this is not God’s original intent.” A marriage may be broken by the continual marital unfaithfulness of one of the partners. The word *fornication* is the Greek word *porneia*, and it means “sexual impurity.” But even when a husband or wife has been unfaithful and committed adultery, does that mean that a divorce is called for? No. Reconciliation and forgiveness is called for to put the family back together in spite of that; to forgive, to restore, to replace—and it can be done.

Read the Book of Hosea. Hosea the prophet had a wife whose name was Gomer. She finally became a prostitute. She got down to the very depths, to the dregs. Hosea went and found her, bought her from the slave market, restored her, forgave her, and took her back to be his wife. Now God does allow divorce for marital infidelity—and sometimes it’s not possible—but what we try to do even when that happens here in the church is to restore that relationship with forgiveness and grace, and it becomes what I call a “super glue marriage.” You know what a super glue is. It’s stronger where it’s put back together than it was before it was broken. That can happen—that can happen.

We have so many, however, trivial excuses for divorce in today’s world. For example, people say, “Well, the love has gone out of our marriage.” I’ve actually had men come speak to me, say, “I want to divorce my wife.” And I say, “Well, why?” And he says, “Well, I don’t love her anymore.” He doesn’t get a lot of encouragement from me, because the Bible says, in Ephesians chapter 5, verse 25, “*Husbands, love your wives.*” (Ephesians 5:25) That’s not a suggestion. That’s a command. Behind every command of God is the omnipotent power of God to carry it out. Women are to love their husbands. The Bible says, in Titus 2, verse 4, “*That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands.*” (Titus 2:4) We’re commanded to love.

Now part of the problem is the world’s definition of love and our definition of love. Let me ask you guys a question. When you were dating, looking around for a girlfriend, and you were just kind of looking around the field there, what were you looking for? You won’t kid me. I know what you were looking for. You were looking for a looker. You were looking for somebody that was attractive physically. You might also have been looking for somebody who was cute, somebody who was funny, somebody who had a good sense of humor—that meant they laughed at your jokes—somebody who was popular. A face and a body: that’s what you were looking for, and your heart began to, you know, *pump, pump, pump, pump*, and you finally got close to her, and finally got in that situation, and you leaned over and you whispered in her ear something like this: “I love you”—“I love you.” But you know what

you really meant is, “I want you.” The world calls that love. But, you see, that kind of love is very conditional, and a person who’s loved that way and that way only is going to feel very insecure, because, I mean, she might, when she was eighteen, look *this* way, and when she’s forty, it’s *this* way. She has what we call a Supreme Court figure: no appeal. And he might have been so handsome, but now he’s kind of bald and bulky.

And you think about it—you think about it. Now, friend, if we love people because of this attractiveness, you know what’s going to happen? When the attractiveness changes, that kind of love is conditional love. And that’s the reason we have so many people who get divorced, because we have an emotional, conditional love.

A man loves a woman like he loves a sweet orange. He takes a plug out, squeezes the juice out of it, and says, “There’s nothing else left for me,” and throws it on the ground like a piece of garbage. He loves because of what he can get out of it.

Now when the Bible says, “*Husbands, love your wives,*” (Ephesians 5:25) it uses another kind of a word for love. It is the word *agape*—*agape* love. That’s the kind of love that Christ has for the Church, and it is a non-conditional love. Did you know that God loves you unconditionally? And do you know that’s the way you’re to love your mate? Unconditionally. You see, if you do not love, if your mate feels that you do not love them unconditionally, you know what’s going to happen?

This is why we have so many divorces. The very first thing that’s going to be in a person’s mind is fear. You know, “I’ve got to perform; I’ve got to keep the house a certain way; I’ve got to look a certain way; I’ve got to lose a certain number of pounds; I’ve got to do this; I’ve got to do that, because if I don’t, I may lose him”—“I may lose her.” There’s a fear of that. And then, when that divorce comes, what happens? Guilt. “I didn’t live up. I wasn’t good enough. I didn’t perform enough. So I was not acceptable to my mate.” And so somehow we feel guilt. And then after a while that guilt turns to what? Anger. “Now, wait a minute. He has no right to do this.” And that anger says, “I was used, and now I’m discarded.” And then, that anger turns to bitterness. Bitterness is a living hell.

A lot of people are going through just that kind of a thing, because all of that is built on conditional love. The kind of love that the Bible teaches is an unconditional love. And when you know that you’re loved unconditionally, rather than fear, there is peace. And, rather than guilt, there is security. And, rather than bitterness, there is joy. We have to learn to love as Jesus loved. And that’s the reason it takes Christ to make a marriage, because, friend, you don’t have that kind of *agape* love. That is not a human product. The Bible says that, “*the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.*” (Romans 5:5) And when we learn to love unconditionally, we don’t have to listen to the devil’s lies. We have so many

of these lies today. You know, we think that love is some sort of an emotional experience, and, “Well, I love you because you make me feel good.”

No, I’m not going to get finished with this sermon. Man, you did not listen very quickly.

It was Gary Smalley who said that some people treat marriage like a tick treats a dog. They’re only on that dog for what they can get out of it. The problem with marriage is there are two ticks and no dog. We’re trying to make somebody else satisfy and meet our needs, which is basically selfish.

Now, there’s nothing wrong with romantic love; but, friend, romantic love is not enough.

### **III. Marriage Is Always Marked by Hope**

I just want to get to the third point, because I just want to put it in your heart and your mind. I’m going to leave out a lot of stuff about this kind of love. Marriage is made in heaven. Marriage may be marred by hell. But marriage is always marked by hope.

Now I want you to see this. Look at this, if you will. God gives you hope in your home, even if you’ve been divorced, even if you cannot get remarried, or whatever the situation. And I believe there are legitimate times for a person to be remarried; but no matter where you are, whether your home seems to be a living hell, whether you’ve been deserted, no matter what—listen to me—divorce is not the unpardonable sin; it is not a dead-end street. And if you’ve been divorced, you are not a second-class citizen. There’s something called the grace of God.

Now we need to hold that up in this church. Forgiveness is always available. The Bible says, in Romans 8:1, “There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” The Bible says, in 1 John 1:7, “The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses us from all sin.” The Bible says, in Isaiah 1:18, “*Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.*” Our church is not a showcase for saints. You think I’ve brought you in here to make you feel bad because Satan has hurt you? You’re wrong. We’re here as a church to minister to you.

I remember reading in the Bible about a woman taken in adultery. Men were saying, “Stone her”; and Jesus said, “Woman, where are your accusers? Isn’t anybody accusing you?” She said, “No, my Lord.” He said, “Nor do I. Go, and sin no more.” (John 8:1–11) I remember reading about the woman at the well. She had five husbands. She became an evangelist that led the entire city of Samaria to Christ. God used her mightily. (John 4:1–42) God doesn’t hold grudges.

Put this scripture down—1 Corinthians 6, verses 9 through 11: “*Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate,*”—that means, “homosexuals”—“*nor abusers of*

*themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.” Put it down big, plain, and straight: if that’s your lifestyle, that’s the lifestyle you embrace, you need to get saved. You will not inherit the kingdom of God. But now, notice verse 11. I love this: “And such were some of you...”—he did not say, “And such are some of you”—“And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus.” (1 Corinthians 6:9–11)*

Isn’t that wonderful? If you’re in Christ Jesus, you’re a new creature. And I don’t care what has happened in the past: marriages that are made in heaven are either marred by hell or marked by hope. And He is the God of grace and the God of forgiveness. There are many wonderful people who have come out of broken homes and children, families, and heartaches, and tears. We’re here as a church to help and not to hurt, to lift and not to push down further. And we’re here for you. And we want you to know this. Yes, divorce is wrong, and I want to save our kids in this church from it. And so here’s a precipice, a cliff, and we don’t want them to fall over. And so we’re going to build a wall up here as high as we can. But down in the valley we’re also going to put an ambulance to help those who have fallen over. We’re going to make sure there’s gas in it. That’s one of the reasons that Glen Putman is here: to help us to minister to these people.

## **Conclusion**

Now I must close; but, friend, listen to me. If you are married, you make certain that Christ is the head of your home. If your marriage is not a Christian marriage, give your hearts to Jesus Christ, because the devil is working against you. Number two: If you’re married, continue to feed your love day by day. Don’t take it for granted. Number three: If you’re divorced, ask God for forgiveness, if it was your fault. If you were divorced because of someone else’s wrongdoing, forgive in your heart, and don’t let bitterness carry you away. Next: Remember that your godly home can perhaps be the greatest testimony that you’ll have in this world. And if you’re unmarried, I beg you kids, you marry only in the Lord, and build a Christian home. A home is the sweetest place on earth, the nearest place to heaven. It’s the only part of the Garden of Eden that we have left.

# The Carpenter Is Still Building Houses

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** February 28, 1982

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 19:1–9

*“Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”*

MATTHEW 19:6

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## Introduction

Take your Bibles, please, and turn to Matthew chapter 19. We begin our reading in verse 1, Matthew chapter 19, the first book in the New Testament: *“And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judaea beyond Jordan; and great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there. The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it*

*lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery” (Matthew 19:1–9).*

Is marriage obsolete? Is marriage like the kerosene lamp and the Model-T Ford: a thing of yesterday? There are those who are telling us that that is so. There are those who are telling us that we have come through a moral and a sexual revolution, and marriage as we knew it is no longer a viable institution. And we're being told that by Hollywood. We're being told that by newspapers. We're being told that by journals. We're being told that by sociologists. And, God help us, we're being told that by some so-called religious and spiritual leaders. And so we need to go back one more time, as always, to the Word of God, because Americans who do not know the Bible are being sucked down, and young people are being sucked down, into the cesspool of sin because of perverted doctrines and philosophies that have come from the minds of men rather than from the Word of God.

## **I. The Provision of the Married Life**

And so I want us to look at this passage that is before us this morning to see principally three things, the first of which is this: the provision of the married life—the provision of the married life. Where did married life come from? Is it something that man just thought up, or is it something that God provided to meet the deepest, spiritual, psychological, social and economic needs of man? Of course, the latter is true. And as you study the Bible, and as you study the history of man, you will find out that marriage and the home came first. It came before we had any law. It came before we had any government whatever. It came before we had any church or any system of worship whatever. It is the very first and foremost institution of civilization and the basic of all human organization and life.

God Himself created the family. And so, as we look here at the provision of the married life, I want you to notice four principle things.

## A. The Divine Creation of Marriage

First of all, the creation of the home. It is divine in creation. Look at the Word of God again that we just read to you. The Bible says, *“Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause...”*—what cause? The marriage relationship—*“For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no longer twain, but one flesh.”* Now, notice this phrase: *“What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”*

This is God’s business. First of all, God made man; and when God made man, He was pleased with what He had made. As a matter of fact, He was pleased with all that He had made. He made one thing and said, “This is good,” and another, “This is good,” and another, “This is good,” and another, “This is good”; and then He made man, and He said this in Genesis 2:18: *“And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make an help meet for him.”* And what does the word *help meet* mean? It means, “a fitting help.” “I’ll make some something suitable to man; I will make a fitting helpmeet for man.”

Some Bible scholars tell us that, when man first saw woman, when Adam first saw Eve, he said something loosely translated that is like this: “Hot dog!” or “Wowee!” or “Super!” He was really pleased with what God did, because he is saying, *“This is...bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh”* (Genesis 2:23). That is, “Here is someone that I can identify with; that, I am incomplete, and she completes me. This is bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh.” You see, a wife may say of her husband, “I am half a person without him.” A husband may say of his wife, “She completes me, and she makes me all that God intended me to be.”

And so, what is the origin of marriage? God created marriage. God instituted marriage. Marriage did not come up through the evolutionary process, out of the swamps of immorality. Marriage is not some sort of a social conditioning that man has evolved into, and therefore that man may evolve out of. No. Jesus said that God planned it. God created marriage in the very beginning. And the Bible says, *“What God hath therefore joined together, let not man put asunder.”*

Wayne Dehoney, commenting on this scripture, said—and I quote—“The ultimate authority in marriage rests with God and not man. As God joins a man and women in flesh of marriage, neither a third party nor a manmade law must be allowed to disrupt this union. A marriage is neither to be established nor to be dissolved simply to suit the conveniences and contingencies of men.” And that is well said.

## B. The Supreme Commitment of Marriage

Marriage is divine, my friend, in creation. But I want you to notice not only the

creation of marriage; I want you to notice the commitment of marriage. Look again at what the Lord Jesus said in verse 5. He said, *“For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they [two] shall be one flesh”* (Matthew 19:5).

What is Jesus saying here? He is talking about the supreme commitment of marriage. And He’s saying that our relationship to our husbands and to our wives should come even before our relationship to our parents. *“For this cause shall a man leave [his] father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife”*—leave and cleave. There comes a time when we must be cut away from our parents. And the apron strings and the purse strings need to be cut. And here is a new home. God knew exactly what He was doing, because this relationship between husband and wife is to be a deeper relationship and a deeper commitment than even parents are to make toward their own children.

Now I’m not diminishing our relationship to our parents, because the Bible says that we are to honor our parents. And I’m not diminishing our relationship to our children, because they are our offspring. And the Bible says that, *“If we provide not for those of our own house, we have denied the faith and we have become worse than an infidel”* (1 Timothy 5:8). But I am telling you, sirs, I am telling you, ladies, that the relationship between husband and wife is to be the closest relationship upon this earth—closer than a relationship between father and daughter, mother and son. That is how close it is to be.

You see, our children grow up and move away, but that relationship between husband and wife is to remain there. And many a wife has made the mistake of pouring her commitment, her love, her full attention, into her children at the expense of her husband’s unfilled need and affection. And the marriage finds itself in trouble sometimes before the empty nest, and quite frequently after the empty nest, because parents have discovered now that they have poured their lives into their children and have neglected one another, and they failed to understand the wisdom of God in saying that this thing called marriage is not only divine in creation; it is to be supreme in commitment.

And let me say a word to you men. While some women may make the mistake of pouring all of the energy into the children, all of their love, devotion and affection into the children, some of you men are married to your business, and you’re guilty of doing the same thing. And your relationship to your wife is a supreme relationship, and it is to come before the business.

Now the young executive today is almost married to his business, and he is expected by our American success novel to rule his business very much as would rule a wife and to be married to the business as would be married to a wife. And so when the business says, *“do this”* or *“do that,”* he must do it, for, after all, he’s got to be a



success.

And one woman who was a little bit envious of the energy and the time and the commitment that a husband gave to his wife said something about what her husband was doing. And this is the way he responded. He said, "If she wants to stay with me, she ought to realize that it is my job that is important; I could always find another wife." Now what he needed was not only another wife; he needed another life. He had accepted the role model that a man is somehow a success in America if he has a divorce at twenty-seven, an ulcer at thirty, and a cardiac arrest at forty-five; that somehow that had made him a success.

Now what Jesus is saying: of all earthly relationships, even greater than the relationship of parent to child is to be the relationship of husband and wife: *"For this cause shall a man leave [his] father and [his] mother. And...cleave to his wife: and they [two] shall be one flesh."*

### **C. The Faithful Continuance of Marriage**

And not only, dear friend, do we think of the creation, and the commitment of it, but I want you to think of the continuance of it. Notice what our Lord Jesus said also in verse 6: *"Wherefore they are no more [two], but one flesh. What God therefore hath joined together, let not man put asunder"* (Matthew 19:6). It is to be faithful in continuance. This home is to continue. God made one man for one woman until death do them part.

A preacher was preaching this way, and he saw a little lady just shaking her head. She was a pretty little thing, and he went up to her and said, "Don't you agree with this?" She said, "I agree with it. I just want to get in on it."

Listen. God made one man and one woman until death do them part. And we must continue in love.

And one thing that Americans fail to understand is this: that love is not something like a brilliant, gorgeous, resplendent diamond that is there in all its beauty just simply to be apprehended, to be reached out and taken, and there to be enjoyed as a thing of beauty forever. Love is not like that. That's too static. That's too brittle. That's too fixed. Love, rather than being like a diamond, is more like a beautiful flower that needs to be cultivated and fed and cultured, as it continues to bloom, as it continues to grow, as it reaches more and more beauty, and as full pleasure is experienced.

Friend, you must cultivate that love. It must be captivated, and then it must be cultivated.

### **D. The Miraculous Consummation of Marriage**

I want you to think not only of the continuance of it; but I want you to think of the consummation of it. Jesus said, again, that they shall be one flesh. It is miraculous in consummation. This is something that is not said about any other earthly relationship.

The two becomes one. That's strange arithmetic. One plus one equals one. They are no longer two. But they are one socially, psychologically, economically—even physically—as their bodies blend together, they become one flesh.

And it is a mystical and wonderful thing. Over here on a mountainside there bubbles up a little stream that trickles down water out of a pure spring, and it starts to flow down the mountainside; and over here unknown is another little bubbling spring that comes out of the mountainside; and they flow down a very beautiful path, and as they flow down the mountainside they finally meet, and they blend, and they merge, and the two become one, and they intermingle, never to be separated again. Over here is a life; and over here is a life; and by the providence of God that life comes this way; and by the providence of God that life comes that way; and they meet, and they blend, and they merge, and they become one.

The Cherokee in their Indian ceremony when they get married have the brave and the squaw, the bride, to take hands and to wade through a stream together, symbolizing that, as the water cannot be separated, these two in a unique way and in a mystical way have become one. And unwittingly they have picked up the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ here in Matthew chapter 19.

Dear friend, it is to be miraculous in consummation. God knows what He's doing when God says, *"It is not good that the man should be alone"* (Genesis 2:18). And like the violin without the bow cannot make music, and the bow without the violin cannot make music, together they are what God intended them to be. And so we see, first of all, the provision of the married life.

Listen to me, and listen well. Monogamous marriage has been established by God the Creator for the protection and the development of the deepest psychological, physical, and spiritual needs of humanity. God knew what He was doing when He made marriage. And man can never outsmart God. There is the provision of the married life. It was God's plan from the very beginning of creation, the first institution created by God.

## **II. The Pollution of the Married Life**

Now, second, I want you to notice, not only the provision of the married, but I want you to notice, sadly, the pollution of the married life. I want you to continue to read now in verse 7: *"They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? [Jesus] saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, commiteth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery"* (Matthew 19:7–9). Thus saith the Lord.

Now, why has God given these stringent rules? And why has God given these

prohibitions? And why has God been so careful to say what He has said about keeping ourselves sexually and morally pure and one man for one woman? Is God holding out on us? Absolutely not! You see, marriage is so beautiful and so wonderful, and the sexual relationship is of such intrinsic value, that God is protecting it. He is not trying to keep us from it; He's trying to keep it for us. Do you understand?

For example, if over here on the wall we had a painting, a picture, a reproduction of some painting that could be bought in a department store for three or four dollars, and someone came up with a penknife and slashed it, or if someone came up with a ballpoint pen and mars it, that's bad, but it's not a tragedy. After all, it can be replaced. But suppose there is a Rembrandt, a Van Gogh, some beautiful work of art, a masterpiece, that is there, and someone comes up with a ballpoint pen or a penknife or whatever and slashes it, we would say that is a tragedy. It had intrinsic value. It's one of a kind. It cannot be replaced. And so perhaps we would keep it in a vault. Or we would keep it behind a shield.

Now that is what God is doing. When God has built some high walls around this moral, physical relationship, God is putting something so intrinsically valuable inside a shield. And when God says, "Thou shalt not," He's not trying to keep us from sex; He's trying to keep sex for us. *When God says, "Thou shalt not," He's saying, "Don't hurt yourself." And when God says, "Thou shalt," God is saying, "Help yourself to happiness."* God wants you to know this happiness. And that's the reason that the Bible says that, *"Marriage is honourable...and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge"* (Hebrews 13:4).

Now I want you to see, not only the sanctity of married life, but the sinfulness of the immoral life. I want you to see, not only the provision of marriage, but I also want you to see the pollution of marriage, because that's what the word *adulterate* means. It means, "to pollute"—"to pollute"—and we pollute marriage by moral, physical infidelity.

And when a man, when a woman, sins this way, how do they sin?

### **A. They Sin Against Themselves**

Number one: They sin against their own bodies, against their own selves. You know, the Bible says, in 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 18, speaking of this kind of sin, "Every other sin that a man commits is outside his body, but he that commits immorality, fornication, sins against his own body" (1 Corinthians 6:18). It's different than any other sin. There is no other sin that can harm you as deeply, physically, psychologically, morally, intellectually, spiritually, as the sin of adultery. It does something to you that no other sin does. You sin against your self, against the deepest resources and springs of your own being. Billy Graham said that he was speaking with the head psychiatrist at a great Eastern university not long ago and that psychiatrist said to him, "Over fifty

percent of all the university students here are suffering psychological problems because of their immoral relationships.” When a man commits this sin, he sins against himself.

### **B. They Sin Against Their Home**

But wait a minute. Not only does he sin against himself; he sins against his home. Remember now that the home is the building block, the basic unit, of society. He sins against his dear wife; he sins against his children. Don't you think that children have a right to be raised in a home where father and mother love another and where they're true to one another? I say again, the family has been established to provide for the love and the physical care, the social and the spiritual development, of children. A man says, “Well, it's my business what I do.” Well, my dear friends, what about his children? Should they be sacrificed upon the altar of your lust?

### **C. They Sin Against Their Church**

Now, wait a minute. Not only does a man sin against himself, and not only does he sin against his home, but he sins against his church. Is it possible for a Christian to slip into the sin of unfaithfulness and immorality? It grieves me to say it, but when a Christian, even a child of God, takes his eyes off the Lord Jesus Christ and fails to live by the principles of the Word of God, even a child of God may so dishonor his Lord as to fall into this kind of a sin. And when he does, how he wounds the church of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Paul said, in 1 Corinthians 3:16, *“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”* That is, all of us together are a holy temple. Individuals are building blocks in that temple. And then Paul said this: *“If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy”* (1 Corinthians 3:16–17). That is, church wreckers God will wreck. That's what He says. You are the temple of God—and how can a man defile the temple of God? In the context here Paul is speaking of the sin of immorality, and he is saying that there is nothing that so wounds the church and hurts the church as immorality in the lives of the members.

Sometimes a person who is a member of a church will say, “It is not your business what I do.” I beg to differ with you, sir. It is my business what you do, and it is your business what I do, because we are members of the same body.

*That gall bladder a while back, I could have said, “Well, that's no affair of mine.” But it was—it was. That's a part of my body. And when a gall bladder gets out of line, it hurts the whole body—the whole body.*

You see, when one member suffers, every member suffers (1 Corinthians 12:26). And when you gave your heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, when you became a Christian, you were baptized into the Body of Christ, and we are members one of another. And not only do you sin against yourself, and not only do you sin against your family, but you sin

against your church.

#### **D. They Sin Against Their Nation**

And I want to go further and say that you sin against your nation. Immorality is a sin of treason—of treason. The Bible says, *“Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people”* (Proverbs 14:34). It was this sin that led to the downfall of Rome. Gibbon, in his book *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, listed the reasons why Rome fell, and this sin, immorality, was number one. It was this sin that led to the downfall of Greece. It was this sin that led to the downfall of Egypt, and Babylon, and every other great civilization that has gone before us. This was the chief sin, the breakdown of the home, for a nation cannot long endure when the home is hurt, and nothing hurts the home and nothing corrodes the home like marital infidelity and unfaithfulness.

#### **E. They Sin Against God**

But wait a minute. Not only is it a sin against self, not only is it a sin against the family, not only is it a sin against the church, and not only is it a sin against the nation; but, first and foremost, primarily, this kind of a sin is a sin against God. That’s the reason that David was wise enough to say, in Psalm 51, as he considered his horrible, hurtful, heinous, hellish sin, *“Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest”* (Psalm 51:4). Listen, my dear friends. You sin against God. It was God who said, *“Thou shalt not commit adultery”* (Exodus 20:14). I don’t care what Hugh Hefner said—Margaret Mead, some anthropologist, Dr. Kinsey, or somebody else—it doesn’t make any difference what they say. One ounce of what God says is worth a ton of that garbage. We had better go back to the Word of God. It is God who has said, in the Ten Commandments, *“Thou shall not commit adultery.”*

I want you to put down some verses, if you will, for just a moment. I want you to jot them down. Hebrews 13:4—I’ve already quoted it, but I want to quote it again: *“Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but [fornicators] and adulterers God will judge.”* God will. Do you know one of the big mistakes that we make in America? We think that, because God does not judge sin immediately, God is not going to judge sin. That is an awful mistake. *“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap”* (Galatians 6:7). As surely as night follows the day, as surely as God has built into this universe the law of sowing and reaping, whatever a man sows that shall he also reap.

But, you see, we think that God has forgotten us. People need to go back and read Romans 2:5 that says, *“But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath.”* What does that mean? “Treasuring up wrath.”

You're just laying it by. You're just saying that God has forgotten, but God's got it there in His safety vault: *"against the day of wrath."* You are treasuring up wrath, laying it by. God has not forgotten.

Let me give you another verse. The Bible says, in Job 31:11, speaking of this sin, *"For this is a heinous crime; yea, it is an iniquity to be punished by the judges."* Let me give you another verse—Proverbs 6:27 through 29: *"Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes be not burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned? So he that goeth into his neighbour's wife; whosoever touches her shall not be innocent"* (Proverbs 6:27–29). Let me give you another verse—Proverbs 6:32: *"Whoso commiteth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul."* Let me give you another one—1 Corinthians 6:9: *"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate,"*—and that's talking about homosexuals, those that are perverted—*"nor abusers of themselves with mankind..."*

The Bible says clearly, plainly, unmistakably, that those who live this way receive unto themselves the judgment of God. This is God's law. And law without penalty is only advice. And God is not giving advice when God says, *"Thou shalt not commit adultery."* It is a sin against God.

### III. The Preservation of the Married Life

Now, let me move on and give for the last point the preservation of the married life. We've talked about the provision of it. We've talked about the pollution of it. Now, let me talk about the preservation of it. How can husbands and wives live as we ought in this day and this age when we are being bombarded from every side from all the ungodly, demon-inspired philosophies that have been vomited out of hell? How can we be pure in such an unclean age where there seems to be a shortage of everything except filth?

#### A. Decision

Well, let me give you some words, some key words; we will let them start with the letter *d*, the first of which is *decision—decision*. Give your heart to Jesus Christ. I know of no way, and you know of no way, that a man can live as he ought to live without first of all making a decision for Christ. Receive Christ by faith. Do you want a Christian home? You can't have a Christian home without Christians any more than you could have a cherry pie without cherries. Give your hearts to Jesus. Be saved.

#### B. Dependence

And after this decision comes *dependence*. Because you have decided for Him, depend upon Him. He lives within you. *The* Christian life *is not your* responsibility. *It is your* response *to His* ability. He lives within you. Depend upon Him. Look to Him day

by day and moment by moment. Turn your home over to Him.

### C. Devotion

Thirdly, not only decision, and dependence; but *devotion*. Love the Lord, and love your wife, with all your heart and with all your soul. If you love God and love your wife, you are not going to have to worry about running away with somebody else's wife. Just stay deeply in love with your own wife, with your own husband. But you say, "But I don't love him anymore. I fell in love with him, and I fell out of love with him." Rubbish! Love is not moonlight and roses; it is concrete and steel. You love what you decide to love. Have you ever read in the Bible where the Bible says, "*Husbands, love your wives*" (Ephesians 5:25; Colossians 3:19)? That's not a suggestion; that is a command.

And I want you to learn a secret today. In every command of God there is a promise. In every command of God there is a promise. God never commands us to do something that He does not equip us to do. For example, suppose God were to say to me, "Adrian, jump over this church building." I say, "But, Lord, I can't do that." And He says, "Well, you are a sinner, because I told you to." Now, what kind of God is that? A God that commands me to do something that is totally, absolutely impossible for me to do. I couldn't worship a God like that. You see, when God commands me to do something, the same God that commands me to do it enables me and equips me to do it. And so when a man comes to me and says, "I don't love my wife anymore," I say, "Well, decide to love her, and learn to love her. With God's help, you can."

There is a devotion. And the same Bible that says, "*Husbands, love your wives*," in Ephesians, says, in Titus, "Women, love your husbands and love your children" (Titus 2:4). And there is a decision that you make. And you would be surprised how by the grace of God and the aid of God that you can decide to love. And that love, my friend, is a strong love, more than moonlight and roses, and whispers of vows of undying affection. It's got spiritual concrete in it. It's got spiritual steel in it. It's got a foundation that is more than this will-o-the-wisp, now-I-see-it, now-I-don't type of thing.

### D. Development

Now, not only devotion, but the next word that I want to give you is *development*. Continue to feed that love from day to day and from week to week. Help your love to mature. The chances are, if you don't love your wife a whole lot more now than when you married her, you love her a whole lot less. But some people think, again, that love is like a diamond: once possessed, it is yours forever. It is like a flower that must be cultivated and cared for and watered and nourished.

Some women have this philosophy: there's no need to chase a streetcar after you have already got it. And so, after they get married, they let themselves go. Some husbands have the same philosophy.

They are like the man whose wife complained that he never told her anymore that he loved her. He said, “I told you that I loved you when we got married. And if I ever change my mind, I will let you know.”

Nurture that love. It must develop; it must grow.

### **E. Discipline**

And not only is there the word *development*; there is the word *discipline*. You must be disciplined. There are certain things that you do not allow. You guard your company. And if you know a couple that wants to become your social friends, and yet they believe in immorality, they believe in drunkenness, they believe in dope, they laugh at the Bible, they laugh at the church, you saturate that couple with your absence. Just stay away from them. The Bible says that evil companions corrupt good manners (1 Corinthians 15:33). The Bible says, “*A companion of fools shall be destroyed*” (Proverbs 13:20).

Watch what you read. Watch what you entertain yourself with. “As a man thinks, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7). You keep bombarding your mind with sexual stimuli, and before long it’s going to affect you. You remember the verse, “Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can he go upon hot coals?” (Proverbs 6:27–29). You say, “Oh, I can read my sex magazines; I can see these so-called adult movies,”—which are not adult; they are infantile—“but I can watch that and it doesn’t affect me.” Is that true, sir? If that is true of you—at least you say it is true—one of three things is true about you: either you are no man, Superman, or you are a liar. You can’t take that into your mind and it not affect you. “As a man thinks, so is he.” There is some discipline. You watch the company you keep, the things that you do. God holds you responsible for this.

### **F. Determination**

But, finally, there is *determination*—*determination*. You need to make up your mind. Do you know what I’ve found out in life? That one big decision will keep you from a lot of little decisions.

In our family, every now and then, we decide to go out and eat. And, you know, I’ve got the biggest individuals in my family. They all have their ideas; they are all headstrong—except their daddy. And we decide to go to eat, and I back out and I get just as far as where the driveway goes out to the street, and someone says, “Where do you want to go?” And one says this, and the next one says something else, and we get out, and we start slowly moving the car down the street, and we are discussing it all the way. And, boy, we are a one-man energy problem. I mean, all the oil that the Arabs sent last year has gone right down the drain as we try to go to a restaurant.

Now if in the house we had made a decision that we were going to such-and-such a place, every other decision is already made. We get to this corner, and we turn here,



and we turn here, and we turn here, don't you see? One big decision helps a lot of little decisions.

You see, you don't have to go on reconsidering if you are going to get a divorce if you just decide that you are not. You are not. You say with all the unction, function, and emotion of your soul that, *"As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD"* (Joshua 24:15). Do you know what the Psalmist said? *"My heart is fixed, O God"* (Psalm 57:7). Have you ever made that kind of decision? When you got married, you came to that marriage, did you listen to what that minister was saying: "I, John, take thee, Mary, to be my lawfully wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, in sickness and in health, in poverty as in wealth, to love and to cherish and to obey until death do us part; so help me, God"? Did you mean that? Or were you lying? Oh, there needs to be a determination, not in the self, but in the Spirit of God that motivates that determination.

## Conclusion

Do you know what America needs? Revival in her homes. If we get right in our homes, it will filter out into every other area of our lives, including our church. Someone says, "Brother Rogers, my home is in a terrible condition." Jesus performed His first miracle at a wedding. And He can take a broken home and put it all back together, if you will give Him the pieces. You say, "But it's too late for that. I'm already remarried. I've got another family and all of that. What should I do?" He still loves you. You can't unscramble eggs, you can't go back; but you take that, and bring it to Him and say, "Lord, we missed your first plan; here it is now, Lord; we give you this home," and He's a God of grace—He's a God of grace: *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins"* (1 John 1:9). Take that home and make it work for the Lord Jesus Christ.

And God is a great God of grace. But, oh, how we need to hold up a standard for our young people and let them know what the Bible says about the sanctity of marriage! God give us Christian homes! The Carpenter is still building houses today, and He will build yours if you will let Him.

# Family Revival

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: September 5, 2004**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 19:3-6**

## Outline

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## Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn to Matthew chapter 19. And, while you're turning to that, let me tell you that we're seeking and asking God for a revival. And, of course, we want revival in our nation, and we want revival in this our church; but, friend, unless we have revival in the family, we're not going to have revival in the church, nor the nation. So we're talking today about "Family Revival." And I want us to read from Matthew chapter 19. Let's begin in verse 3: *"The Pharisees also came unto him,"*—that is, to Jesus—*"tempting him,"*—that means they were testing him— *"and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."* (Matthew 19:3-6)

We live in a sad day today of broken homes and throwaway marriages, and people are treating adultery as a small thing, pre-marital sex as an incident, and divorce as an

unfortunate occurrence. And we are today desperately, desperately, in need of a spiritual revival. And your family needs revival. I don't care who you are, or where you are: you can always be better, get closer to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so we're going to look at what the Bible says; not what others say. The intellectuals of our day have told us that sex outside of marriage is no big deal. They've told us that pornography is a victimless crime. That's a lie, but they tell us that. Did you know that in the United States of America the pornography business every year takes in twelve billion dollars? I didn't say million—twelve billion. That is more than CBS, ABC, and NBC take in all together. That is more than comes from all professional sports together—football, basketball, and baseball—all that income. Greater than that income is the pornographic business. We are being drowned in a mudslide of filth, and yet, they tell us, that's only freedom of expression.

We've come to a time where an unwed motherhood is looked upon as incidental, and it is quite all right to have a baby outside of wedlock. And many blessed little children are coming into this world without father and mother being married.

And then, we have reached the very bottom—have we not?—when now the homosexuals are asking for homosexual marriages. And four judges in Massachusetts decided they would go against the norms of history, and the teaching of the Word of God, and thousands of years of tradition, and throw over those laws, and institute something called same-sex marriage.

Now there are those who will tell you, "I don't want anybody telling me who I can marry. I'm a free individual." Well, you've already been told who can marry before this issue came up. You can't marry a child. That's against the law. You can't marry a blood relative. That is against the law. You cannot marry someone already married. That's against the law. You cannot marry more than one person. It is against the law. You can't marry an animal. You cannot marry someone of the same sex.

Now what we need to understand is that there are three thoughts that I want to lay on your heart today. And, by the way, some have said, "Pastor Rogers, you're judgmental." Did you know that the one moral absolute today in society is, "Thou shalt not be judgmental"? But, of course, we have to come to the Word of God, so I want us to see what God's Word says about the family—about my family, your family, our families—and we need to go back to the beginning. If you were to ask a carpenter to build a house, he perhaps could do it, but he would have no idea unless he first knew what a house was. And so he has to know what a house is before he can build it. You have to know what a marriage is before you can build your marriage in the name and power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now there are three basic things I want to lay on your heart this morning.

## I. God Has Designed the Family

Number one: God has designed the family. Not some social engineer; it did not rise from the swamps of immorality and evolution: God has designed the family. Look in verses 4 and 5: “*And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?*” (Matthew 19:4–5)

God established monogamous marriage to meet the deepest needs of humankind: emotional, physical, psychological, and spiritual. And God had something in mind when He planned the family.

Now there are three key verbs in the scripture that I’ve just read to you. One is *leave*; the other is *cleave*; and the third is *be one flesh*. Now this is God’s plan for marriage. This is what God designed. This is what God designed for my home and your home, so I want you to listen very carefully.

### A. We Are to Leave

First of all, God says that a person is to leave father and mother. Now, what does that tell us? It tells us that marriage is the supreme commitment. Marriage is a greater commitment than the commitment you have to your parents. Now you have a commitment to your parents. The Bible says you’re to honor your father and your mother, (Exodus 20:12) and may you never ever forget that. But your marriage commitment rises even to a higher priority than your relationship to your parents. You’re to leave father and mother and be joined to your wife.

And it follows, if the marriage relationship is greater than the relationship of parent and child, then the marriage relationship is also greater than child and parent. We are to choose our mate and give higher priority to our mate than any other thing in this world. The first thing is to leave. That means that the purse strings and the apron strings need to be cut.

### B. We Are to Cleave

Now, secondly, not only does he say that we are to leave, but he says that we are to cleave. That word *cleave* means “to weld together” or “to glue together.” Marriage is to be a permanent relationship. Now, listen very carefully, because there are some of you here today who may be considering divorce, or some of you who are listening through television, or later on will get this tape. Divorce is not an option in the Word of God, except for marital infidelity. You are to cleave to your wife till death do you part. It is not something that is incidental. People get married, for an ideal, and the ideal turns to an ordeal, and then they want a new deal. Marriage is for a lifetime commitment.

### **C. We Are to Be One Flesh**

And then he says, not only are we to leave, and we are to cleave, but he says we are to be one flesh. God's arithmetic is, one plus one equals one. Now, why one flesh?

#### **1. We Are to Be One Physically for Multiplication**

Well, we're to be one flesh physically for multiplication. God wants you to have children. Children are a blessing from the Lord. Put this verse down—Malachi chapter 2 and verse 15: *"Did not he make one..."*—that is, husband and wife—*"Did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek"*—listen—*"a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth."* (Malachi 2:15) What does that say in plain English? God made husband and wife one that they might reproduce and have a godly seed.

The sad thing in the world today is that many who ought to be having children are not having children. My heart goes out to those of you who want children and cannot have them, and they would give anything if they could conceive and have a child. But there are many in the world today who no longer consider children a blessing, but rather a curse. Many children are killed in the womb because they would be an impediment to the plans of father and mother. Today there is a new category of persons. They're called *DINKs*: double income, no kids. They figure, if father and mother work, they don't have any kids, then they will have enough to satisfy their material desires. I've told you before, however, that children don't make a rich man poor; they make a poor man rich. And thank God that you don't have to be *DINK*. It sounds like something, doesn't it? A *DINK*.

#### **2. We Are to Be One Psychologically for Communication**

All right, we are to be one physically for multiplication. Listen. We're to be one flesh psychologically for communication. You need somebody by your side. Marriage is the deepest emotional intimacy that you can have. Not only should you be lovers; you ought to be friends. Your wife is your completer, not your competer. And we are to be one psychologically.

*Marriage is like a violin and a bow. The bow may be something over here, and the violin something else; but when they get together, then the music comes.*

#### **3. We Are to Be One Spiritually for Communion**

And then we're to be one flesh, not only for multiplication, and not only for communication, but we are to be one flesh for communion. My wife and I prayed this morning, as we pray every morning together, and we open our hearts to God and to one another. We pray for our children. We pray for you. We pray for our nation. We pray for the nations of the world. And there are few things, if any, that will draw husband and wife

closer together than prayer. And if you are one flesh, then it follows, as night follows day, you ought to pray together. And I'm going to tell you, those of you who are members of our church, if you're not having a family time of devotion, and mister, if you are not praying with your wife, there's something desperately wrong.

Now men don't like to pray with women, because men are self-sufficient. Men don't mind getting the roof off; they just don't like to get the walls down. But there's nothing that your wife needs more than to hear you pray and to hear your heart. And God has made us one flesh.

## II. Satan Wants to Destroy the Family

Now God has designed the family, so it follows, as night follows day, that Satan wants to destroy your family. Look, if you will, in chapter 19 and verse 7: *"They said unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication,"*—that word means "sexual uncleanness"—*"and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery."* (Matthew 19:7-9)

Now, listen to me, folks. God says that marriage is to be a permanent union, but the devil has leveled all of the artillery of hell against the home, and he wants to break up your home. Now there are some today who say, "Well, I'm going to get a divorce. I've got a good reason for getting a divorce." They say, "You know,"—and I've heard this too many times—"the love has gone out of our marriage." Friend, that will not pass by the judgment of God—that the love has gone out of your marriage. You see, *it is not love that holds your marriage together; it is marriage that sustains your love.* And love is not some emotion that you feel; it is a choice of the will.

As a matter of fact, the Bible says, in Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 25, *"Husbands, love your wives."* (Ephesians 5:25) That's not a suggestion. That is a command. What kind of a God would command me to do something I cannot do? Suppose God tells me, "Adrian, jump over this church building." I can't jump over this church building. Therefore God would not command me to do it unless somehow He enabled me to do it. And when the Bible says that husbands are to love their wives, that is a command from God. And *behind every command of God is the omnipotent power of God to carry out that command.*

Over in the Book of Titus—Titus chapter 2, verse 4—God teaches what the older ladies are to do: *"That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands..."* (Titus 2:4) That doesn't say, "to feel like a grasshopper on roller skates." He's not talking about

that kind of love. He says, “Teach them to love their husbands.” That is, it’s something that you can learn; it’s something you can do. Now God has commanded us to love.

Now we have a generation today that doesn’t understand love. Therefore they say, “The love has gone out of our marriage.” Now, what happened when you were dating? You had your little shopping list. You were looking around. You said, “I want somebody good-looking or beautiful. I want somebody who thinks I’m funny. I want somebody with a good personality. I want somebody that has certain physical attributes, and maybe perhaps certain intellectual gifts, somebody who can make me feel good.” And so the time comes when you finally say to that young lady or that young man, “I love you.” That may be true; but more likely, in today’s society, it is, “I want you. I want you because you meet a particular need in my life.” And that kind of love is not the love that God is talking about that binds husbands and wives together. As a matter of fact, that kind of love is a very conditional love. And if those are the reasons that you got married—because of somebody’s charm, or somebody’s beauty, or somebody’s wit—then your marriage is in danger.

Now I’m not saying that charm and wit and beauty are not important. Sure, they’re important. But let me tell you something, folks. Those things fade; they go away after a while. I mean, you may have married a man who was an Adonis, but now he’s bald and bulging. You may have married a woman who was beautiful, but now she’s fat and forty. She has a Supreme Court figure: no appeal. Can you see how dangerous that kind of conditional love is to a marriage? It is basically selfish. And it’s going to bring three attitudes in your partner if you married for that kind of a reason. First of all: fear. They’re going to be afraid that they cannot keep up the conditions of marriage. They’re going to be afraid that somebody else is going to come along that meets those conditions better. Number two: you’re going to feel guilt; “There’s something wrong with me. I did not measure up.” And, number three: you’ll feel, finally, anger. You’ll feel like you have been used. That is conditional love.

God’s love for us is an unconditional love. And when the Bible says that a husband is to love his wife, God uses the word *agape* love, which is unconditional love, and it does not depend upon our meeting those conditions. The Bible says, in Romans 5:8, “*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*” When we know that the husband, the wife, loves the other with an unconditional love, think what that does. You have security in the place of fear. You have peace, which replaces guilt. You have joy, which is going to replace that anger. And so, don’t say that, “The love has gone out of our marriage, and therefore we need to separate.” It’s a lie from hell.

Number two, somebody comes up with this excuse: “It would be far better for our children if we got a divorce than for our children to live in this constant wrangling.” Well,

sociologists have told us that divorce is seldom, if ever, a positive factor in the life of a child—if you're talking about what is better for the child. I suggest you go ask the children, and see what they think about it. Actually, you get the idea that it's better for the children: really, basically, that is selfishness on your part—you want to do what you want, and have what you want to have, and yet you pawn it off as better for the children, and you say, "Well, the only two alternatives we have is divorce, or over here with constant wrangling." Listen to me. There's a third alternative. You get your heart right with God, and stop this wrangling, and don't use some silly excuse for it. The Bible says that we're to *"live peaceably with all men."* (Romans 12:18)

Well, a third person will say, "Well, I owe it to myself to be happy." Oh, you hear this over and over again. Friend, you owe it to yourself to keep your word when you made a marriage vow before Almighty God. And, by the way, you don't live in isolation. Your happiness is not the only thing that matters. Listen. When you say, "I want someone else so I can be happy," do you know what you have said? "God, I don't care about your commandments." Number two: You have defrauded your partner that you've made a holy vow to. Number three: You have dishonored yourself, because you now have broken that vow, and you have wounded your children.

Another wrote this word. I want you to listen: "A man who breaks up his home by adultery is telling his child, 'Your mother is not worth much, and your father is a liar and a cheat. Furthermore, honor is not nearly as important as pleasure. In fact, my child, my own satisfaction is more important than you.'" Don't tell me that you are going to get a divorce because it would be better for the children.

Now there are others, others who say, "Well, I've prayed about it, and God has told me to get a divorce." Oh, yes? You think that God has changed His laws just for you, that you are a special exception? No. Listen. People who get divorces and people who don't get divorces normally have about the same kind of problems. It's how people react to those problems. *There are no* problems *too* big *to* solve, *just* people *too* small *to* solve *them*. We can solve a problem if we will attack the problem rather than one another.

Now if you've got a bad marriage, one sermon is not going to change your marriage, and your marriage will not be healed overnight; but I tell you what you can do in this one service: you can change the direction of your marriage—change the direction. And you can begin to grow a marriage like God wants it to be. You can make that decision. What a tragedy it is when ten percent of the marriage is in trouble and the other ninety percent goes down the drain because people are not mature enough to do what God wants them to do!



### III. You Must Defend Your Family

Now, listen. God has designed the family. Satan wants to destroy the family. Thirdly, you must defend your family. Again, I'm telling you, we are at war. There is a war on the family, perhaps more than any other war, more insidious than the terrorism and other things that we face. I want to say again, this church is no stronger than its families. This nation is no stronger than its families. Matthew 19, verse 6—God says, *"Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."* (Matthew 19:6) Now, folks, God has joined us together, and where there is God, there is hope.

Now, perhaps, you've failed. You say, "Pastor Rogers, the message today is making me feel guilty. Our home is broken, broken beyond repair. We've divorced and gotten remarried. What should we do?" Make the best of that marriage. Though it was not God's original will, you cannot unscramble eggs. And I want you to understand that God is a God of mercy. There are those who are self-righteous people, who want to make divorce an unpardonable sin. They want to make divorce a dead-end road. And yet God's Word teaches that, if we have failed, we can be forgiven. And forgiveness is always available. And listen. If your home has been broken, whether it's your fault or somebody else's fault, I'm telling you that is not the end for you. God has a way for you.

Romans chapter 8, verse 1, says, *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus"* (Romans 8:1)—none! And don't you let the devil condemn you over this. First John 1:9 says, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* (1 John 1:9) And Isaiah chapter 1, verse 18, says, *"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."* (Isaiah 1:18) And people who are self-righteous, looking down upon others who have failed, you need to understand that you've failed also. Who are you to judge someone else? And *the church is not supposed to be so much a showcase for saints as it is a hospital for sinners.* And if you have a need, we ought to be here.

There were people who wanted to stone a woman because she was taken in adultery. And you remember the story—John chapter 8, verse 7: *"So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."* (John 8:7) Now, anybody in this congregation sinless? Of course not! Therefore don't you look down your long nose at somebody who has suffered a broken home. They need your love. They need your compassion. They don't need your condemnation.

Now Jesus, in this same chapter, in John 8, verse 10, said, *"When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine*

*accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her,—listen—“Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more.” (John 8:10–11)*

Now I ask you a question: What would God do with a repentant sinner today who has a broken home? How would Jesus treat them? He would treat them exactly the same way, because the Lord changes not. He says that Jesus is *“the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”* (Hebrews 13:8)

Now, sure, divorce is wrong. If you think I’m minimizing divorce this morning, or marital infidelity, you’re dead wrong. We will never, as a church, lower the bar. We will teach what God’s Word teaches, that marriage is a union where people leave, cleave, and become one flesh. That is God’s plan. We will build at the top of the cliff a fence, a wall, as high, as strong, as we can do it, and we will teach our young people clearly and plainly, with no equivocation, no stutter, no stammer, what the Bible says about marriage. We will build that wall there at the top of the cliff. But, ladies and gentlemen, we also need an ambulance at the bottom of the cliff. We also need to minister to those who have failed in some way. And we are to defend our homes. Now if God has designed it, the devil wants to destroy it. Then it’s up to you, clearly and plainly, to defend the home.

Now, how can you defend your home? I want to give you a few things, and we’ll be finished with the message this morning.

#### **A. Make Sure That Christ Is the Head of Your Home**

Number one: If you are already married, make Jesus Christ the head, the center, the nucleus, of your home. Now your home is like a wheel, and Jesus is the hub; and the closer the spokes in that wheel come to the hub, the closer they are to one another. And let me tell you this: If you will put Christ in the center of your home, that will be, in this day and in this age, perhaps the greatest testimony you can possibly give. I have many people tell me, “Pastor, thank you for modeling the home.” I’m not even conscious of that. It’s something right that we ought to do. But I have had, perhaps, more people say that than say, “I heard your sermon.” I’m telling you, your greatest testimony, if you are saved, with a Christian home, maybe is your home.

#### **B. Continue to Feed Your Love Daily**

Now, number two—make sure that Christ is the head of your home—number two: Continue to feed that love day by day. Now some people get the idea that love—true love—is like a dazzling diamond, something that we find, something that we purchase, something that we keep, something that we enjoy—a diamond is forever. But, no, that’s not what love is. Love is not like a diamond. Love is like a flower, a beautiful flower, and it must be nurtured; it must be cultivated; it must be cared for day by day, like a tender flower that

gets more and more beautiful. And if you don't love your wife more today than you did some years ago, you probably love her less.

Joyce and I have just celebrated a wedding anniversary. And we were married September 2, and we've been married for...—none of your business—and I can tell you without stutter, God knowing my heart, I love my wife more deeply than I ever did, because our love... I loved her when we got married, but love is a continuing, a growing thing.

Now I want to say a word to you men. Never flirt with another woman, even in jest. Never cease to flirt with your own wife. Remember how you used to treat her when you first got married? You'd go round and open the door of the car for her. Now, if a man opens the car door, one of two things is true: either the car is new, or the wife is new. Cultivate that love, and never flirt with another. And if you are married and have a Christian home, make it a testimony to the world.

### **C. If Your Home Is Broken, Ask God for Forgiveness**

Now, next: If your home is broken, ask God for forgiveness. If it was not your fault, deal with that bitterness, and get rid of it. You're not going to make it any better with bitterness.

### **D. If You Are Unmarried, Marry Only in the Lord**

And if you are unmarried—you college students, listen to your pastor—marry only in the Lord. Never, never, no never ever marry an unsaved person with the idea that you can lead that person to Christ. You're asking for trouble. The Bible says, "*Be...not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.*" (2 Corinthians 6:14) An unbeliever is a child of the devil. *If you marry a child of the devil, you get the devil for a father-in-law.* You marry only in the Lord. Do not marry a person in order to change them. And, by the way, you say, "How am I going to find the right person?" Well, to find the right person is to be the right person. And there's somebody else out there that's looking for you, just like you are looking for them. And trust the Lord in this. And be patient.

## **Conclusion**

Now if you want your marriage to last, remember what the Bible says, in the Book of Ecclesiastes: "*A threefold cord is not [easily] broken.*" (Ecclesiastes 4:12) One strand can be broken; two strands can be broken; but three strands together give strength. What is a threefold cord? It is a man, a woman, and Jesus Christ.

Question: Those of you who are married and have good marriages, those of you who have marriages that are on the rocks, those of you who've had a broken home, are you willing to come to Jesus today, and say, "Lord God, I want revival in my home"? There can't be revival in my home unless there's revival in me. And there cannot be revival the church

unless there's revival in the home. And there cannot be revival in the nation unless there is revival in our families. O God, start a revival, and let it begin with me.

God wants you. There are three homes that God wants you to have. God wants you to have a heavenly home. Are you headed there? Are you saved, bound for glory? Are you? Do you know that you're saved? God wants you to have a heavenly home. God wants you to have a family home. And God wants you to have a church home. And Jesus is the key to all three.

# Family Revival

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: September 5, 2004**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 19:3–9**

*“Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”*

MATTHEW 19:6

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## Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and turn to Matthew chapter 19? And when you’ve found it, look up here. In a moment, we’re going to begin reading the third verse of the nineteenth chapter of Matthew. But, you know, we, as a church, have been seeking the face of God for revival. Already in this series we’ve talked about revival in general. Last Sunday, we talked about personal revival, letting our lives be a river of revival flowing out. And today, we’re talking about family revival.

Now, our families are not going to be any stronger than our individuals. And our church is not going to be any stronger than our families. And our nation is not going to be any stronger than our churches. And so, how important it is that we have genuine revival! We’re not talking about a religious spasm, or emotionalism, or worked-up

enthusiasm, but we're talking about a genuine, deep work of God that causes repentance, that brings God's power in our lives, that is transformational to us and transformational to others.

Let's look in the Word of God here, beginning in verse 3: *"The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain"—"no more two"—"but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."* (Matthew 19:3–6)

Now, ladies and gentlemen, this is God's plan for a home, and I hope we'll pay attention to it because there are many social engineers today, and sociologists, and philosophers, and wicked people, who have tried to redefine the family and to minimize what our Lord Jesus has taught about the family.

There are those, for example, who will tell us that homosexuality is to be accepted as a normal thing. Homosexuality, therefore, in the years that most of us have been alive, has gone from a sin to a sickness to a socially acceptable practice. We hear this everywhere.

Number two: We are told that pornography is a victimless crime. And that is a lie out of hell. And many homes are being broken by pornography; many lives are being defiled by pornography. Pornography is a billion-dollar business. Twelve billion dollars every year are spent on pornography. Friend, that is more money than comes in by ABC, CBS, and NBC. Now, that's supposed to be the mainline media, but pornography is bigger than that. Pornography is a bigger industry, a moneymaker, than all major sports, including football, baseball, and basketball. America is being inundated with a tidal wave of slime.

And in America today, we are told that it's all right to have sex outside of marriage. And some of you may be living together and you're not married. You need to repent and break up that situation, or else get married. Friend, it's a sin against God. We're told that unwed motherhood is not a problem at all; and so, little children come into this world without the benefit of father and mother as God had intended. Then, just when we think we have reached the bottom of the barrel, we come along with something called same-sex marriage. It just keeps getting worse and worse.

Now, I'd rather not spend much time talking about this, but like a mushroom cloud it affects all of us. And don't get the idea that it will not, does not, cannot affect you. Four judges in Massachusetts set aside the norm of humanity, thousands of years of history, and declared that there is such a thing as a same-sex marriage.

Now, there are those who will say, "Don't tell me who I can marry. It's nobody's

business but mine.” Well, you’ve already been told, in many ways, who you can marry. For example, you can’t marry a child. That’s against the law. You cannot marry a blood relative. That is against the law. You cannot marry someone who is already married. That is against the law. You cannot marry more than one person at a time. That is against the law. You cannot marry an animal. You say, “Well, pastor, don’t worry about that.” Just wait—just wait. Friend, I am telling you that the devil knows no limits.

Now, we need to understand what marriage is all about because we have a generation that has ceased to be anchored by the Word of God. G. K. Chesterton wisely said, “The danger is that when men stop believing in God, it’s not that they will believe in nothing, but they will believe in anything.” And today, we’ve come to a place in society that the one moral absolute is this: “Thou shalt not be judgmental.” Now, you can do anything else except say that sin is sin and call it by name. But I want us to go back now to the instructions. I want us to learn what Jesus Christ taught about marriage so that we can have revival in our home.

## I. God Designed the Family

First of all, I want you to understand that God has designed the family. The family did not come from the swamps of immorality, or by evolution, or by sociological change. God Almighty has designed the family. Listen to Matthew chapter 19, verses 4 and 5: “*And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them*”—listen—“*male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain*”—or “*they two*”—“*shall be one flesh?*” (Matthew 19:4–5)

Now, if you were to ask the best carpenter in the world to build a house, how would he build it if he didn’t know what a house was—never heard of a house, never seen a house? He couldn’t build it. You cannot build a marriage until you understand what marriage is. And God has set the tone for marriage to meet the deepest, psychological, physiological, emotional, and spiritual needs of humanity. And it is the family unit that holds society together.

Now, in this passage that the Lord Jesus has given to us there are three verbs that stand out: *leave*, *cleave*, and *be one flesh*. This is how God designed marriage.

### A. We Are to Leave

First of all, He says, “*For this cause shall a man leave his father and [his] mother, and shall [be joined] to his wife.*” (Matthew 19:5) A person, in order to be married, is to leave father and mother. Now, that doesn’t mean that you disrespect father and mother. It doesn’t mean that you love them any less. But what He is saying here is that the marriage relationship supersedes the relationship of child and parent, or parent to child.

And the apron strings, and sometimes the financial strings, need to be cut so that children can have the home that God intended. Parents are not the supreme commitment, and children are not the supreme commitment.

Now, you ought to love your children. And God have mercy upon you if you do not love them and bring them up in the fear and the nurture of Almighty God. But the time will come when the empty nest will come. And if you're a wife that has poured all of your love, all of your affection, all of your time on your children to the neglect of your husband, the time will come when the empty nest comes and you're going to find out that you have an empty wedding, empty marriage. Mate-to-mate supersedes all human relationships.

And marriage is to be a permanent relationship. Don't consider divorce as an option whatsoever. You say, "Well, we have problems." Well, do tell. Who doesn't have problems? And married people who get separated have basically the same kind of problems than those who stay together have. There are no problems too big to solve, just people too small to solve them. If you would attack the problem rather than one another, you could solve that problem.

## **B. We Are to Cleave**

You are to leave father and mother and cleave to your wife. (Matthew 19:5) Now, the word *cleave*, what does that mean? It means "to weld," or "to glue," or "to put together in a permanent relationship." Don't even consider divorce as an option. And you just make up your mind that when you get married, you throw away the parachute. You cannot please God by breaking up your home. *Now people get married; they want an ideal. And the ideal turns to an ordeal; and then, they want a new deal.* But you can't do that. You are to cleave to your wife.

## **C. We Are to Be One Flesh**

*Leave, cleave, and be one flesh.* God's arithmetic is one plus one equals one.

### **1. We Are to Be One Flesh Physically for Procreation**

Now, why does God want us to be one? Well, God has made us one flesh physically with our sexual relationship for procreation or multiplication. Put in your margin "Malachi chapter 2, verse 15." He asks this question: "*And, wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed*" (Malachi 2:15) Now that, in plain English, means that God has made us one that we might have godly children. How are we going to populate the world with godly children if godly people don't have children? Now, children are a blessing from God. We have today something called "DINKs": double income, no kids. These are people who selfishly say, "We don't want children. What we want is all of the material things that we can have without children because children will make you poor." Listen to me, ladies and gentlemen: *children don't make a rich man poor; they make a poor man rich.*



What a blessing they are! *“Children are [the] heritage of the LORD.”* (Psalms 127:3) And so, we’re to be one flesh physically for procreation.

## **2. We Are to Be One Flesh Psychologically for Communication**

We’re to be one flesh psychologically for communication. Not only is your wife to be your lover; she is to be your friend, just like this bow and violin. One without the other cannot make music. Together they make that incredible music. We’re to be one psychologically, therefore, for communication, to have someone that we can share the most intimate thoughts of our hearts and our lives with.

## **3. We Are to Be One Flesh Spiritually for Communion**

And then, we’re to be one flesh spiritually for communion. There is no deeper communion than the communion that a husband and wife have with one other when they’re having communion with the Lord.

My wife and I make it a practice to pray every morning, pray every evening. And she prays for me. I pray for her. We pray for our children. We pray for you. And as we’re praying, God’s Spirit is binding our hearts together. It’s more than trite to say that the family that prays together stays together. That’s definitely true. And men, listen, the reason that most families do not have family prayer—or if they do, it’s just a formality; and most men, even preachers, do not pray with their wives—is this: that God made the woman to be a nurturer, to be soft, to be tender. God made the man to be the provider. Adam was to keep the garden and tend it. That is, he is to defend his family; he is to provide for his family. So God, by nature, has given man a harder exterior. Men like to talk. Women like to share. And men don’t like to talk that much. So, it’s hard for a man to pray with someone else if she is a female—even with a male. Men don’t mind getting the roof off, getting right with God, but they don’t like to get the walls down. They don’t like to make themselves vulnerable. They don’t like to open their hearts in prayer. But sir, I want to tell you, your wife needs to hear you pray. Your wife needs to know that you respect her enough and love her enough that you will share your intimate thoughts with her.

And so, God wants us to have one flesh for procreation. God wants us to have one flesh for communication. God wants us to have one flesh for communion. That is God’s plan for the marriage. You need somebody that you can open your heart to.

The late Madalyn Murray O’Hair, the renowned atheist who is now dead, left a diary of at least two thousand pages, and at least a dozen times in those two thousand pages she said these words: “Somebody somewhere love me!” Isn’t that sad? “Somebody somewhere love me!” She didn’t believe in God. She had no intimate friends. She did not have a husband that she could share with and pray with.

## II. Satan Wants to Destroy the Family

Now, God has designed the family. This is God's plan, and you cannot change it and you cannot improve on it: to leave, to cleave, and to be one flesh. Now, the devil wants to destroy your family. That is the work of the devil: to destroy your family. Matthew chapter 19, verses 7 through 9: *"They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery."* (Matthew 19:7–9) There are hard hearts, and those hard hearts are energized by the devil to destroy the home.

Now again, I want you to know that marriage is to be a permanent, lifelong contract and covenant between one man and one woman. And even if there is immorality, even if there is fornication, even if God does permit divorce for that reason, still it's not necessary. He does not command it. And we can take the example of Gomer and Hosea in the Old Testament. Gomer, his wife became a prostitute. Hosea went and bought her from the slave block and restored her back into himself.

Now, there are a lot of people who today think—and some in this auditorium who think—that God is telling you to get a divorce. And you may have all kinds of superficial ideas and reasons. One is that "Well, the love has gone out of our marriage"—as if somehow that gives you a right to get married. Many people don't even understand what love is. Friend, *it is not love that sustains your marriage; it is your marriage that sustains your love.* Your love is something that you can do if you wish to do it. Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 25—here's what God says: *"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."* (Ephesians 5:25) Now, he's not talking about emotionalism there; he's talking about a choice. God has commanded you to love, and anything God commands you to do, you can do.

† Suppose God commanded me to jump over this church building. I cannot jump over this church building. What kind of a God would command me to do something I cannot do?†

*Behind every command of God is the omnipotent power of God to carry out that command.* And God has said, sir, that you are to love your wife.

And again, Titus chapter 2, verse 4—here's God's admonition to older women who would mentor younger women: *"That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children."* (Titus 2:4) We're commanded to love. And if God commands us to love, that means that we can love.

Now, what we need to understand today is that there's a difference between God's love and what Hollywood and others call love. You remember, when you were young,

you sort of had a little shopping list for the person you wanted to marry: they had to be attractive; they had to be witty and friendly; they had to laugh at your old jokes; they had to make you feel good about yourself. And so, the time came when you said to her—or she said to him—“I love you, I love you,” but what they may have meant is, “I want you.” We think that this other person is going to give us the happiness that we deserve, and we’re looking for happiness and joy in an individual rather than Almighty God. And what that kind of love infers is “I want you.” It is a conditional love, not an unconditional love.

Now, it’s really a selfish love. And if you have that kind of love, first of all, that will engender fear in the heart of your partner sooner or later. You know, you may have married a beauty queen, but she’s not a beauty queen today. And there’s a new bevy of beauties coming on, and she’s afraid that she cannot stay up, she may not keep up; and so, there’s this fear: “He loves me because…” and the *because* is fading.

Then there’s another thing that it will incur, and that is guilt, because if you cannot stay up, you’re going to feel guilty; you’re going to feel that you have failed. And then, that will turn to anger and resentment, and you will feel that you’ve been used and manipulated and treated as a thing.

What is God-like love? God-like love that God commands for husbands and wives is an unconditional love. It is not based on conditions. Romans chapter 5, verses 8: “*God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*” (Romans 5:8)

Now, again, if we have this unconditional love, think what that’s going to bring into the family. Well, rather than fear, it’s going to bring security because you know that you’re loved no matter what. And so, security is going to replace that fear. And peace is going to replace that guilt. You’re not going to feel guilty if you’re not able to stay up. And I want to tell you that joy is going to replace that anger when God’s love, that unconditional love, moves into our hearts. Now, remember that this kind of love is not primarily an emotion. It’s not feeling like a grasshopper on roller skates. It is an act of the will. That’s the way God loves us. The Bible says in James chapter 1, verse 18: “*Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be kind of firstfruits of his creatures.*” (James 1:18)

Now, there’s nothing wrong with emotion in marriage. There’s nothing wrong with you finding somebody that makes you feel good. But friend, beyond that there is an act of the will for your marriage. Now, the Bible teaches that we are to stay married. And if we don’t love, we need to learn to love.

“Well,” somebody else says, “I’ll tell you why I think I need a divorce. It would be better for the children if we got a divorce. There’s this constant wrangling between husband and wife, and so, therefore, we need to separate for the children’s sake.” Now, when you say that, you have an unmitigated selfishness. You see, that’s not the only

option—that those children hear you wrangling or else a divorce. There is another option: get right with God—get right with God—and stop that wrangling. You say, “Well, my mate...” Friend, it takes two to make an argument.

Now, you say, “Well, it would be better for the children.” Sociologists tell us that divorce is hardly ever a positive factor in the life of a child. If you think it is better for the child, why don’t you ask the child and see what they say? No, I’m telling you that that is not an excuse before Almighty God. You say, “Well, it’s for the children that I’m doing this.”

Well, somebody else says, “Well, you know, I owe it to myself to be happy.” Who said so, other than you? Marriage is not to make you happy. Now, if you’re happily married, I’m grateful for you. But if you are looking to marriage to meet your deepest needs, that will never be done. And if you are unhappy, you need to understand that God did not let you be married that you might be happy but that you might be holy, that you might keep your word. You see, you don’t live in isolation. It’s not simply your happiness that is a factor. You live with a family. You live in a society. You live as a child of God, if you are.

And so, if you separate, divorce, number one, you have defrauded the partner that you made a holy vow to; number two, you have lied to God; number three, you have dishonored yourself; number four, you have wounded your children. You owe it to God, to yourself, and to your family, to keep those holy vows that you’ve made before God.

Let me give you the words of Kent Hughes. He said this: “A man who breaks up his home by adultery is telling his children, ‘Your mother is not worth much, and your father is a liar and a cheat. Furthermore, honor is not merely as important as pleasure. In fact, my child, my own satisfaction is more important than you are.’” Now, don’t tell me, therefore, that it’s love that causes you to do this.

Another says, “Well, God is telling me to get a divorce.” Oh? You say, “I prayed about it, pastor, and this is what God wants me to do.” Do you think that God is going to bend His Word just for you? Do you think you are some kind of a special exception? No. God’s Word is God’s Word! Marriages are a covenant only to be separated, ended, by death.

Well, you say, “Pastor, we have all kinds of problems in our home. Do you think by a sermon that you’re going to change my family?” No. I’ll tell you what I can do with a sermon: I can make you make a decision. I can hope that you’ll make a decision to start in the right direction. Now, there will be many problems, but what you need to do is to say, “We can—we *will*—by God’s grace, work it out.” It may take time, but you can do it if you will.

### III. You Must Defend the Family

Now, let me say, thirdly, that God designs the family; Satan wants to destroy the family; number three, you must defend the family. There is a war on the homes—on your home. Satan wants to devastate your family. The Bible says in Matthew chapter 19, verse 6: *“Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”* (Matthew 19:6) What the devil wants you to do is to put your home at odds and to drive a wedge between husband and wife. And how terrible that is!

Now, with God there is always hope. Have you failed? You say, “Pastor Rogers, this sermon is too late for me. My home is already broken beyond repair. I’ve already been divorced and married another. I cannot put my home back together.” And indeed, you cannot. You can’t unscramble eggs. What you have to do is take what you have left and bring that back to God again. And let me say something, church: divorce is not a dead-end street, and it is not an unpardonable sin. And we need to stop looking down our judgmental nose at those who’ve been divorced as if we are better than they. You are not better than they.

Now, there’s not a one in this room who does not have sin in his life. And if you have a broken home, I want to tell you that God is a God of forgiveness and God will forgive you and cleanse you. Jot these scriptures down. Romans chapter 8, verse 1: *“There is therefore now”—listen to this—“no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.”* (Romans 8:1) Let no one condemn you if God does not condemn you. The Bible says, in 1 John 1:7: *“If we walk in the light, as he is in the light...the blood of Jesus Christ his Son”—listen—“cleanseth us from...”—a-double-l—“from all sin.”* (1 John 1:7) Now, if a person’s been cleansed from all sin, how can they be looked down upon as a second-class person? Isaiah chapter 1, verse 18, says, *“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”* (Isaiah 1:18)

*The church is not primarily a showcase for saints; it is a hospital for sinners.* You remember reading in the Bible about a woman who was taken in adultery and there were those self-righteous people who wanted to stone her? Jesus knelt and wrote in the sand; and in John chapter 8 and verse 7, the Bible says, *“So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.”* (John 8:7) “All right, step up. Anybody here who has never sinned, you throw a stone at her.” In this auditorium, is there anybody who has never sinned? Is there anybody who’s not had to seek the grace and face of Almighty God? Of course not! So, what did Jesus say to this woman when no one would cast a stone? John 8, verses 10 and 11: *“When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man*

*condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more.*” (John 8:10–11) Jesus did not give her a license to sin. He did not treat sin lightly, especially the sin of adultery. But Jesus said, “I do not condemn you. I do not judge you, because you’ve come to me.” Friend, these people who need the love of Jesus Christ are the ones that we’re trying to reach with our church.

You remember the story of the woman at the well, this Samaritan woman, a much married Samaritan? She’d been married five times—*five times*—and yet the Lord Jesus spoke to her about living water.

Now, what we have to do today is to show the love and compassion of Jesus Christ. What would Jesus Christ do with those who have broken homes? He’d do just what He did in these scriptures I read to you. “*Jesus Christ [is] the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever,*” (Hebrews 13:8) the Bible says in Hebrews chapter 13 and verse 8.

Now, sure, divorce is wrong. You think I’m trying to lower the bar today? I am not. The bar is set by Almighty God. And we’re going to preach to our young people and to those who are married and have not yet had broken homes what God’s standard is. God’s standard is to leave, to cleave, and to be one flesh. But, at the same time, we’re not going to be judgmental and hardhearted to those. What we really need to do as a church is to build a fence at the top of the cliff. The cliff, those who go over the cliff—that’s divorce. What we need to do is to build a fence high, wide, and strong; a wall to keep our young people from falling over. But there are those who are going to fall. And we also need to have an ambulance at the bottom of the cliff to help and pick up the wounded and to help them. There are people who need our help. They don’t need our judgment; they need our love. They need the gospel of Jesus Christ. And Christ was a friend to those who had failed, and He is a friend to you. And He wants to help you today.

Now, how are you going to defend your home? Let me suggest some ways.

#### **A. Be Sure Christ Is the Head of Your Home**

First of all, make certain that Christ is the head of your home. Let your home be centered in Him. Satan is doing all that he can do to destroy your home. But if Christ is the core, if Christ is the center, your home will stand. It is a house built upon a rock. (Matthew 7:24–25)

#### **B. Continue to Feed Your Love Daily**

Number two: Continue to feed your love day by day. Love is not like a dazzling, beautiful diamond, hard and brilliant, that you get to possess. A diamond is forever, and you have it, and you can take it out and look at it and enjoy it. No, a diamond is a dead, hard object—love is like a flower that needs to be nurtured. It needs to be cultivated. It

needs to be fed. If you don't love your wife more today than you did a year ago, most likely you love her less than you did. Friend, nurture that love; feed that love.

### **C. Never Flirt with Another Man or Another Woman**

Next, never flirt with another man or another woman, even in jest. Do not do it. Never cease to flirt with your wife. I flirt with Joyce. She flirts with me. I enjoy it. I hope she does. Do you still open the car door for your wife? Do you? You know, they say if a man is now seen opening the car door, one of two things is new: either the car or the wife. Flirt with her. Let her know that she is special.

### **D. Use Your Home as a Testimony**

Next, if you are married and have a Christian home, use your home as a testimony to this world. That will mean more perhaps than any lesson you can teach in this day and this age. People today actually mock a family where husband and wife are together and the children are loved. They think perhaps somehow you are perverted when you have this kind of a marriage. It is the butt of jokes in the sitcoms to have that kind of a home. And I'm telling you, when you have that kind of a home, it will make a radical, dramatic, testimony to those who are around you.

### **E. If Your Home Is Broken, Ask God for Forgiveness**

Next, if your home has been broken, remember that is not a dead end. If it was your fault, ask God for forgiveness. If somebody has sinned against you, let the love of Jesus Christ cleanse the bitterness out of your heart.

### **F. If You Are Unmarried, Marry Only in the Lord**

Now, next and finally, if you are unmarried, marry only in the Lord. You are not to marry an unsaved person. You cannot have a Christian home without Christians any more than you could have a cherry pie without cherries. You marry in the Lord. Some of you girls say, "Pastor, I'm getting up in age. Where is that man?" And some of you guys are saying, "I can't find the right one." Be patient. Wait on God. The way to find the right one is to be the right one, and God will help you.

And there are a lot of things that are worse than not being married, and number one is being married to the wrong person. The Bible teaches that *"a threefold cord is not [easily] broken"* (Ecclesiastes 4:12) : a man, a woman, and Jesus Christ. Build a home on Christ. Seek the will of God, and marry only in the Lord. If you marry an unsaved person, you're going to marry a child of the devil. Jesus said to the Pharisees, *"[You're] of your father the devil."* (John 8:44) *If you marry a child of the devil, you're going to have the devil for a father-in-law.* Think about it. Friend, marry in the Lord. *"Be...not unequally yoked together with unbelievers."* (2 Corinthians 6:14)

## Conclusion

We need revival in our church—we need revival in our church—and it begins with personal revival. Personal revival helps us to have family revival. Family revival helps us to have church revival. Church revival helps us to have national revival. And it begins with you getting your heart right with God. God wants us to have three homes: a family home, a church home, and a heavenly home—and Jesus Christ is the key to all three.†



# Touching Tomorrow Today

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** November 17, 1996

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 19:13–15

*“But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”*

MATTHEW 19:14

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Source of the Vision
- II. The Strength of the Vision
- III. The Scope of the Vision
- IV. The Strategy of the Vision
  - A. Proposition #1
  - B. Proposition #2
  - C. Proposition #3
  - D. Proposition #4
  - E. Proposition #5
  - F. Proposition #6

Conclusion

## Introduction

In your Bible would you find, please, Matthew chapter 19, and look with me for just a moment at verse 13. These are the words of the Lord Jesus, and I'm so grateful that I have the privilege of sharing them with you today—Matthew 19, verse 13: *“Then were there brought unto him”—that is, unto Jesus—“little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children”—or, “allow little children”—“and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence.”*

(Matthew 19:13–15) “Let the little children come to me,” the Lord Jesus said. So, that's why we're in the Love Offering emphasis this year. I hope you remember the theme of this year's Love Offering. It is “Touching Tomorrow Today.”

Now, tomorrow will be too late. We've got to capture the hearts and minds of these children for Jesus today so we can touch tomorrow through their lives—and we can do it today. To love a child, to teach a child, to prepare for a child is to touch tomorrow today. And, isn't it better to construct a child than to repair an adult? Isn't that better? Isn't it

better to build the love of Jesus in them today?

You know, I get letters from parents, and I'm so blessed when parents write me and when children write me. I write a lot of letters to little children because they write me notes of all kinds. And, I want to share with you a couple here that I have received. Now, I've not asked permission to share these so I'm going to leave the last names off, but here's one to Dr. and Mrs. Joyce Rogers: "I'm sending you a copy of what my son wrote a few weeks ago at school. This was displayed for all the parents to see during open house at Bartlett Elementary. Michael writes things about the Lord constantly in school. I felt like this one needed to fall into the hands of two people who have ministered to my son. Michael completed the New Members Class with Mrs. Rogers in the fall of '95. Thank you, and God bless you."

Now, here's what Michael wrote. This was posted for all the parents to see when they were visiting the school. And, he says, "When I grow up, I want to be a preacher"—now, let me tell you how he spelled *preacher*. I hope he won't be embarrassed by this, but it's *pritcher*. He may grow up to be a preacher because you're looking at a man who can't spell—"When I grow up, I want to be a preacher. I've always wanted to be one. I saw my preacher preach. His name is Adrian Rogers. I want to be a preacher because I love Jesus and the Father of everything: God, Christ, Holy Spirit, and the Richest Ruler. And, for all of you parents, if you don't have a church to go to, here is information. Go to Bellevue. Adrian will preach to your heart, and he's the best preacher I ever heard." And then, he says, "I'm glad God made me" in letters about *that* tall. Doesn't that bless your heart to know that? Praise God!

Here's another letter I got—and I didn't ask for these; they just came to my desk: "I wanted to share this story with you that my daughter wrote about herself. She has such a great love for the Lord. She reads her Bible daily, and she won't even take a drink of water or chew a piece of gum until she thanks the Lord first. She doesn't like to watch television much because she says there are too many bad things on television and God doesn't want us to watch those kinds of things. She is truly a blessing to our family. And, I just want to thank you and all the teachers in the children's department, and I pray that God will continue to bless each of you. I truly believe that the only hope for our children today is our precious Lord."

Now, here is the story that this little girl wrote for her mother. And, you won't be able to see it very well, but if we get up real close, it's just a big heart out here, and it says "Love," and it's a little story for the mother. And, it says, "Love for my wonderful, thankful mom. By Ashley, your child." Then she draws a picture of Ashley. This is Ashley right up there. She's very pretty. She draws her own picture. I know you can't see it, but here's the story. Listen to it: "Once upon a time, there was a woman that was pregnant. One night, her husband had to take her to the hospital. And before you knew it, there popped

out a little baby girl who looked so cute. She was a nice baby. She cried a lot, but she really was an adorable baby after all. When she was about two years old, she'd always go to Sunday school and trust in God, our Lord. When she was about eight years old, she really believed in God, our Lord, who her family and she trusted in. She would always read her Bible and pray every single night. She would dream about heaven every night, wondering what it would be like. When she was ten years old, she knew more about God, our Lord. Then, at that age, mostly kids say bad words, but she, no!"—there's a big "No!" there and an exclamation point—"She prayed for people and read her Bible every night, trusting in our Lord. Boy, is she a blessing to her mom, and family, members, and friends!" And then, she signs this letter, "Dear Lord, Thank you, Lord, for this child. Amen. By Ashley." Isn't that beautiful? Praise God!

Now folks, that's what we're about—building into boys and girls that kind of love, that kind of faith, that kind of courage at that age. Again, when you do that, you touch tomorrow today.

You know, I'm so concerned about our children today. They're in more danger in the twentieth century than children were—I mean, in these last days they are in more danger than children on the frontier surrounded by hostile Indians, and wild beasts, and dust storms, and savage winds. What is displayed in the drugstores, in the newsstand, what comes into the house by television, what is taught sometimes in the schools has the potential of doing them more danger than all of these other things that sometimes children in the previous age had to face. And, it is incumbent upon us that we, as a church, build into these little children great truth.

Don't tell me the little children cannot learn. I have a grandson who lives in Spain who's six years old who speaks fluent Spanish. I can't, but he can. And, he speaks English also. Children can learn, and they need to learn about Jesus. And, the earliest sound they need to hear is, "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so." And, their parents need to learn, and their parents need to come to a church where the Word of God is preached and where people fellowship and love Jesus. And, the parents can't come if there's nowhere to leave the children. But, it's not just babysitting over there. We teach the children in the preschool department and the children's department about Jesus.

¶ A little girl came in to her mother, and she said, "Mother, you know that very expensive vase, that beautiful heirloom that's been in our family for generations and passed down from one generation to another generation to another generation? Mother, you know that vase?" She said, "Yes, sweetheart." She said, "Well, this generation just dropped it and broke it." Now folks, the faith that we have is being passed from one generation to another, and we cannot drop it. We dare not break it.¶

¶ I was listening to some college students the other day, and they were out at Focus on the Family, and one college student said to those of us who were on the board of Focus on the Family—this young man said, “We are running a race,” and said, “Your generation is handing to us the baton. It’s a relay race. But,” this college student said, “you know, when you raced the race, you ran on a racecourse that was laid out; you knew where you were running. Ours is a cross-country race. We don’t even know where we’re running. We don’t even know where we’re supposed to go.”¶

Now folks, that’s why we have this Love Offering, “Touching Tomorrow Today.”

Now, I want you to leave Matthew 18, and I want you to turn to Ephesians chapter 3 with me for a moment, and I want to prepare your heart to make the Love Offering that you’re going to make next Sunday. This offering is born out of a vision. We believe the vision is from God. We believe these facilities came out of a vision. We believe it is of God.

What is a vision? A vision is foresight with insight based on hindsight. It studies history. It sees what God has done, what God has said. It sees what is happening and where we’re going. And then, it gets the heart and mind of God.

Now, the vision that God has given us really does not even center in children, as wonderful as they are. It doesn’t center in the future. It centers in a person. And, as you’re considering your Love Offering, I want you to look with me in Ephesians 3 and verse 20. Here’s what God says: *“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”* (Ephesians 3:20–21) *“Unto him”* (Ephesians 3:20)—that’s the way it begins. Do you know what the mission statement of Bellevue Baptist Church is? We tried to give every member a card with the mission statement on it. We’re going to be saying more at the close of this year and the beginning of next year about our mission statement. But, in case you’re wondering why we exist, in case you’re wondering why we receive this offering, sing these songs, why we built this building, why we come here today, why I’m standing here, why do we do it? *“Unto him.”* (Ephesians 3:20)

Here’s our mission statement: “Number one: Bellevue Baptist Church exists for the purpose of magnifying Jesus through worship and the Word. Two: Making Jesus known to our neighbors and the nations. Three: Moving believers in Jesus toward maturity and ministry.” Would you like to hear that again? “Bellevue Baptist Church exists for magnifying Jesus through worship and the Word, making Jesus known to our neighbors and the nations, and moving believers in Jesus toward maturity and ministry.” Now, if you want to know what we’re about, that’s what we’re about. That’s why we exist. That’s why we breathe. That’s why we live. That’s what we are up to as a church. When you become a member of this church, you get in on that purpose or you’re in the wrong

place. That's what we're all about. It's *"unto him."* (Ephesians 3:20) And, this preschool building, this Love Offering, is an intrinsic part of that vision statement, that mission statement.

Now, I want you to listen to this verse of Scripture that I have before us now, Ephesians chapter 3, verses 20 and 21, and I want to break it down into smaller components.

## **I. The Source of the Vision**

First of all, I want you to think of the source of the vision. Do you know why it is *"unto him"*? (Ephesians 3:20) Because it is from Him. *"For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things."* (Romans 11:36) We don't just try to cook up something around here and ask God to rubberstamp it. We seek God in prayer. We seek the face of God. We do it corporately. We do it with our leadership. We do it with our staff. We do it with our deacons—to try to find the heart and mind of God. I believe that this entire enterprise that we have here—these buildings, this ministry—I believe it is of God. I believe that God laid it on our hearts. It is *"unto him."* (Ephesians 3:20) That's the source of this vision.

## **II. The Strength of the Vision**

Then, I want you to think of the strength of this vision. Look at it: *"Unto him that is able..."* (Ephesians 3:20) Do you believe that God is able to do what needs to be done? Good. One *amen*. God is able. He didn't say, folks, that we would build the Church. He said He would build the Church. (Matthew 16:18) We're not talking about these buildings. Church is not a place that we come to; Church is what we are. We are the people of God. And, the Lord Jesus said He will build His Church. The strength of this vision is He is able. There's nothing that God wants us to do that we cannot do. God would never ask us to do anything that is impossible. If the vision is of Him, it can be done. God's work done in God's way will always be successful.

Now, what we're about is big, and it is not going to happen just ipso facto. It's going to take all of us. But, God is the One who's going to be doing it. And, I ask you this question: Is there anything too hard for the Lord? No!

## **III. The Scope of the Vision**

*"Unto him"* (Ephesians 3:20)—that's the source of the vision. The strength of the vision: *"unto him that is able"* (Ephesians 3:20) Now, I want you to think about the scope of the vision. Look at it again: *"Unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think..."* (Ephesians 3:20) Do you think we think too big around here? We haven't begun—we haven't begun. We need to let God stretch our hearts and God

stretch our minds. *“Unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think...”* (Ephesians 3:20) Do we serve a big God or not? We serve a big God! Is there a lost world out here? There is! Is God concerned? He is! Should we be sitting around rolling marbles when we ought to be moving mountains? No!

When we were downtown, trying to build downtown, we needed at least three more acres—at least three more. We tried to buy three more acres of property. We stained heaven with our prayers. We pushed. We struggled. We negotiated. Prices began to rise. Others said, “I’m not going to sell.” And, we said, “Are we going to stop growing? Lord, we only need three more acres.” We wouldn’t have been able to build a building this size. It would have been a gerrymander on one side of the whole shebang. We would have had to build a parking lot for 1,200 cars, a parking garage. But, we were trying. You know the problem? You know what the problem was? God had a better plan. We were looking for three acres. God said, “I’ve got four hundred acres for you out there on the interstate.” Amen? I mean, when I found out what God was up to, it staggered me, and I said, “Adrian, you just didn’t have enough faith in a big enough God ’til finally God began to unfold the plan.” *“Unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that [ye could] ask”* (Ephesians 3:20)—“that you could ask or think...” You see, that’s the scope of the vision. So many times we put God in a box, and we say, “Now this is all we can do.”

¶ I have read—I guess this is true—that a housefly will never fly more than three stories high. There’s nothing to keep him from doing that, but they say if you live in an area that has a lot of flies and you’re on the fourth floor, you don’t have to have screens on the windows; they won’t fly that high. Now, they will go up an elevator, but they just normally... Why? There’s no reason that a fly cannot fly that high. He limits himself. And, sometimes we limit ourselves, and we say, “Well, this is it. We’re not going to reach out. We’re not going to make provision any more.”¶

The scope of the vision: He’s able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think.

#### **IV. The Strategy of the Vision**

Now, here’s the next thing. I want you to listen to this. The source of the vision: *“Unto him...”* (Ephesians 3:20) The strength of the vision: *“Unto him that is able...”* (Ephesians 3:20) The scope of the vision: *“Unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we [can] ask or think...”* (Ephesians 3:20) Now, pay attention: the strategy of the vision. Now, watch it. How does He do this? Well, look at it very carefully: *“according to the power that worketh in us.”* (Ephesians 3:20) We can’t do it without Him; He will not do it without us: *“according to the power that worketh in us.”* (Ephesians 3:20) He builds the Church, but He does it through us. You see, God wants to release this power

through us.

¶ A man saw an atomic power plant one time, and he asked a friend—this was an atomic power plant that generated electricity—he said, “How much power does that plant generate?” And, the man said, “None!” He said, “Oh, no! I see all these powerful wires going out from here. How much power does it generate?” He said, “None! All that plant does is release power that God has put in the elements.” Think about it. You see, we don’t generate the power. The power is Jesus! And, He is in us! And, what we’re here for is, not to be a dynamo, but to be a conduit of the power that works in us.¶

Do you believe that Jesus Christ is alive and living in this church? If you do, say “amen.” Do you believe He is able to do what He wants to do? Yes. How is He going to do it? He is going to do it through us. That’s the reason I told our church staff, “I’m going to just take a Sunday morning when most of the people are there, and I’m not going to preach like I would normally preach.” And, I know that guests might be there, and they might understand, they might think, “Well, all they’re talking about down there in that big church is money,” but they’d be wrong! We’re talking about boys and girls. Beyond that, we’re talking about Jesus. And, besides that, we’re not asking our guests to give anything. So, you’re just in on a family discussion. What we’re here today for is to tell you what we’re up to and to get our people to understand that God does this through us. It’s His mighty power, but He does it through us.

We’re going to be asking everybody—every member of this church who can understand and old enough to do it—to do two things: we’re going to ask you to make a commitment, which will be a monetary commitment, and number two, a ministry commitment; that is, that not only will you give of your money, but in some way, even if it’s just through prayer—well, let me take that back. I don’t mean, “*just* through prayer.” But, if it’s not—because prayer is not secondary—I shouldn’t have said it that way. But, we’re going to ask you to make a commitment through ministry and money to serve these boys and girls by serving Jesus because we are serving Jesus by serving these boys and girls, because Jesus said, “*Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of [one of these little ones], ye have done it unto me.*” (Matthew 25:40)

Now, let me just walk you through a little bit logically some things, and I want you to see if what I have to say is correct. If I say something now that’s not correct, I want to be challenged on it, so listen carefully.

### **A. Proposition #1**

Proposition number one: God knows the need. Everybody agree? God knows the need. Okay, we’re on the same page.

## B. Proposition #2

Proposition number two: God knows what part He wants me to play in meeting that need, and God knows what part He wants you to play. Okay? Still doing good? I mean, anybody want to challenge that? God knows the need. God knows what part He wants me to play. He knows what part He wants you to play. Okay? Got that?

## C. Proposition #3

Number three: God is able to communicate that to me and to you if we will listen to Him. Okay? Is that right, Bobby? Am I tracking? Okay. God is able to communicate that to us if we will listen to Him—what part He wants us to play. Anybody want to disagree with that? I don't see any.

## D. Proposition #4

Okay, let me go on to the next proposition: What God communicates to me that He wants me to do I am able to do because He would never tell me to do something I could not do. Okay? Still good? Okay. All right. God knows the need. He knows what part He wants me to play. He's able to communicate that to me if I will listen. Whatever He communicates to me that I ought to do I can do.

## E. Proposition #5

But now, number five: If it is of Him, I must depend upon Him in order to do it. Now, if I cook it up, I can do it. But, if He tells me to do it, then I have to depend upon Him to do it. How does He do this? *"According to the power that worketh in us."* (Ephesians 3:20) He's the One who is able, but He does it through us. So, here's the thing: I must depend upon Him. You see, don't just sit back and say, "Now, what can I do?" or, "What should I do?" Say, "Lord, what do you want me to do? And, what are you able to do through me?" Whatever God tells you to do you're able to do, but you must depend upon Him.

## F. Proposition #6

Now, here's the next proposition: what He does through me brings Him glory and not me. Do you see that? Look at it: *"according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus."* (Ephesians 3:20–21) You see, if I get the idea of what I'm going to do and I do it in my own strength, then who gets the praise? Who gets the glory? I do. But, if I get a word from Him, and I obey Him, and I do what He tells me to do in His strength, who gets the glory? Him. Well, now, how long will what He does last? *"Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."* (Ephesians 3:20–21)

## Conclusion

Now folks, if you get in the business of doing what you do in your own strength and in



your own power, by your own wit, by your own wisdom, by your own ingenuity, you know who gets the glory? You do. You know how long it will last? No longer than you do. You want to invest in eternity?

Did you know this—that *Good Morning America*, ABC, on a talk show one morning—you may have seen it—they asked a question. They asked people all over the United States to call in—but in order to call in, you had to be ninety-five years old or older—and call in and say what you would do if you could live your life over. Only people who were ninety-five years of age and older could call in. They took all of the answers, and they boiled them down; and there were three things that these people said they would do. Number one: They said they would take more time to think about the purpose and meaning of life. Number two: They said, “I would be willing to take more risks. I wouldn’t just play it safe. I only have one life. I’d live it to the full. I’d be willing to take more risks.” And they said, number three, “I would invest in more things that count for eternity.” Here they are, ninety-five years old: “If I could do it again, I would want to pour my life into that which counts for eternity.”

That’s what the vision is about: “*Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, [by] the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church...world without end*” (Ephesians 3:20–21)—for all eternity. People say, “You can’t take it with you.” You can take it with you if you’ll invest in something that’s going: the souls of men. And, what a better way to invest it than to invest it in the lives of boys and girls! And, I want to say again, it’s better to build a child than to try to repair an adult.

Think about these boys and girls—how they’re able to learn to play the violin. Most of you can’t play the violin. We can teach them about Jesus. We put the love of Jesus down in their hearts.†

# It Pays to Serve Jesus

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: December 30, 1984**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 19:27–20:16**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Don't Make Bargains with God
- II. Don't Keep Books on Yourself
  - A. They Knew What They Had Done
  - B. They Knew What Others had Done
    1. You Will Lose Your Blessing and Your Reward
    2. You Are Not Going to Keep the Books Right Anyway
    3. You May Not Be Aware of a Reward That Is Coming Your Way
- III. Don't Begrudge Blessings
  - A. All Jealousy Is Rooted in Legalism
  - B. All Ingratitude Is Rooted in Jealousy
  - C. All Self-Pity Is Rooted in Ingratitude
  - D. All Misery Is Rooted in Self-Pity

Conclusion

## Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles, please; and, for our first of the year, or end of the year, message, turn, if you will please, to Matthew chapter 19. I'm going to begin reading in verse 27. Now if you don't have a Bible with you, look in the pew rack there. *"Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first"* (Matthew 19:27–30).

Now continue to read into the next chapter: *"For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and*

*whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.” (Matthew 20:1–16).*

Now the title of our message today is this: “It Pays to Serve Jesus.” And friend, I want you to see clearly and plainly that it does pay to serve the Lord Jesus. I want to ask a question today: Is God an equal opportunity employer? Well, you think on that. I want to ask another question: Does God give equal pay for equal work? Now you think on that one, and you may be surprised at the answer to that one.

But let me say at the beginning that it does pay to serve the Lord Jesus; and, if you want to get into the work force, there’s a job waiting for you. And the Lord would say to every man, every woman, every boy, every girl, in this place, “Don’t sit around here idle. There is a job. Why stand ye here idle?” There’s work for you to do; and, not only is there a place of service, but there is a glorious, glorious reward.

Now you will notice that I read this passage starting in Matthew chapter 19 and going right on through chapter 20, even though there is a chapter break. Now the chapter breaks were not in the Holy Scripture. I want you to understand that. That was added later by men. The chapter breaks are there to keep preachers from preaching too long.

And in this particular instance, the chapter break does not enhance the meaning; it destroys it a little bit, because you’re going to have to get the background to this story that Jesus told. Now let me, first of all, tell you the story, then give you the background, and then make some applications for our lives.

The story is this: The Lord Jesus said, “There was a man who had a vineyard, and

the man who owned the vineyard went out early in the morning. The sun was not even hot; and, about six in the morning, he hired some laborers to go out into his vineyard and work. And they had a little negotiation there, and they agreed that he was going to pay them a penny.

Now when it says, “a penny,” most of us say, “Oh my goodness, you mean they’re going to work all day? What a cruel man this is—he’s only going to pay them a penny!” Well, the Greek word is a *denarius*. It does not mean, “a penny,” as we mean, “a penny.” Don’t be misled by that. It means, “a day’s wages.” This was the same wages that a Roman soldier would get for a day’s wages. It was good money—good money. They were glad to have it. And so he agreed to give them a day’s wages, and they go out in the vineyard and begin to work.

And then, the man doesn’t have enough workers yet. So about nine in the morning, he goes out, and he finds others. He says, “You’re just standing around here with nothing to do. Come work in my vineyard.” And they say, “Well, what do you pay?” He says, “I’ll just give you what’s right. Trust me.” They say, “All right,” and they come and work in the vineyard. At noontime, he finds others, and he invites them to come. “What are you going to pay?” “I’ll just pay you what’s right.” And so they come to the vineyard. About three in the afternoon, he comes, and he finds others there in the marketplace. “Nothing to do? Would you come work in my vineyard?” “What are you going to pay?” “I’ll just give you what’s right.”

And so they come and work in the vineyard; and then, finally, at five o’clock, just before sundown—the Bible calls it the “eleventh hour,” by the way; they worked a 12-hour day—at the eleventh hour, he went, and he found others. And he said, “Why do you stand here all day idle? You come and work in the vineyard.” And they came and they worked one hour.

Now the paymaster comes at the end of the day. He says, “All right, call them, and pay them.” He says, “Start with those who came last; and then, pay the others, also.” So they called in these people who worked an hour, and he gave them a day’s wages—he gave them “a penny”—a denarius. Well, when the others—those who came in first—saw these who came in last, they said—their minds started to calculate—they said, “They worked an hour—they got a day’s wages. We worked 12 hours—we’ll get 12 days’ wages.” And so they were just waiting for 12 days’ wages.

But right down the line, everybody gets a day’s wages. And those who had worked all day—they started to murmur; they started to complain; and they accused the employer of being unfair. And they said, “That’s not right; that’s not fair. You’re not giving equal pay for equal work. Now we worked longer than they did; and, therefore, we demand more.” The owner of the vineyard said, “You wait a moment. We had a

contract. You agreed for a denarius, and that's what you got. I haven't cheated you. It's my money. I can do with it what I wish. But I want you to know that we had a contract, and I was fair with you. I gave you exactly what we bargained for."

Now what on Earth is the meaning of that parable? What does it all mean? Some people think that it means that our Lord is teaching deathbed repentance—those who came in the eleventh hour—there is such a thing as deathbed repentance; you can be saved at the end of our life. Billy Sunday said, "Deathbed repentance was burning the candle of life for the devil and then blowing the smoke in God's face." But I want to tell you that anybody can be saved on their deathbed.

Very few are the dying feet that turn to the Lord Jesus. *"And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom"* (Luke 23:42). That was deathbed repentance. His deathbed was across, and the Lord saved him. But someone wisely said, "The Bible records one deathbed repentance, that no one may despair—but only one, that no one may presume." Very few people are saved on their deathbed, and this parable is not a parable to teach deathbed repentance.

What is our Lord teaching in this wonderful, wonderful parable? Well, you have to get it in its context. That's the reason I began to read in chapter 19. In chapter 19 is the story of the rich young ruler. Jesus had told him to sell everything, take up his cross, and follow Jesus; and, the rich young ruler didn't want to do it. And the Bible says that, *"He went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions"* (Matthew 19:22).

About that time, Simon Peter—you'd know it's Simon Peter; as I said before, he opens his mouth only to change feet—he had something to say about that, right in verse 27: *"Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?"* (Matthew 19:27). That is, "Lord, he wouldn't give up much. We gave up everything. Now Lord, what are we going to get?"

Now at this time, Peter was in danger of becoming a legalist. He was in danger of wanting to bargain with God, saying, "Now God, I gave You this. What are you going to give me? What am I going to get back? What am I going to get in return?" And it was on the heels of Peter's statement and question that Jesus gave this parable.

Now keep that in mind, as you serve the Lord Jesus: God does not always give equal pay. Some get more than others. And why do they get more than others? This parable ends with this saying: *"Many are called, but few are chosen"* (Matthew 22:14). Now what does He mean by that? Well, everybody can come into the vineyard, but few are chosen. Now the word *chosen* here does not mean chosen in the sense of predestination. That's not the idea at all. The word literally may mean their "choice ones"; these are the "ones I love."

**Many are called, but there are few that are really choice. When somebody goes out**

to buy poinsettias, there are many poinsettias. But someone will say, “Hey, that’s a choice one. I really like that one. That one brings me joy.” Many are called, but some are choice laborers.

What is it that really moves the Father’s heart? What is there that gives God great joy and pleasure out of your service to the Lord? And what is it that causes God to reward some more than He rewards others? It does pay to serve the Lord Jesus, but there are degrees of reward, as we’re going to see. Some will come in first, and some will come in last, at payday.

All right now, let me give you three thoughts here, and I hope that you’ll bury them in your heart, and that God will keep them burning in your heart, as you serve the Lord Jesus.

## I. Don’t Make Bargains with God

Number one: Don’t make bargains with God—don’t make bargains with God. Now begin to read this parable, and you’re going to find out, in verses 1 and 2: *“For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard”* (Matthew 20:1–2).

Look at that word *agreed*: *“When he had agreed with [them]...”* (Matthew 20:2)—that is, they had some negotiations. They worked out a labor contract; they had a bargain together. I can just imagine them. He says, “Look, I need some men to work in the vineyard.” “Well, what are you paying today?” “Well, I’m paying thus-and-such.” “Well, the rate over here is thus-and-such.” “Well, I’ll give you so much. No, I can only give so much.” “Well, do this.” “All right now, here’s the agreement.” And so finally, they have a labor contract. They have negotiated, and *Williams* translates this, “When they had contracted.”

Now you can understand a little bit more. The idea is, here, that there was some give-and-take; and, finally, there is an agreement. They have bargained with the owner of the vineyard. He says, “All right, I will give you a denarius”—that is, “I’ll pay you the same thing that the Roman soldiers get.” “Fine.” They go into the vineyard, and they have a bargain with God. Many people want to bargain with the Lord. They want to bargain with their employer.

I heard of a man who applied for a new job, and he asked the employer—he said, “What do you pay?” He said, “Well, I’ll pay you what you’re worth.” He said, “Nothing doing, I just quit a job making more than that.”

Now there are a lot of people who want to bargain, when they work for the Lord. Now those people who bargain are legalists.

But now, there was another category of persons, if you'll look here in this parable—in verse 4, and verse 5, and verse 7—those who came later in the day. And they said, “What do you pay?” And the owner of the vineyard said, “Hey, I'll just do right. Trust me, I'll just give you what is right—and without any contract, without any negotiation, without any agreement whatever; with no bargain.” They went out into the field and began to work. It was what we would call today, “a gentlemen's agreement”—“I'll just trust you. You just give me what you think is right.”

Now the Lord Jesus is contrasting two types of Christians: those who serve the Lord from a legalistic motive, and those who serve the Lord from a love motive; those who serve from legalism, and those who serve by grace. The first category of persons represents those who operate on the principle of legalism. The second category talks about those who operate on the basis of grace.

Now listen. The legalist is always afraid he's going to get cheated; he's always afraid he's not going to get enough. So the legalist always has to have it written down. The legalist always wants a bargain. Now here's the sad thing about the legalist: He wants to get more, and he always gets less.

If you strike a bargain with God—put it down: God will keep the bargain, and you will lose. Are you listening? If you strike a bargain with God, God will keep the bargain, and you will lose. You'll get far more, if you don't bargain with God, than if you do bargain with God. You see, God gives the best to those who leave the choice with Him. The bargainer always cheats himself; he always comes in last.

That's the reason Jesus warned them, in chapter 19, verse 30: “Many that are first—they're going to be last” (Matthew 19:30). Again, He said the same thing in Matthew 20, verse 16: “The first shall be last” (Matthew 20:16)—grace in first place, and legalism last. Now remember that: Grace in first place, and legalism last. Many that are first shall be last; many that are last shall be first. You see, God does not give equal pay for equal work. God is not interested in your hours, but He's interested in your heart.

Now if you make a bargain with God, He's going to treat you on that basis—I mean, if you want God to be a labor contractor. All right, all right, let me show you something—Psalm 18, verses 25 and 26: “*With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright; with the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself forward*” (Psalm 18:25–26).

Now what is *the froward*? Some football player is going to think we're talking about a forward pass. What is a *froward*? What does he mean by “froward”? Well, a froward person is a conniving person, a stingy person—the person who wants to drive a bargain, and the person who can't just leave it with God. God says, “You'll be merciful—I'll be merciful.” God says, “You'll be upright—I'll be upright. If you are a froward person,

you're going to find Me froward to you. If you want to work for Me as a hireling, then I'll be to you as a hirer. I will be to you according to the attitude that you take with Me. Now if you want to strike bargains with Me, just go ahead and strike bargains, and I'll keep My part of the bargain."

Remember what the Lord Jesus said to those who served Him for the wrong motive, there, in the Sermon on the Mount: "*Verily I say unto you, They have their reward*" (Matthew 6:16). That is, "They wanted to do it for this, and that's what they got. They have their reward. I'll give them that part." But the Pharisees, in Jesus' day, were very legalistic. You know, they were serving God for what they could get out of it. And Jesus said unto them, in Matthew chapter 23 and verse 23: "*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin*" (Matthew 23:23).

What were these? Little garden herbs, just like you ladies have a little mint plant out behind your back door—some of you do. What the Pharisees did—they'd go out there, and there was that little mint plant—that herb—and they'd start to count the leaves—one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten—that one belongs to God. One, two, three, four, five six, seven, eight, nine, ten—that one belongs to God. Oh, they were careful. You see, they had a little contract with God. They were going to pay God not too much, but always enough, because, you see, they were in a business deal with God, in their own way.

Now did God bless them for tithing? Well, in a way, He did. They had a bargain with Him. You know, it pays to tithe. But let me tell you something, friend: If you give because it pays, it won't pay near as much. It pays to tithe. But if you tithe because it pays, it will not pay near as much—when you begin to bargain with God, when you are so careful that your right hand knows what your left hand does. How does a man count his change? He reaches in his pocket, and he counts it this way. Don't let your right hand know what you count. Just reach in and give. Don't worry about it.

A couple of people were talking one day. One man said, "Hey, do you tithe before or after taxes?" He says, "I tithe before I pay taxes." The man says, "Why do you do that?" He said, "God gets more that way." Amen? "God gets more that way."

I'm not all worried about the fact that I'm going to give God too much. I'm not going to get in this matter of bargaining with God. Friend, that thing—you're going to cheat yourself, if you serve God from the wrong motive.

Number one: When you serve God, if you want to be on the highest end of the pay scale, number one, don't bargain with God. Those who didn't bargain with Him—those who just simply said, "Lord, I'll leave it with You; whatever is right, you pay me"—they came out best.



## II. Don't Keep Books on Yourself

All right now, the second thing I want you to see. Number one: Don't make bargains with God. Number two: Don't keep books on yourself—don't keep books on yourself.

### A. They Knew What They Had Done

Now what had happened is that Simon Peter had been keeping books. Now he had given up some things, and he had given some things to the Lord. But he was quite aware of the fact that he'd given them up. If you go back here to this 19<sup>th</sup> chapter and look in verse 27: *"Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee"* (Matthew 19:27).

Now Peter evidently had a little notebook—"one boat given to the Lord, some net given to the Lord, mother-in-law given to the Lord." And he had it all there. He had his little record book there. "Now Lord, You see what we've done." Now he kept books on himself. Now when you keep books on your service, what you're going to become is a clock-watcher. You see, these people in the parable—they knew exactly how many hours they had labored. They said, "We have labored 12 hours. We want you to pay us accordingly."

### B. They Knew What Others had Done

Not only did they know what they had done; they also knew what the others had done. A legalist has his eye on the clock, and he has his eye on other Christians.

#### 1. You Will Lose Your Blessing and Your Reward

And when you have your eye on the clock, and when you have your eye on other Christians, you're going to lose the blessing and you're going to lose the reward.

You see, when I was a boy, I worked as a soda jerk. Do you know what a soda jerk is? You kids ever watch this program *Happy Days*? *Happy Days*—that's when I was raised—in the "Happy Days." Back in the late 40s, when I was a teenager, I was a soda jerk at Albritton's Drugstore on the corner of 40<sup>th</sup> Street and Broadway, in West Palm Beach, Florida. And a soda jerk is a man that stands behind the soda fountain, because it wasn't all prepackaged there.

Listen. If you wanted *cherry smash*, I could make one. If you wanted a *chocolate coke*, I could make one—you know, you just name it. And we had fountain Pepsi's. They had their special kind of glasses; and, if you didn't have any money, you could come in and order a *pine float*. That's a glass of water with a toothpick in it, and we'd serve it. You know, it didn't make any difference. And that was my job. I was the soda jerk, and also the floor sweeper, in that particular drugstore. And that's just the corner drugstore, and I enjoyed doing that.

Mr. Albritton started as a young man, and he built that drugstore there, and worked, and built it into quite a big business. I remember being there one night—we closed at 10:30, Brother Bob, and I had my eye on the clock. I was waiting for 10:30 to come; and, about 10:25, I started to go and close those big folding doors that went across the front. No air conditioning—those doors were open just to let the fresh air in. And I started to roll those doors out, because I wanted to make certain that at 10:30 those doors were closed and shut—that no more customers would come in that place. And I had my eye on the clock; and, when that clock moved right up to 10:30, *crump*—I bolted it down, and slid the lock. At that time, a car drove up, and a person got out of the car and tapped on the glass. I looked at my watch, and said, “Closed—we’re closed.” And you know, I had a sense of importance, when I told them they couldn’t come in. But then, I turned around, and there was Mr. Albritton standing right behind me. And he didn’t scold me, but he said something I’ll never forget; I haven’t forgotten: He said, “Son, that’s the first time anyone has been turned away from this drugstore.” I felt about *that high*.

You know, there’s a difference. You see, I had my eye on the clock. He had his eye on the store. See, there’s a difference.

Now the legalist—he’s not all that interested in God’s work; he’s not all that interested in the vineyard. But he wants his pay. “Look, we’ve done so many hours. You just pay us.”

## **2. You Are Not Going to Keep the Books Right Anyway**

Now dear friend, when you keep books on what you do, when you have your eye on the clock, and you have your eye on what others do, I’ll tell you what it’s going to do: It’s going to steal your blessing, and you’re not going to keep the books right anyway. I mean, there are times when you think you deserve pay, when you don’t deserve pay. You would mark up something in the ledger, and you’d say, “Now Lord, You owe me a big reward for this one.”

I heard a black preacher preach down in Miami, many, many years ago. And he was a very eloquent man. And he said, “You know, sometimes, you preachers—you take credit for things that you don’t deserve credit for.” He said, “Have you ever been out dove hunting, and you shoot a dove, and it continues to fly, and will fly quite a while before it falls to the ground?” He says, “Then it falls in another field way over there away from where you shot it.” He said, “Now you got up there and preached last Sunday, and people came down forward, and you say, ‘Lord, look what I did.’” He said, “That soul that fell at your altar this morning—some man may have wounded him a long time ago.” Amen?

You see, one man sows the seed, and another man cultivates, and another man

reaps. And it'll take another world to show what rewards we ought to have or not have. So many times, we think, "Well, we're really doing something." We're not doing anything at all. Somebody else did it, and we just entered into somebody else's labor. Sometimes what we do we do in the strength of the flesh, and it's "wood, hay, and stubble" (1 Corinthians 3:12). And if we were keeping books, I'm afraid we'd do it wrong.

### **3. You May Not Be Aware of a Reward That Is Coming Your Way**

But I want to tell you something else: There are a lot of times that we're not even aware of the fact that there is a reward coming to us for what we've done.

You're in Matthew chapter 20. Turn to Matthew chapter 25, here, for just a moment. Let me show you something beautiful. Verse 34—here's when the Lord is going to give His rewards: *"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer..."*—now, watch this—*"Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?"* (Matthew 25:34–39).

Now I want you to get this. These folks had done all these things, for the Lord said they had. He had the record, but they'd forgotten. They didn't know it. They didn't have the little notebook out; they weren't keeping a record. They were things that were forgotten—things that were overlooked, and, evidently, sometimes things they were not even conscious of the fact they did.

Last night, I read a letter from a person who wrote me, and said, "Dr. Rogers, I want to tell you what a tremendous blessing you were to me." This person wasn't trying to butter my bread. They weren't trying to flatter me. They didn't even sign their name—just, "A Christian." They said, "I watched you in a particular place at a particular time, and I want to tell you that what you did just tremendously blessed me." Well, friend, I tried to go back in my mind, and I wasn't aware of the fact I was being a blessing to anybody at that particular time.

I got a letter a while back from a young man. He said, "I owe you this letter." He said, "Years ago, you were driving down the road in Merritt Island, and you stopped and put me in your car. I was a teenage boy walking along the side of the road, and you talked with me, and shared with me. And I got out of the car, and," he said, "that time, that ride with you did something in my heart." He said, "Since that time, I have given my heart to Christ; I've been saved. And now I'm pastor of thus-and-such a church." He said, "I just wanted to write you and tell you about it." Folks, I can't remember it. I don't remember

stopping and picking up that boy. I don't remember what I said—I don't remember. But aren't you glad that there's Somebody who knows?

You see, dear friend, one of these times, God's going to say, "Adrian," "Jim," or, "Scotty, I'm so grateful you did this. I'm so grateful you did that." And we say, "Lord, when did I do that? I don't remember that." You see, a legalist—he has his little notepad out.

Now you listen to me, friend. When you serve the Lord, number one, don't make bargains; number two, don't keep books. God will do a better job of the bookkeeping than you will.

### III. Don't Begrudge Blessings

Number three: Don't begrudge blessings. Now when God blesses somebody else, don't let that take the joy out of your life.

Look now, in verse 8, as we continue to read here in this parable: "*So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more...*"—you see, these were the bookkeepers and the bargainers—"they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house" (Matthew 20:8–11).

Now here they are murmuring; here they are unhappy. Rather than praising and being grateful that they were able to do a full day's work, and get a full day's pay there, with the money hot in their hand, rather than praising, they're murmuring and they're bitter. Do you know why they're bitter? Not because of what they got, but because somebody else got more.

#### A. All Jealousy Is Rooted in Legalism

Now listen to me. Are you listening? All jealousy is rooted in legalism—jealousy is rooted in legalism. When we are legalists, we think we're owed so much. And then, if somebody else gets more, that legalism causes us to be jealous. Pay attention now. All jealousy is rooted in legalism.

#### B. All Ingratitude Is Rooted in Jealousy

Now all ingratitude is rooted in jealousy. You see, when I'm jealous of somebody else, I'm not grateful for what I have.

Little children are so happy on Christmas Day with what they have, until they go out and see what someone else got. Isn't that right? I mean, you get a bicycle for

Christmas, and you're thrilled—until you go out and find somebody with a moped. And then, you say, "Oh my goodness! He got a moped." You get a doll, and you're happy—until somebody else has a basketball, or roller skates, or something; and then, you feel that you didn't get enough. Now that's human nature; that's the legalism in us.

### **C. All Self-Pity Is Rooted in Ingratitude**

Now listen to me, friend. Legalism is the root of jealousy; jealousy is the root of ingratitude; ingratitude is the root of self-pity. When you're not grateful for what you have, you begin to feel sorry for yourself.

### **D. All Misery Is Rooted in Self-Pity**

And self-pity is the root of misery. You want to be miserable? You become legalistic in your service for God; you make bargains with God; you begin to keep books on yourself—and, I'll tell you what you'll do: You'll end up a bitter murmurer, ungrateful to God. Your legalism will lead to jealousy; your jealousy will lead to ingratitude; and your ingratitude will lead to self-pity; and that self-pity will lead to misery. Don't you worry about it. If God wants to bless somebody else, let Him bless that person. His blessing upon somebody else does not diminish yours. And you can trust the Lord, friend. He will do right. You just trust Him. He says, "You trust Me, and I will do right." We get in a lot of trouble, when we worry about what other people have.

Ole' Simon Peter—at the end of his ministry, the Lord is telling Simon Peter, "Now when you're old, Simon—when you're old—somebody is going lead you around, and you're going to die a martyr." The Bible says there, in the end of John, that the Lord told him this, "signifying the way that he should die" (John 21:19). And then, Peter turned and looked at John, and he said, "*What shall this man do?*" (John 21:21). You know what the Lord said? "*If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me*" (John 21:22). "What's that to you? Mind your own business, Peter. I will do as I will do. What's it to you? Don't worry about it. It's Mine. I'll get it as I will."

Don't you begrudge somebody else's blessing, because, if you do, you'll lose your own.

## **Conclusion**

You want to serve God this coming year? Three rules: no bargains, no books, no bitterness. Okay? God is God. He will do right. You just serve Him out of a heart full of love, and leave it with Him. Let's pray.

# It Pays to Serve Jesus

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** November 4, 1990

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 19:29–30; 20:1–16

*“So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.”*

MATTHEW 20:16

## Outline

Introduction

- I. It Is Always Too Soon to Quit, but Never Too Late to Start
  - II. To Make Bargains with God Is to Cheat Yourself
    - A. Some Came with a Contract
    - B. Some Came with a Covenant
  - III. You Will Get Better Pay If You Will Let God Keep the Books
    - A. If You Keep Your Own Books, You May Overpay Yourself Some Time
    - B. If You Keep Your Own Books, You May Fail to Pay Yourself for Something You Weren't Conscious of Doing
  - IV. God Is Not Fair, but He Is Always Just
  - V. Another Man's Blessing Is Never Your Loss
- Conclusion

## Introduction

Turn with me please to Matthew 19 and find verse 29. I've already announced that the title of our message this morning is this: “It Pays to Serve Jesus”—and, friend, it really does.

*It pays to serve Jesus.*

*It pays every day.*

*It pays every step of the way.*

—FRANK C. HUSTON

And it pays big. Look, if you will, in verse 29. The Lord Jesus said, “*And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.*” (Matthew 19:29)

It does pay to serve Jesus. But I want to ask you this question: Does God give equal pay for equal work? What do you think? May I tell you, my dear friend, He does not. God does not give equal pay for equal work. It's a good thing God can't be sued,

because some of those Washington lawyers would sue our Lord for unfair labor practices. He does not give equal pay for equal work. Now I'm not saying God is unjust. God is very just, as we're going to see. It's very interesting.

Now, let's continue to read verse 30: *"But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first."* (Matthew 19:30) And now, let's just continue to read: *"For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a [denarius],"—that is, "a penny a day"; a day's labor. That's what that literally means—"he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen."* (Matthew 20:1–16)

That's an interesting story. It's a parable—and a very interesting parable. Here's a man who needs some workers, some hired hands, in his vineyard. So he goes out in the beginning of the day, and he says to these people there in the labor pool, "If you'll come work in my vineyard, I will pay you a day's wages"—called here in the King James Version of the Bible a *"penny."* But don't think for a moment it means a penny like our penny. It was a full laboring man's denarius, a laboring man's wage for a day. He said, "I'll give you this." And so they hired on, and they began to work.

Now at about nine o'clock, he goes out and he finds other people there in the labor market. But these people he doesn't contract with; he just says, "You come aboard, and I'll pay you whatever is fair." And so they come about nine in the morning. And then, at high noon, at twelve o'clock, he goes out, and others come. And they're hired under the

same arrangement. Then, at three o'clock in the afternoon he goes out, and he finds some more. He says, "Come on into the vineyard and work. I'll just give you what's fair." And they come into the vineyard and work. And then, about five o'clock—I mean, at the end of the day—what the Bible calls "the eleventh hour," after all the others had worked eleven hours and there was only one hour left to work—they worked a twelve-hour day, by the way—he hired some others to come, and they worked one hour. And then, of course, when the pay time came at the end of the day, everybody received the same.

Now these fellows who'd worked only an hour got paid a day's wages. Those who had worked for twelve hours said, "Boy, we're going to get rich today, because he's paying a day's wages for an hour. We worked twelve hours. Look what we're going to get!" But they also only got a denarius, a day's wages; and they began to murmur. There was a near riot. Why, these people had grievances and complaints, and trouble broke out. They said, "Look, we've worked twelve hours in the burning sun, and this man only worked an hour, and others worked a few hours; and we all got paid the same. You are not fair! You don't give equal pay for equal work." The owner of the vineyard said, "Look, you got what you bargained for. The money is mine. I can do with it what I will."

Now that's a strange story, isn't it? But, my dear friend, there are some incredible principles, and I pray God that He will teach them to you and remind me of them: five wonderful principles I want to give you today, when I want to tell you, my dear friend, it pays to serve Jesus. Now Jesus said, "*Many [are] called, but few [are] chosen.*" (Matthew 20:16) Now the word *chosen* here has the idea of being choice. Do you want to be a choice servant? Would you like to be not just somebody called into the vineyard, but would you like to be a choice servant?

Five things I want you to learn today.

## **I. It Is Always Too Soon to Quit, but Never Too Late to Start**

Number one: It is always too soon to quit, but never too late to start. Okay, put it down: It is always too soon to quit, but it is never too late to start. I may be talking to some of you today, you've not yet given your heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, and you say, "It is too late for me. I am living in the sunset years of my life. I am living in the eleventh hour of my life." My dear friend, our Lord, through this preacher, is saying to you today, "Come into the vineyard."

Now He's not saying that it is wise to postpone coming to the Lord. He's not just putting a premium on what we call deathbed repentance. Does the Bible teach deathbed repentance? Can a man live all of his life for the devil, and then in the last few hours give his heart to Christ, and be saved? He certainly can! Should he? Oh, no. The best thing to do is to come to our Lord early. Billy Sunday said that deathbed



repentance was like burning the candle of life for the devil and then blowing the smoke in God's face. But, my dear friend, you can be saved at the eleventh hour; and I don't care how old you may be, or how long you've lived in sin: You can be saved at the eleventh hour. And I just tell you, it's always too soon to quit if you're serving the Lord, but it is never too late to start. And so you can come to our Lord any time that you want.

Billy Sunday was a great evangelist, and Billy Sunday was a baseball player before he became an evangelist. As a matter of fact, he held the record for circling the bases. He was like Ty Cobb. He could run those bases. And he was an incredible guy and a great athlete. God called him to preach. And before Sunday was saved he ran with his old baseball crowd. Well, one day, when Billy Sunday was in a particular town for a crusade, they said to him, "Billy, there's an old man here that lives in this town that says he knows you. We call him the Old Timer." And they gave Billy the name of this baseball player, and Billy said, "Yes, I know him." He said, "We played baseball together." He said, "He was with me the night I decided to give my heart to Jesus. I'll go see him." They said, "Billy, the Old Timer is sick. He's about to die." Billy said, "I'll go see him."

And Billy Sunday went to see his old buddy, and they sat down and talked, reminisced. They talked baseball; they talked the times they had together. And then Billy Sunday said to the Old Timer, "Old Timer, have you given your heart to Jesus? Are you saved?" The Old Timer said, "No, Billy." He said, "You remember that day we sat on the curb and we discussed religion? You told me what you were going to do. And, Billy, you got up and left, and you went your way; but," he said, "Billy, I went my way. You've lived for God; you've had a good life, Bill; but I haven't. Things haven't worked out for me." So Billy Sunday said to the Old Timer, he said, "Well, let me tell you how to be saved, and let me explain the gospel and how God loves you."

And so Billy just poured out his heart to his old baseball buddy and asked him, "Wouldn't you like to be saved now? Don't you want to give your heart to Jesus?" Do you know what this old baseball player said to Billy Sunday? He said, "No, Bill." He said, "I can't do that now." He said, "It's too late for me." He said, "I remember when we were young men: You went your way; I went mine. This is the way I lived; this is the way I'll die." Sunday said, "Oh, no, Old Timer. It doesn't have to be that way. God is a God of grace and a God of mercy, and He will receive you. Come and give your heart to Jesus." But the Old Timer said, "No, Bill, it's too late for me."

Billy Sunday later on told that story. The Old Timer died, of course, and he went to hell—never gave his heart to Jesus. Billy said, "It was late in the game of life." He said, "The Old Timer was at the plate. It was his last game. It was the big game. It was late in the ninth inning. The sun was sinking in the west. The Old Timer was there at the plate, and he had two strikes against him." He said, "The pitcher in the game of life wound up, and he threw one more ball." And Sunday said, "He came across big and soft right

across the plate. And everybody in the crowd said, ‘Swing, Old Timer, swing!’ But,” Sunday said, “the Old Timer never even lifted the bat from his shoulder. The umpire said, ‘You’re out!’” That’s sad.

My dear friend, I want to tell you something: It’s always too soon to quit, but it’s never too late to start. I don’t care who you are or where you are, I want to tell you that God wants to save you today. And if you have come into the vineyard early—if you’re a child, if you’ve come to the vineyard early—praise God for all of the sin that He’s kept you from. I’m so glad I was saved as a teenager. But if you’re an old person, come and get saved and thank Him for all the sin He’s forgiven you of. The Bible says when we’re forgiven much, we love much. (Luke 7:47) It pays to serve Jesus.

## **II. To Make Bargains with God Is to Cheat Yourself**

Now there’s a second thing I want you to learn: Not only is it always too soon to quit but never too late to start; but the second thing I want you to learn is this: to make bargains with God is to cheat yourself. Do you have it? To make bargains with God is but to cheat yourself.

### **A. Some Came with a Contract**

Now, go back to this story. What our Lord is doing, really, is teaching against legalism—the deadly sin of legalism. He was talking there to some of those who were in danger—having been influenced by the Pharisees—in danger of legalism. And you see it right here, if you will, in chapter 20: *“For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard.”* Now, notice verse 2: *“And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.”* (Matthew 20:1–2) Underscore the word *agreed*. Williams’s translation gives it this way: “When he had contracted...” That is, they were saying, “What are you paying today?” And he says, “Well, I’ll pay so much.” And they say, “No, we want so much.” And he says, “Well, I’ll give you this much.” And they bargain back and forth. And finally they have a labor contract. It was a bargain. They had an agreement: “This is what I will pay for a day’s work. I will pay so much for so much work.”

### **B. Some Came with a Covenant**

Now, that’s the first category of people who came that day. There were people who came with a labor contract—verse 2. They had a bargain, an agreement, a contract. But now, notice the second category of persons, if you will. Look, if you will, in verse 4—these are those others who come the third hour: *“And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you.”* (Matthew 20:4) No agreement here, just, “You just trust me. Whatever is right, then I will give it to you.” Look, if you

will, in verse 5—the same thing: *“Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.”* (Matthew 20:5) Look in verse 7, the last part: *“And whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.”* (Matthew 20:7) Now, in the first category, here’s a bargain; here’s an agreement. Those who came first said, “I want so much pay for so much work.” That’s a contract. The others, just a covenant, not a contract: “Just trust me; I will do right.”

Now the difference between these two groups is the difference, dear friends, between legalism and the difference in grace. You see, Peter—Simon Peter—occasioned this parable. Simon Peter was in danger of slipping into legalism. Notice chapter 19 and verse 27—go right back to chapter 19: *“Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?”* (Matthew 19:27) That is, Peter was saying, “Look, I want to know what I’m going to get paid. I’ve forsaken everything, and I’ve followed you. And so I want to know. I want some kind of a contract with you, Lord.” And, you know, legalism always demands its rights. It wants to bargain with God.

Now, let me tell you the trouble with legalism. The difficulty with legalism is not that it doesn’t get what it bargains for; the difficulty with legalism is it does get what it bargains for. That’s the problem with legalism. Jesus said, *“Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.”* (Matthew 6:2; Matthew 6:5; Matthew 6:16) These people who bargained with the owner of the vineyard, they got exactly what they bargained for. You see, the man who bargains with God may get what he bargains for, but he will cheat himself out of God’s best. God gives the best to those who leave the choice with Him. And that’s the reason that the legalists came in last in Matthew 19 and verse 30: *“But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.”* (Matthew 19:30) God does not give equal pay for equal work. God is not interested in hours; God is interested in hearts: not what you do, but why you serve.

Now, if you want to come to God as a hired hand, just come on, and God will treat you like a hired hand. If you want to be a hireling, God will treat Himself like a hirer. Let me give you a verse—Psalm 18:25–26: *“With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright; with the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward.”* (Psalm 18:25–26) Now, the *froward* means a person who is selfish and a person who is exacting, a person who has his self interests. God says, “If you act that way to me, then that’s the way I’m going to reflect my actions to you.” Now, dear friend, I could say, to the hireling, God shows Himself as a hirer. What God wants—the kind of service God wants in Bellevue Baptist Church, and the kind of service God wants in this community when you go out, is free, loving, joyful, spontaneous service that comes from the heart.

You know, the Pharisees were so careful to serve for what they would get out of it.

For example, in Matthew 23:23, our Lord talked about the way the Pharisees tithed, and He said, *“For ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin.”* Now, what does that mean? The mint was a little herb that grew outside their houses, and they would tithe the mint leaves: “One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine leaves—these are mine. Ten—that one’s God’s.” I mean, you have to be pretty much of a serious tither to count the leaves. But Jesus said that’s what the Pharisees did. They were so careful. But He said, *“Ye...have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith.”* (Matthew 23:23) Why were these Pharisees tithing? They were tithing because they felt it paid to tithe.

Now, dear friend, let me tell you, if you tithe because it pays to tithe, I want to tell you something: It just may pay, but it won’t pay as much as it would if you just tithed not for pay. But just trust the Lord—just trust the Lord. I mean, don’t try to get a bargain with God. You see, 2 Corinthians chapter 9 and verse 7 says, *“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity:”*—don’t make a bargain with God—*“for God loveth a cheerful giver.”* (2 Corinthians 9:7) Jesus said, “Don’t let your left hand know what your right hand does.” (Matthew 6:3) Just give. I mean, don’t get so exacting about it. Don’t make bargains with God.

One man asked another man, “Do you tithe before or after taxes?” Well, that’s a spirit of a Pharisee—trying to figure that out. “Do you tithe before or after taxes?” This man said, “I always tithe before taxes.” He said, “You do? Why?” He said, “God gets more that way.” I like that, dear friend. Listen. You see, there’s just a spirit of not saying to God, “Now, God, what are you going to do? If I do this, what are you going to do? All right, we’ve got a deal, God?” God says, “Look, just forget all of that, and just trust me—just trust me.”

### **III. You Will Get Better Pay If You Will Let God Keep the Books**

All right, here’s a third principle. The first principle was it’s always too soon to quit, never too late to start. Second principle is don’t make bargains with God, dear friend. To bargain with God is to cheat yourself. Number three: You will get better pay if you will let God keep the books. Now old Peter had been keeping books. Peter had said, “Lord, now we’ve left all to follow you. What are we going to get?” (Matthew 19:27) Peter had said, “One boat: all right, I gave a boat. All right, one fishing business: I gave a fishing business.” He said, “Now, Lord, here’s the record. Here’s what we’ve left for you. Now, Lord, what are we going to get?”

Now these people who came into the vineyard late in the day, they didn’t know what they were going to get; they just simply trusted the Lord. Let me tell you about a legalist. A legalist has his eye on the clock, and he has his eye on his fellow servants. He knows exactly how many hours he has served, and he knows exactly how many hours they

have served.

When I was a kid, one of the first jobs I had was I was as a soda jerk in a drugstore. I could cook hamburgers and make ice cream sundaes and the old-fashioned type of sodas. I worked at Albritton's Drug Store at the corner of 40<sup>th</sup> Street and Broadway in West Palm Beach, Florida. That was our corner drugstore. I worked for Mr. Albritton. And I would come in there and work behind the counter and wait on tables just as a boy in junior high school. And then at the end of the day, I'd sweep out the drugstore and take those folding doors and bolt them shut all across the front that opened on the street. There was no air conditioning. It was just open to the street. And we always would close the drugstore at 10:30 at night. I could hardly wait for 10:30 to come. I'd have my eye on that clock, and I'd be watching those doors, because I knew anybody in the drugstore I had to wait on; and they might get in there at 10:29, and then I'd have to stay until they left. I'd always be watching the cars out front and watching that folding door. And I saw 10:30 come on the clock, and I ran over to those doors and began to put them in place and bolt them all down. And a car parked out there, and somebody came and looked through and knocked on the glass. They wanted in the drugstore. I said, "Too bad. We're closed." They got in the car and drove off.

And I turned around, and there was Mr. Albritton standing right behind me. He looked so grieved; he looked so hurt. He said, "Son, that's the first time anybody's ever been turned away from this drugstore who wanted to do business here." Well, I could have crawled under the rug—I felt so ashamed. And I saw the difference: I saw the attitude that I had compared to the attitude that he had. I saw the love that he had for people, and for business; and I saw why he was such a wonderful businessman. I saw myself for what I was: a hireling and a clock-watcher.

I've seen people like that in the kingdom of heaven. I mean, they're not interested in the vineyard; they're not interested in God. They're interested only in themselves. Now, my dear friend, you quit watching the clock, and get your eyes off of others; and just serve the Lord, and forget about the rest of it.

#### **A. If You Keep Your Own Books, You May Overpay Yourself Some Time**

Now, listen. You live by grace. Let God keep the books, and God will pay you a lot better than if you keep your own books. If you keep your own books, in the first place, you may overpay yourself some time; you may take credit for things that you ought not to take credit for.

One time, I heard a black preacher, who was an eloquent preacher, preaching. He so spoke to my heart. He was talking about pride in the ministry, and he said, "You preachers, you stand up there and preach on Sunday morning, and you give the invitation, and people come down the aisle to give their heart to Jesus, and you say,

'Look what I did.'" He said, "How do you know you did that?" He said, "Have you ever been dove hunting?" He said, "You shoot a dove here, and he continues to fly for a while and falls in a field over there." He said, "That man that fell at your altar this morning," he said, "someone may have wounded him a long time ago. You think about it: Somebody witnessed to him; somebody prayed for him; somebody gave him the gospel a long time ago. And just because he happened to come forward when you were preaching, that doesn't mean it was your ministry."

### **B. If You Keep Your Own Books, You May Fail to Pay Yourself for Something You Weren't Conscious of Doing**

Sometimes, you see, we may pay ourselves for things that we don't have any right to pay ourselves for. And sometimes, dear friend, we may fail to pay ourselves because we have done something that we were not even conscious of. You're in Matthew chapter 20—just turn to Matthew chapter 25 and look with me in verse 34—this is so wonderful: *"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me."* Now, notice verse 37: *"Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."* (Matthew 25:34–40)

Now it's a very interesting thing: Our Lord is going to come and reward His servants, and He's going to say, "I thank you for doing this, and this, and this, and this, and this." And you say, "Lord, when did I do that? I don't remember doing that." Did you know that many of the things we're going to get rewarded for are things that we've forgotten and things we didn't even know we were doing when we were doing them? Did you know that? I mean, let God keep the books.

I got a letter a while back from a young man. He said, "I want to ask you to forgive me, and I'm asking God to forgive me, for not thanking you sooner, but," he said, "it's because of you that I know the Lord, and I'm now in the gospel ministry"—wrote me down in Alabama. I couldn't remember anything about it. But he said, "At Merritt Island, Florida, I was walking home from school. You stopped and picked me up, put me in your car, told me about Jesus, and let me out." I could not remember anything that he said happened. Dear friend, if you'd ask me, "Did I ever do that?" I would say, "I don't even have the foggiest about it." But there was a time when I had witnessed to that

young man. And the Lord says, “Thank you, Adrian.” I said, “When did that happen?” “Inasmuch as you’ve done it unto the least of these, you’ve done it unto me.”

Friend, you do not know. Sometimes we take credit for things we have no business taking credit for. Other times God sees things that we’ve done, we say, “When did I do that? When did that happen?” It’s just in our normal course of life.

One of the most incredible letters that I’ve received was another letter that I got a while back from a person who had visited our church—and this is what that person said. They told me how dejected they were, how in great despair and anguish of heart, and told me the terrible sorrow that had come into this man’s life. And this is a portion of the letter. He said, “Home alone in my apartment I made it through the afternoon and drove myself back for the evening service. Your message of Jesus saving Peter on the water must have been meant for me. It lifted my spirits. But as the service concluded with the baptisms and the song, a lot of old memories tore at my heart. I had a hard time leaving church that evening as the choir and the duet continued in song. I finally left. And by the time I got home, I was really depressed. My ship was very near the rocks. I laid down on my bed in anguish, crying my heart out, as I felt so alone and unloved. My thoughts drifted toward my closet, my shotgun, and the shells I had available. I rolled over on my back, looked up in despair, and cried out, ‘O God, help me! Please help me!’

“God answered quickly, just as Jesus answered quickly to Peter’s plea to save me. Instantly, on that bed as I lay there, the smiling face of a young lady appeared in my mind. This young lady is a member of our Sunday School group, which I met one Sunday earlier. You see, as I left church Sunday night and drove out of the front parking lot, a car stopped to let me onto the street. And as I was about to proceed, out of the corner of my eye I caught the glimpse of another waving hand in the car behind the stopped car. I looked and recognized this young lady. She smiled and waved again. I wanted to pull over and thank her for smiling, but I didn’t, because of the traffic.” And then, this is what this man said to me: “Through the smiling face of that young lady, God turned my thoughts toward my children, my mother, my relatives, my wife, and my friends. I wondered how they would ever understand the selfish act I was contemplating.” And a man’s life was saved by a smile—by a smile—right on our parking lot.

Remember that when you leave the parking lot today, okay? A man’s life saved by a smile. Now, my dear friend, God will say to her, “Thank you for saving a man’s life.” She’ll say, “Lord, when did I do that?” *“Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, you’ve done it unto me.”* Friend, you’ll get better pay if you let God keep the books. Just let God keep the books.

#### **IV. God Is Not Fair, but He Is Always Just**

Now, here's a fourth principle I want to give you: God is not fair, but He is always just—God is not fair, but He is always just. Now, don't ever say, "God, you're not fair." You have no right to say to God, "God, you're not fair," because God has no obligation to be fair to you. Do you know what fairness is? Fairness is a human concept. We want God to be fair. Why should God be fair? Do you know, when I say, "I want my fair share," that says what? "I've got something coming"—doesn't it? You see, I compare myself to someone else, and if that person gets more than I get, then I say, "That's not fair." My friend, God doesn't operate on the basis of fairness. Fairness is a self-centered, egotistical, human concept. Fairness is based on the idea that I deserve something—and especially I deserve something if somebody else is getting something, and it's not fair if I don't get what they get. God is not fair. God is just. Justice is a holy attribute of God. God does what is right, not what is fair; and I hope you can see the difference. I'm not accusing God of dishonesty; as a matter of fact, I'm attributing to God the ultimate honesty. You see, God is a God of justice.

Now, if you're looking for fairness, you'll never plead for mercy. But if you're looking for justice, then you say, "O God, I need mercy! I need mercy!" You see, only a person who sees that God is just says, "God, give me mercy." When a person says, "God, you've got to be fair," he's saying, "Give me what I deserve." But when a man sees that God is just, he says, "O God, I need mercy!" You see, *justice is God giving us what we deserve; mercy is God not giving us what we deserve; and grace is God giving us what we don't deserve.* You got it? Justice is God giving us what we deserve—and we deserve hell. Mercy is God not giving us what we deserve, saving us from hell. And grace is God giving us what we don't deserve—just paying us at the end of the day when we haven't earned it.

Now, my dear friend, listen. God is not fair, but God is just. When you understand that God is just, then you can appreciate the mercy of God.

*A lady went to the photographer to have her picture made. It looked just like her, so she didn't like it. She went back to the photographer and said, "You'll have to redo it." He said, "What's wrong with it?" She says, "It doesn't do me justice." He looked at it, and looked at her, and said, "Madam, you don't need justice. What you need is mercy."*

Now, my dear friend, God is not a fair God; that is, it's not that God owes you something and He's unfair if He doesn't give it to you. God is a just God. And this parable teaches because He can do what He will with what is His own, then if He gives you something, it's out of His mercy.

#### **V. Another Man's Blessing Is Never Your Loss**

I want to say one last thing: Another man's blessing is never your loss—another man's



blessing is never your loss. Don't get all bent out of shape if somebody else seems to be getting blessed more than you're blessed. Let God go ahead and bless. The elder brother in the story of the prodigal son got all bent out of shape because the father was merciful to the younger brother.

Can I be a little personal right now? Did you know there are people sometimes who are longstanding members of the church who get bent out of shape because newcomers come in and seem to enjoy the blessings that they worked for for years? I can't imagine anything worse than that, but there are people like that. They say, "Well, my goodness! I can't even get a seat in my Sunday School class!" Did you know sometimes that people think they have seniority in the kingdom of heaven? "Well, we started early in the day. Who are these latecomers to the vineyard?" My dear friend, I want to tell you that seniority is not the rule in the kingdom of heaven. God operates by grace—God operates by grace. Another man's blessing is never your loss.

## **Conclusion**

I must complete this message, but let me say to you, dear friend, if you're living in the eleventh hour, if you haven't served the Lord, I want to ask you to come to Him today. Don't despair. It's never too late. But don't presume. Come now to Jesus.

# God Is Not Fair

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** January 23, 2005

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 20:1–15

*“Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee.”*

MATTHEW 20:14

## Outline

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## Introduction

Take God’s Word and turn to Matthew chapter 20. Let me tell you about a friend I had. He’s a preacher. He’s now in heaven. He was “follicly challenged.” That means he was bald, combed his hair with a washcloth. He had a crew cut, and the crew bailed out. Great man of God. And he had a little saying: “God is good; God is fair: some get brains, and some get hair.” God is good, but God is not fair!

I want to talk to you about this subject of fairness now. On a human plane, fairness is a wonderful attribute, and we feel it inbred in us when we’re children. “Mamma, that’s not fair! She got more ice cream than I got.” Or, “This is not fair. I did the dishes last night.” “It is not fair. Why should she get the car tonight when she had it last night?” And, we demand fairness. On the job, if we don’t get the promotion and somebody else does, we say, “That’s not fair!” Somebody gets a raise, and we don’t: we say, “That’s not fair!” If somebody has a day off and we don’t get it, we say, “That is not fair.” And now, today, we have laws that make employers apply fairness across the board. Well, I’m glad that God cannot be sued, for if God could be sued, the Washington lawyers would have a field day suing God because of what they would call His “lack of fairness.”

Now, we’re in Matthew chapter 20, verse 1—these are the words of Jesus: *“For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day”—*now, it’s not a penny like our penny; that’s a day’s wages—*“he sent*

*them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour”—now, they were working a twelve-hour day—“about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith to his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny”—that is, a day’s labor wages—“But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?” (Matthew 20:1–15) God is not fair, but God is good.*

Now, you need to get the background of this passage of Scripture. There’s a man who has a vineyard. He needs some workers so he goes out early in the morning, at the beginning of the day, and hires some laborers. Then he goes out again at nine and hires some more laborers. Then, he goes out again at twelve and hires some more laborers. Then, he goes at three in the afternoon and hires some more laborers. And then, also, some at five, at the last hour before sunset. Now, payday comes—pay time comes. And he starts with those who came last, and he gives them a day’s wages. And then, the ones who have been working all day said, “Boy, this is going to be wonderful! Look! He gave those who only labored an hour a day’s labor. I wonder what we’re going to get.” And they got the same thing. A near riot broke out. The Bible says there was murmuring. (Matthew 20:11) They were disgruntled, and they felt discriminated against; and they voiced their grievance. Complaints were uttered. Others just murmured under their breath. Notice Matthew 20:11: “*And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house.*” (Matthew 20:11) These who were murmuring were those who had toiled for twelve long hours, and they ended at the end of the day saying, “It just isn’t fair!” And it wasn’t. But God is good.

I want you to learn tonight some incredible truths, some great truths that will see you through in life. And if you don’t learn these, I think you’re going to get your nose bumped on the spiritual highway.

## I. It's Always Too Soon to Quit but Never Too Late to Start

Truth number one: It's always too soon to quit but never too late to start. Now, look in verse 6: *"And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle?"* (Matthew 20:6) And they came at the eleventh hour. Now, he's not talking here about deathbed repentance. He is not talking about burning the candle of life for yourself and then blowing the smoke in God's face. Now, there is a deathbed repentance. God will save anybody if they're drawing their last breath, if they call upon Him to save them. But that's not what He's trying to teach here, or what He is teaching here. Now, the thief on the cross was saved in the eleventh hour. Just before he died, he turned to Jesus and said, *"Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."* (Luke 23:42) Now, don't deliberately deny Christ and say, "Well, I'll get saved in the eleventh hour" because you may never get to the eleventh hour. You may die tonight. You may die tomorrow. Your heart may get hard, as we preached last Sunday night. But what is He saying? He's saying it is never too late to start; it is always too soon to quit.

Now, these people came into the vineyard, even in the eleventh hour, as soon as they were called. Now, what is the teaching here? It is better to start and to serve lovingly all day, but it is never too late to start. If there are some of you here and you feel like, you know, "I've wasted my life. I'm getting up in years. I'm sixty, seventy, eighty, ninety. It's the eleventh hour for me," I've got wonderful, wonderful news for you: our Lord is calling you into His vineyard. Listen, friend, it's always too soon to quit, never too late to start. Does that speak to somebody's heart here tonight? You've been sitting idle all of your spiritual life, and the Lord of the vineyard is calling you tonight.

## II. If You Bargain With God, You Will Cheat Yourself

Second truth: If you bargain with God, you will cheat yourself. Look now in verse 2: *"And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard."* (Matthew 20:2) That means an agreement had to be made. That means there was some haggling. That means there was a contract. Actually, Williams gives it, "when they had contracted." They were looking for a certain amount. I can just hear them saying, "What are you paying today?" And he says, "Well, I'll pay you a penny a day." And they say, "Well, no. We think we need more than a penny a day." Let's say the labor at that time for a laborer was ten dollars an hour, and he's saying, "I'll pay you 120 dollars for a day's work." And, they're saying, "Couldn't you pay us more than that?" He says, "No, I will pay you this much."

¶ I heard about a man who applied for a job, and he asked his prospective employer, "What will you pay me?" He said, "I'll pay you what you're worth." He said, "No deal. I just quit a job making more than that."¶

But they're haggling back and forth. And finally, they agree. There's a contract. And they go into the vineyard. Now, they're going to the vineyard early, and there's nothing wrong with that. The earlier you go into the vineyard, the better it is. I was called into the vineyard early. God saved me at fourteen, called me to preach at sixteen. I've been pastoring since I was nineteen. It's all I've ever done. I would recommend it to these children here, these young people in the preteen choir: serve the Lord. And if you've been called early, praise God that you've been kept from much sinning. Praise Him for that! I praise God I've never known what it is to use alcohol or tobacco or to be morally impure with fornication. I'm so glad that God saved me from all of that. I'm so glad that God called me early in the morning into His vineyard. And if God has called you that way, thank Him. Praise Him that you have been saved from much sinning. But if God calls you late in the day, praise Him that He has forgiven you much. You see, listen, friend, to bargain with God is to cheat yourself.

Now, these people were bargaining with God, the ones who came early. There's nothing wrong with coming early. But they were trying to drive a bargain. The others came with what we would call a gentleman's agreement. Look at it in Matthew 20, verses 4 and 5: "*And [he] said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard*"—now, watch this—"*and whatsoever is right I will give you*"—no agreement here, just "Trust me. Whatever is right I will give you"—"*And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.*" (Matthew 20:4–5) And then, in verse 7: and these who came at the eleventh hour said, "We're here because no man has hired us." "*He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard*"—now, listen to this—"*and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.*" (Matthew 20:7) Now, they were saying, "Whatever is right, I'll trust you with. I know that you will do right. We know that you will do whatever is right, and we trust you. We don't ask for a contract. We just simply go into the vineyard to work." Now, what our Lord is doing here is teaching the difference between service that comes out of legalism and service that comes out of love.

Now, in the chapter just prior to this I think we see the reason for this story that Jesus gave. In Matthew chapter 19, verse 27, Peter, who was about to slip into legalism, asked Jesus this question: "*Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?*" (Matthew 19:27) Now, he was saying, "Look, Lord, I want to make a deal with you. When we follow you, we want to know what we're going to get paid."

Now, legalism is always demanding its rights. It wants to bargain with God. The basis of the service is debt, not grace. The problem with legalism is not that it doesn't get what it bargains for; the problem is it does get what it bargains for. They bargain for a penny, and they got a penny. Jesus said, "Those who pray to be seen of men have their reward." (Matthew 6:5) Jesus said, "Those who give to be seen of men, they have

their reward.” (Matthew 6:2) They make a deal, and they have a deal. The principle is that *God gives the best to those who leave the choice with Him*. If you bargain with God, you will cheat yourself.

In this story, those who bargained came in last. Look in verse 16: *“So the last shall be first, and the first last.”* (Matthew 20:16) You see, this is not equal pay for equal work. God is not interested in your hours. God wants your heart. God wants you to serve Him, trusting Him with a free heart, a joyful heart, an open heart, a liberal heart, saying, “O God, whatever you do, I know that you are good.” Now, God can treat you two ways: He could treat you like a hireling (you bargain with Him), or He can treat you like a servant.

Now, the Pharisees were legalists, and they tried to bargain with God. And they lived lives of legalism. Just go over to Matthew 23, and look in verse 23 about the Pharisees. Jesus said, *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done”—that is, “you ought to tithe”—“and not to leave the other undone.”* (Matthew 23:23)

Now, let me tell you how meticulous the Pharisees were. Some of you ladies have a little mint plant in your backyard, and you go and pick a few leaves off to put in the iced tea. And I like that. That smells good, and it just adds a little extra flavor and buoyancy to iced tea. But now, the Pharisees were so careful. If they had a mint plant, and as they’re picking the leaves: “One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine—those are mine; tenth—that’s God’s.” They were so careful that they do it exactly right. You would think that God commended them for it, but He didn’t. Jesus said, “Woe unto you because you’re legalists. You’ve left off judgment, mercy, and faith.”

I want to tell you something: it pays to tithe. But if you tithe because it pays, you have a problem. You don’t tithe because it pays—not a bargain with God. You give liberally and joyfully. And the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 9, verse 7: *“God [loves] a cheerful giver.”* (2 Corinthians 9:7) People say, “Give ’til it hurts.” No, you give ’til it stops hurting. You can cheerfully give.

### **III. You Will Be Very Wise if You Let God Keep the Books**

Now, here’s a third principle: you will be very wise if you let God keep the books. Now, if you keep a record of your service—you know how many hours you’ve served, you know what you have done—you’re very foolish—rather than leaving the matter with God. You see, Peter had been keeping books. Peter had his eye on the clock. He said, “We’ve done so-and-so and so-and-so. What are we going to get paid?” The legalist always has his eye on the clock. He knows how many hours he has served. He knows what so-called “sacrifices” he’s made, and he really doesn’t have the vineyard in his mind. He doesn’t have his Master in his mind. He has himself on his mind.

¶ When I was a boy, among other jobs that I worked on when I was in junior high school, I worked in a drug store. But that was kind of a drug store we had back yonder that had a soda fountain in it. And I cooked hamburgers—you didn't know I could do that. I made ice cream sundaes. I did all of these things there in the soda fountain for Mr. Albritton. And, in the evening time, when it was time to close, which was eleven o'clock, I would sweep the floor. Now, we didn't have air conditioning in that drug store. We had folding doors that opened right out to the street. And I had my eye on the clock—it is now 10:59. Eleven o'clock—closing time. I saw a car pull up outside. I went to the door. I began to fasten the door, bolt it down. They came and knocked on the door. I said, "We're closed." I turned around, and Mr. Albritton was standing right behind me. He said, "Son, I've had this store for x number of years." He said, "That's the first time a customer was ever turned away." I felt about *that* high. Now, what was the difference? I was a legalist. I had my eye on the clock. I was not concerned about Mr. Albritton's vineyard.¶

Now, listen to me, friend: you'll get more if you let God keep the books. If you keep the books, let me tell you what the danger is. Number one: You may overpay yourself on some occasion. Sometimes we think we're really doing great things, and we may not.

¶ I heard a black preacher use a very poignant illustration one time. He was preaching to preachers, and he said, "Now, you preachers, you talk about all of those souls that got saved Sunday morning in your church. You might be prone to think they got saved because of your preaching." He said, "Have you ever gone dove hunting, and a man in this field over here will shoot a dove but he keeps on flying and he lands in your field?" He said, "That man that fell at your altar this morning, someone may have wounded him a long time ago. Somebody witnessed to him. Somebody shared Christ with him. And you say, "Look what I did with my preaching."¶

You see, sometimes you may take credit for something that you really don't deserve credit for. And there are other times when you don't even realize how you've been used of God, but God is using you in a very special way. And look, listen to Matthew 25. Now, just go forward to Matthew 25. Jesus is talking about those that He's going to reward, and He said, *"For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done*

*it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” (Matthew 25:35–40)*

There are people who’ve been serving the Lord, doing acts of kindness. They’re not keeping a record. As a matter of fact, they don’t have it in their books. They say, “Lord, when was that? When were you thirsty and I gave you something to drink? When were you naked and I gave you clothes? When were you in prison and I visited you?” You know, if we were to pay ourselves, if we would keep the books, we might overpay ourselves sometimes and underpay ourselves sometimes. Sometimes what we think is the most incidental thing, if it’s done out of loyalty, God blesses.

¶ I told you a while back about a letter I received from a man. He said, “Forgive me for taking so long to write this letter, but I want to tell you how God used you in my life.” He said, “It was on Merritt Island where you used to pastor.” He said, “I was a long-haired surfer going down the road with my surfboard, and you stopped and picked me up. It was a hot day. And you talked to me about Jesus.” He said, “I laughed at you. I made as if it had no impact on me at all. You let me out.” He said, “I went on my way, but I was never ever able to forget what you said to me until I gave my heart to Christ.” He said, “Jesus saved me, and now I am pastor of a very wonderful church. And I just want to thank you.” Well, you see, look, I didn’t even remember it. I thought, “Do I remember now? I think maybe, vaguely, faintly, I remember picking that boy up.”¶

You see, sometimes the things we do we don’t put in the books and the things we think we have done God does not put in the books. But you will be wise to let God keep the books.

#### **IV. Don’t Look for Fairness; Ask for Mercy**

Now, here’s the fourth thing: don’t look for fairness; ask for mercy. Look in verses 14 and 15. The owner of the vineyard said, *“Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?”* (Matthew 20:14–15)

Now, the concept of fairness is based on the idea that I am owed something in comparison with others. I want my fair share. That’s what fairness is based on. But God doesn’t deal with fairness. Listen, God deals on the basis of justice and mercy. He said, “Look, it’s mine. I can do with it what I will.” You see, God is good. God is merciful. But you can only receive mercy after you agree with justice. *Justice is God giving us what we deserve. Mercy is God not giving us what we deserve.* Friend, grace, that we heard about, is God giving us what we do not deserve. And I’m so grateful for God’s grace. God showed grace to these people who came at the eleventh hour into the vineyard.

Now, if you serve God for fairness, you’ll get upset if somebody gets more than you, and you’ll get upset if they got it sooner than you, and you’ll get upset if somebody gets



something that you don't get. Now friend, don't ever ask God for justice. If you get justice, you'll be in a pickle. Ask God for mercy.

## **V. Another's Blessing Is Never Your Loss**

Now, here's the fifth thing I want you to learn, and we'll be finished: another's blessing is never your loss. Because God blessed these at the eleventh hour, that doesn't mean that those who came at the first hour somehow suffered loss. Look in verses 14 and 15 again: *"Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?"* (Matthew 20:14–15) When one serves for reward, it is not long before he is complaining that he is not sufficiently rewarded.

You remember the story of the prodigal son, Luke 15? One brother went off and wasted his father's substance in riotous living. The other brother stayed home. That was fine. The other brother worked in the vineyard, and that was fine. But the other brother got all bent out of shape, and the reason he got bent out of shape is that when the younger brother came home, the father loved him, hugged him, put a ring on his hand, shoes on his feet, and barbecued the fatted calf. The older brother said, "This is not fair! I've worked for you all this time, and look how you're treating this son of yours!" He couldn't even call him his brother. Well, somehow this elder brother thought that his younger brother's blessing was his loss. The father said, "Look," to the older brother, "all that I have is yours."

Don't worry if somebody gets more than you get. Don't worry if God is blessing someone more than He's blessing you, supposedly. Don't be a legalist. Legalism is the root of jealousy. And jealousy is the root of ingratitude. And ingratitude is the root of self-pity. And self-pity is the root of bitterness and envy. Thank God for what He does for you. Don't drive a bargain with God. Now, we're going to be much happier in this life if we take our eyes off of our brothers and sisters and put our eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ and be grateful for what He does.

You know, a lot of us have the elder brother syndrome, the legalist syndrome. I've pastored churches where people resent newcomers into the church. "These people are taking up all the room! That man is sitting in my seat!" And, they get upset when a newcomer comes in and shares in the blessings like those who've been laboring for ten, fifteen, twenty, thirty years in this church. What a pity that is when people feel that way! Some say, "You know, Bellevue is big enough." Do you know what they're saying? They're saying, "I've got what I want. The rest can go to hell." Now, they wouldn't say it that bluntly. But when you say, "Look, we're big enough," you say, "Leave these eleventh hour folks out of the whole deal. These children are ruining the walls with fingerprints," then we'll repaint them, friend. Thank God for the children.

What I'm trying to say is this: someone else's blessing is not your loss. There's no seniority in the kingdom of heaven. Now, when we get to heaven, not everybody is going to have the same reward. You know, we sing that song, "Just give me a cabin in the corner of Gloryland." Well, that may be all you'll get. I'm serious. Jesus said, "*Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.*" (Matthew 6:20) Some will have more than others or this verse doesn't make sense. But how is that treasure laid up in heaven? By loving, free service.

## Conclusion

Now, I want to close the message. But what about those of you who are living in the eleventh hour right now, those of you who are saved and you're in the eleventh hour, you haven't been serving the Lord? What I want you to do is to say, "Lord, how can I use these last days for you?" Don't coast into the holy city. Finish the line; cross the line with your heart blazing, the torch held high for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, maybe you're not even saved, and it's the eleventh hour for you. And you're saying, "You know, I've lived this way. I guess I'll just have to die this way and miss heaven." No, you don't.

† Billy Sunday was a famous evangelist in the twenties, the thirties, of the last century. He was mighty man of God. He was a former major league baseball player, a great athlete. But he was a drunkard, an alcoholic. God saved him, and God transformed him; and God used him as a mighty preacher of the Word of God. When Billy went to a particular city one time, they said, "Billy, there's a man in this city who used to play baseball with you. We call him the 'old-timer.' Billy, why don't you go by and talk to him about Jesus? If you were to talk to him, perhaps he'd get saved. We've talked to him, and it doesn't seem to do any good."

So, Billy Sunday went to talk to this man they called the old-timer, and Billy explained the gospel to him and said, "Old-timer, you remember we had a good time playing baseball, and we had a lot of fun. But old-timer, there were some things that I did that were wrong, and Jesus forgave me; and Jesus saved me, and He wants to save you." And the old-timer said to Billy, "Billy, thank you for coming to see me. We did have some good times together. We were close friends. But I remember that day when you heard that gospel band on the street corner and they preached. I remember, Billy, when you went into the mission there and you gave your heart to Christ. Billy, you went that way, and I went this way. And now, my life is just about over." Billy Sunday said, "Well, old-timer, God is merciful. It may be the eleventh hour, but come on in; come in and be saved." The old-timer said, "Nope, it's too late for me. I made my choice a long time ago." Billy Sunday pled with the old-timer, but the old-timer shook his head and refused Christ.

Billy said, “In my mind, I saw a picture. The sun was sinking in the west. It was the bottom of the ninth inning. The old-timer was at bat. He had two strikes against him—the bottom of the ninth. The ball came across the plate big and soft. The crowd said, “Swing, old-timer, swing.” And Billy said, “He never even lifted the bat from his shoulder.”

Don't be like that man. This may be God calling you. You may be one of those eleventh-hour people. Maybe today's the first time you've ever really understood that God will save anybody, any time, any place who will call upon Him. It's always too soon to quit. It's never too late to start.

# It Pays to Serve Jesus

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: March 5, 1995**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 20:1–16**

## Outline

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Conclusion

## Introduction

**M**atthew chapter 20—the title of our message today: “It Pays to Serve Jesus.”

It pays to serve Jesus, it pays every day,  
It pays every step of the way. (Frank C. Huston)

Now sometimes the devil will tell you, “It doesn't pay to serve Jesus. You're wasting your life, and you're spoiling your opportunities.” But, I want to tell you, it does pay to serve Jesus.

One of the former pastors of this church, Dr. Lee, preached a famous sermon that he preached more than 1,000 times, entitled, “Payday, Someday.” And, friend, if you serve Jesus, there's a payday coming; if you serve Satan, there's a payday coming. “Payday, Someday.”

I heard about a man who applied for a job. And, he talked to the prospective employer, and he said, “I'd like to have the job. What do you pay?” And, the boss said, “Well, we pay thus-and-such. Do you want the job?” He said, “No.” He said, “I really don't.” The boss said, “Well, I'll pay you what you're worth.” He said, “I just quit a job making more than that.”

So, we worry sometimes and think about what we will be paid. That's what the parable that I have before you deals with—it deals with this factor: that it pays to serve

Jesus.

Verse 1: *“For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day...”*—now, let me just pause right here and say I’m reading from the *King James Version*. And, a penny a day is really a day’s wages. Don’t equate that with today’s penny. Whatever you might want to put in there—say 100 dollars, if we’re talking about a laborer, perhaps; let’s say 100 dollars—*“And when he had agreed with the labourers for [100 dollars] a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the lat unto the first.”* That is, “start with the man who came at the eleventh hour, and pay him first.” *“And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.”* That is, “every person who came, even those who came at the latest hour, received a day’s wages.” *“But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst thou not agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen”* (Matthew 20:9–16).

Question: Does God give equal pay for equal work? Answer: No. You know, it’s a good thing that God can’t be sued, isn’t it? Can you imagine what the EEOC and Washingtonian lawyers would do? Can you imagine what would happen if God could be sued as an unfair employer? Why, the lawyers would have a field day!

Now here’s the story of a man who needs some workers in the vineyard. So, he goes out in the beginning of the day and contracts with certain workers, and they strike up a bargain; they negotiate. A price is named, and he sends them into his field to work. Then, at nine o’clock, he goes out, and he finds others; and, they’re hired. Then, at twelve o’clock, others come on. And then, at three o’clock, others come on. And then, at

five o'clock in the afternoon, the last hour before sunset, the eleventh hour of the day, he gets others; and, they come, and they're hired.

And, when pay time comes and the paymaster goes into the field to pay them, he begins with the last man, who worked only one hour, and gave him a day's wages. The others said, "Well, boy! Now let's see. He got 100 dollars. I worked 12 hours. I'm getting 1,200 dollars. I won't work for several weeks. I'll have it made." He just began to figure backward. But, when he got his pay, he got the same thing this man got that had only worked an hour. Why, they begin to murmur. There was a near riot. They got disgruntled. They began to complain; they began to murmur. They uttered complaints under their breath. "Why," they said, "look—I worked 12 hours in the heat of the day. I didn't get any more than he got. That is not fair!"

Now come up close, and I want to tell you something: God is not fair. Does that shock you? God is not fair. God is just. Learn the difference. God is just. Fairness is something that humans demand. Do you know what fairness implies? That we're owed something; and, if we don't get it, then God is not fair. Do you know the only thing we're owed is judgment? We ought to thank God that we don't get that. You see, God is not fair; God is just.

There are three attributes of God that we're going to talk about in this parable: God's justice, God's mercy, and what we sang about—God's grace, God's amazing grace. Now God is not fair. God is better than fair—God is just. A just God gives us what we deserve. That's justice—what we deserve. Justice is God giving us what we deserve. I've told you this many times: Mercy is God not giving us what we deserve. Amen? We ought to thank God for mercy. Grace is God giving us what we don't deserve—that is, the free loving gift of God. Now keep that in your mind. God is not fair; but God is just, merciful, and full of grace—not fair. Fairness implies that we're owed something; and, if we don't get it, then God is...that we...if somebody else has something, then whatever they have, we deserve the same, or God is not fair. God is just; God is merciful; and God is full of grace.

Justice is God giving us what we deserve. Mercy is God not giving us what we deserve. And, grace is God giving us what we don't deserve. Now keep that in mind as we look in this parable, and it'll help you to understand what we're talking about right here.

Here is a wonderful, wonderful lesson on how it pays to serve Jesus. Now He ends this parable by saying, "Many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 20:16). That is, few are choice servants. Would you like to be a choice servant? Would you like to be a chosen one today—one that the Lord calls "choice"? Then pay attention.

Now what we're talking about here today is not primarily salvation, but service. You

don't work your way to Heaven. Heaven *is not a reward for the* righteous; *it's a gift for the* guilty. You don't get into Heaven by doing labor and by doing work. He's talking here about His servants—those who serve the Lord.

I cannot work my soul to save  
That work my Lord has done.  
But I will work like any slave  
For the love of God's dear Son. (author unknown)

Amen? So, we're not talking about salvation here; we're talking about service, and that is the issue.

As a matter of fact, if you really want to get this thing in its setting, go back to chapter 19. And, Simon Peter asked this question, in chapter 19, verse 27: "*Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?*" (Matthew 19:27). He's talking about, "What's it going to be at payday? We have forsaken all, and followed Thee"—they're already saved—"We're following You now, Lord Jesus. What is our payday going to be like?" "Payday, Someday." Does it really pay to serve Jesus? Now in the setting of Peter's question, Jesus gives this parable about the laborers in the vineyard. Three things I want you to think about, as you think about your payday, okay?

## I. Recognize the Justice of God

Number one: You need to recognize the justice of God.

### A. One Group of Workers Agreed

Look, if you will again, here in this passage of Scripture. And, you're going to find out that you see the justice of God in verses 1 and 2: "*For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard*" (Matthew 20:1–2).

Underscore the word *agreed*. *Williams* translates it this way: "When he had contracted..." (Matthew 20:2). That is, there was some negotiation going on here. It wasn't just a simple thing. There had to be an agreement. You can listen to them, as they negotiate: "We want some workers in the vineyard." "Well, what does your master pay?" "Well, he'll pay you so much." "No, the going rate is thus-and-such." "Well, I can't work for that." "Well, will you work for this?" "Yes." "All right, we agree." Do you get the idea? There was an agreement; there was a negotiation. That's the way justice works. In justice, we are paid what we are due—no more, no less. We receive what we deserve. Now that's one group of workers that went out—they negotiated; they agreed.

The key is that they agreed.

## B. One Group of Workers Believed

But now, look, if you will, in verse 4, at the others who came late into the vineyard: *“And [he] said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard,”*—and watch this—*“and whatsoever is right I will give you”* (Matthew 20:4). No agreement—just, “Trust me”; just, “Trust me”; just, “Trust me.” Not a contract—a covenant; just, “Trust me.” “Whatsoever is right I’ll do it” (Matthew 20:4).

Look in verse 5: *“Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise”* (Matthew 20:5). Likewise what? “Whatever is right. Just trust me.” Look, if you will, in verse 7: *“They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard;”*—watch it—*“and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive”* (Matthew 20:7). “Just trust me. I’ll do what is right.” And, they said, in effect, “All right, we’re going to work. We believe that you’re a good master; you’re a fair man. Whatsoever is right...”

Now here you have the difference between legalism and grace. Peter was in danger of slipping into legalism. Peter had been saying, “Well now, look, Lord, we’ve given up an awful lot for You. We’ve done this, we’ve done that, for You. What are we going to get?” Remember chapter 19 and verse 27: *“Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?”* (Matthew 19:27). “Hey, Lord, let’s do a little negotiation here.”

You see, legalism demands what is right. It wants to bargain with God; it wants to agree with God. The legalist wants to demand what is coming to him. Now listen to me carefully. The problem with legalism is not that it doesn’t get what it bargains for; the problem with legalism is that it does. They got what they bargained for. Jesus said of the Pharisees, *“They have their reward”* (Matthew 6:2; Matthew 6:5; Matthew 6:16). They get exactly what they bargained for.

Now the man who bargained with God may get what he bargains for, but he will cheat himself out of the best. Don’t try to drive a bargain with God. God gives *the* best *to those who* leave *the* choices *with Him*. You see, those in this parable who bargained came in last, not first. Matthew 19, verse 30—look at it: *“But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first”* (Matthew 19:30). Matthew 20, verse 16: *“So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen”* (Matthew 20:16).

You see, this is not equal pay for equal work. God is not interested in your hours; God is interested in your heart. God wants your heart—God wants your heart! Don’t negotiate with God. Just give Him your heart. Serve Him with a free reckless abandonment, and let God deal with you as He will, because God will deal with you as



you deal with God. Now if you want to negotiate with God, go ahead. But, you'll cheat yourself.

Put this verse in the margin—Psalm 18, verses 25 and 26: *“With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright; with the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure;”*—now, watch this—*“and with the froward”*—what on earth does the word *froward* mean? It means with “the vile, the base”—*“thou wilt shew thyself froward”* (Psalm 18:25–26). Now if you want to treat God like a negotiator—you want to negotiate with God—God says, “Okay, let’s get down and negotiate. That’s the way you want to be. I mean, if you want to live on the basis of grace, then I’ll show you grace. You want to live on the basis of justice, then I will show you justice.” What God wants is service that is joyful, free, spontaneous—that doesn’t negotiate, that doesn’t keep records. God is just—yes, He is. And, justice is where God gives us what we deserve.

You know, the Pharisees were so careful that they would get what they deserved. Jesus was talking to them, in Matthew chapter 23 and verse 23, about their tithing, and He said, *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin,”*—now, these are little mint garden herbs. They’d pick off every tenth leaf and give it to God—*“and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith:”*—these people were interested in legalism, not in love. And then, Jesus said—*“these ought ye to have done,”*—“you ought to tithe”—*“and not to leave the other undone”* (Matthew 23:23).

Now were the Pharisees blessed for their tithing? I want to submit to you that they were blessed. Jesus said, *“This ought ye to have done”* (Matthew 23:23). But, they were not blessed like they could have been blessed. Let me tell you, if you tithe because it pays, you’re going to miss a blessing. Don’t negotiate with God. Don’t tithe because it pays. Tithe because you love Jesus. Tithe because it’s right. Give because it’s right.

Second Corinthians chapter 9, verse 7: *“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver”* (2 Corinthians 9:7). And, if you’ve been around church very long, you know that word *cheerful* is the word we get our word *hilarious* from. Are you a hilarious giver? Somebody says, “Well, give till it hurts.” May I give a suggestion to you? Give till it stops hurting—I mean, till you can give with joy. What you don’t joyfully give, God neither needs nor wants. Don’t negotiate with God. Don’t think, somehow, that giving is sort of a slot machine thing—sort of a *quid pro quo*—you put in, and you get out; you negotiate with God.

Now first of all, recognize the justice of God. If you want to negotiate with God, that’s your business, but I don’t recommend it—I don’t recommend it. I mean, God will deal

with you as you deal with God.

## II. Receive the Mercy of God

Now here's the second thing. Recognize the justice of God. Then, receive the mercy of God. Now you cannot receive mercy until you recognize justice. You see, there is a door of mercy.

Now here's a man who went out and hired these laborers in his vineyard. And then, he went out later into the labor pool, and he hired others. And, he hired some at the last hour of the day. And, what he was doing was... It wasn't because he needed the laborers. He just saw these men standing there idle. His heart went out to them, and he hired them and paid them more than they were worth. Remember this: *It's always* too soon *to* quit *but never* too late *to* start *with God*.

I'm talking to some of you now who—you've never been in the vineyard. I mean, you have never been saved. You don't know the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. Most people are saved before they reach the age of 20; the great, great majority are saved before they reach the age of 20. But, I know that, through television and by the crowd that's here this morning, I'm speaking to many of you who are past the majority of your years. Your salad days are over. Friend, you're near the dessert. I hope it'll be dessert. Your salad days are over. But, I want to ask you this question: Have you come into the vineyard? Have you been hired? Are you serving the Lord Jesus Christ? The door of mercy is open for you. You can come in.

I remember reading in the Bible about a man who was dying on a cross next to the Lord Jesus. He'd been a thief. And, he turned to the Lord Jesus—you talk about the eleventh hour—and he said to Him, *"Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him... Today shalt thou be with me in paradise"* (Luke 23:42–43). Oh, the mercy of God! This man deserved Hell, but he receives mercy. And, he's going to the same Heaven I'm going to—and I've served the Lord Jesus since I was a teenage boy. I came in early; he came in late.

Now this is not encouraging deathbed repentance. But, it is telling you, if you're on your deathbed, you can repent. It doesn't encourage you to put it off. Somebody has wisely said that story of the dying thief—it's a story that's recorded only once in the Bible: once, that no one may despair; but only once, that no one may presume. Oh, the mercy of God! I'm talking to some of you, and it's the eleventh hour to you. I mean, you are just getting very, very close. You can come to Jesus.

Now if you came as a youngster like I did... and I'm so glad that I came as a youngster; I'm so glad I came to Jesus in my early teens. Let me tell you why: I've never been addicted to cigarettes. I don't know what dope is like—I don't want to know. I've

never been drunk. I went to the marriage altar a virgin. I married a virgin—I'm glad I did. I'm glad I came early in the morning to the vineyard. I'm glad that God, by His infinite grace, has kept me. And so, if you came early, you can thank God that you've been saved from much sinning. But oh, if you come late, you can praise God you've been forgiven for much sinning. Isn't that wonderful? He that's forgiven much loves much (Luke 7:47).

You see, it's just the door of mercy. After justice is established, then there's room for mercy. God is not fair; God is merciful. He is just; and then, He is merciful. Do you want mercy today? You've lived your life without Him. Others have been in the vineyard. And, you say, "Well, it's too late for me." It's not too late for you.

Some years ago, I was in the city of Jacksonville, Florida, preaching a revival meeting. I was with a brother, friend, named Ernie Harvey. And, Ernie and I were out visiting, and we prayed fervently, one morning, "Lord, lead us to this person that we feel needs You." And, we prayed, and we got in the car, and, we drove, and drove, and drove, and got all turned around. And, we got into a section of town by the railroad tracks where there was a little, like a one- or two-room shack. We thought maybe that was the house. We went and knocked on the door, and an old man came out—had an unusual name: Mr. Pugh. I'll never forget it. And, he's kind of stooped-shouldered, white hair, beard—he came to the door.

And, we said, "Are you Mr. So-and-So?" And, he said, "No, I'm Mr. Pugh." And, I thought, "Oh, how can this be? We so prayed that God would lead us, and we have been, all morning, looking for this house." We said, "Well, at any rate, may we talk with you for a few moments?" The old man welcomed us in. We began to tell him about Jesus, and that old man said to me, "It's interesting that you would come." He said, "My daddy was a preacher of the gospel." I said, "Is that right, Mr. Pugh?" I said, "Then you must be a Christian. Tell me about when you were saved." "Well," he said, "I've never been saved." He was an old man. I said, "You've never been saved?" He said, "No, sir." I said, "Well, Mr. Pugh, do you intend to die and go to Hell?" He said, "Oh, no." I said, "Well, Mr. Pugh, you're not getting any younger. You're not..."

Here's an old man. And, I said, "Sir, don't you think you ought to get saved?" And, I remember going into that little house. The bedroom and the kitchen were in the same room—just a little, almost one-room house. And, we got down by the bed and prayed, and that man prayed and sobbed so loudly he shook that whole little frame house, as he prayed and asked Christ to come into his heart. And, I've thought about him so many times. I thought about how God guided us like an arrow right to that house. I know we were guided there. Even our mistake was God's leading. But, that dear man, like the dying thief, came in the eleventh hour.

And, I want to tell you this morning, if you're not saved, come—come. If it's the eleventh hour, come. But, don't presume, because the sun did set that day. And, when the sun set that day, there were no more laborers in the vineyard. And, a life-setting sun is coming for you. But, if you're here today—you're young—come to Jesus. Oh, I'm so glad I came to Christ as a youngster. I'm so glad I had a life to live for the Lord Jesus Christ. And, I wouldn't take anything for my journey serving the Lord Jesus. I was thinking about it this morning, as I was praying. I said, "O God, You've been so good."

Jim, thank you for that song, "Great is Thy Faithfulness." I thought about it, as we sang it this morning, and I said, "O God, how great is Your faithfulness!" But, my friend, the God who hires laborers early in the morning is the God who keeps the door open till the eleventh hour. There's the justice of God. Recognize the justice of God. And then, receive—receive—the mercy of God.

### III. Rejoice in the Grace of God

I want to say a third thing: Rejoice in the grace of God. Recognize the justice of God; receive the mercy of God; and then, rejoice in the grace of God. Now remember, justice *is* God giving *us what we* deserve. Mercy *is God giving us what we don't deserve*—letting us come in at the eleventh hour. But then, grace *is God giving us more than we deserve*—what we don't deserve. You see, He paid them all, except for those legalists, what they did not deserve.

You see, Peter had been keeping books on his service. Remember how this whole parable got started? Peter, in Matthew chapter 19, verse 27, says, "What am I going to receive? Here's what I've been doing for You" (Matthew 19:27). See, Peter had been a clock-watcher. You know what a clock-watcher is?

When I was a teenage boy, I used to be a soda jerk in Albritton's Drugstore on 40<sup>th</sup> Street and Broadway in West Palm Beach. Mr. Albritton hired me on there, and I'd work behind the soda fountain. Did you know your pastor knows how to fix hamburgers, and sodas—old-fashioned sodas—and cherry cokes, and all? I did all that stuff. I knew how to do all that. And, I'd work back there, and I'd sweep out the drugstore. We didn't have air conditioning in the drugstore, but we had big folding doors that went across the front there that opened out on Broadway. And, we would close, on a certain night, at 11—stayed open till 11. Well, I was so tired by 11.

And, I remember, one time, it was 11. I had my eye on those big folding doors. I was so anxious to close those doors, so I could get out of there. And, I remember when I watched the clock; and, it was about one minute to 11, and I started folding those doors and putting those things down till those folding doors across the front would be all bolted in and locked. Just when I got it down, a car pulled up at the curb. A man got out, went

and knocked on the door like that. He wanted in the drugstore. You know what I said? “Too late—too late. Can’t get in. We’ve already closed. It’s 11 o’clock.”

And then, I turned around, and standing behind me was Mr. Albritton. I’ll never forget it. That man drove off. He said to me, “Son,” he said, “that’s the first time anybody ever wanted to come in this store and buy something, and they weren’t let in.” I felt so bad. You know, I learned there, as a youngster, the difference between the owner and the hireling. You see, I had my eye on the clock; he had his eye on the customer, and on the business.

### **A. The Three Dangers of Being a Clock-Watcher**

Now folks, what we need to learn is to serve the Lord with grace. You see, don’t keep books; don’t be a clock-watcher. If you do that, let me tell you three dangers, and I’ll be finished.

#### **1. The Danger That You’ll Pay Yourself When You Don’t Deserve to Be Paid**

First of all, there’s the danger—there’s the danger—that you’ll pay yourself some time when you don’t deserve to be paid. Sometimes when you think you’re really doing something very wonderful, God says it’s wood, hay, and stubble (1 Corinthians 3:12).

#### **2. The Danger That You Won’t Pay Yourself When You Ought to Be Paid**

Secondly, there a danger that you won’t pay yourself when you ought to be paid. You know, you might fail to pay yourself.

Matthew 25, verses 34 and following: “Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry, and you gave Me food: I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink: I was a stranger, and you took Me in: naked, you clothed Me: I was sick, and you visited Me: I was in prison, and you came to Me. Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You? or thirsty, and give You to drink? When did we see You a stranger, and took You in? or naked, and clothed You?”—that is, “Lord, I don’t remember that. I don’t remember that.” And, our Lord said—“Inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of one of these, you’ve done it unto Me” (Matthew 25:34–40).

What’s the idea? We serve the Lord sometimes just unconsciously, just being kind and loving, free—not keeping books. God is the One who is keeping the books. He says, “You can’t even give a cup of cold water in the name of the disciple and lose your reward” (Matthew 10:42).

I got a letter a while back from a man. He wrote me, and he said, “It’s long overdue that I thank you.” And, I said, “What for?” Brother Jim, he was down at Merritt Island. He said, “You...” Or, he had been at Merritt Island when we were down there. He said,

“One day,” he said, “I was a beach bum, a surfer, going along the road.” He said, “You stopped your car, picked me up, put me in the car, talked to me about Jesus, and sent me on my way.” He said, “I didn’t get saved, when you talked to me, but,” he said, “I never forgot what you said to me.” And, he said, “God has saved me, and God has called me to preach.” And, he said, “I’m pastoring a church,” and he told me about his church. He said, “Mister, I just want to thank you for being faithful.” And, the thing about it is, I don’t even remember. I wouldn’t have remembered it at all, except he wrote me the letter. “When saw we Thee hungry, and fed Thee? When did we see You thirsty? I don’t remember that” (Matthew 25:37).

### **3. The Danger That You’ll Begin to Resent Others**

Sometimes you’ll pay yourself when you ought not to pay yourself, and sometimes you won’t believe that you deserve pay. You do. And, I’ll tell you something else: If you keep books—if you keep books—you’ll begin to resent other people, because you say, “It’s not fair that he has more than I have.”

That’s what the people in this parable said. They said, “God is not fair. Others have more than I have.” You see, when you look for fairness, you’re never satisfied, when you get what you get. You’re only angry you didn’t get it sooner, and more angry if somebody else gets more. Isn’t that true? But, when you see that God is just, merciful, and full of grace, then, if somebody else is blessed, their blessing is not your failure. You don’t have to become like the elder brother, who so resented the prodigal son coming home he wouldn’t even come in the house. The best sermon title I ever heard for him is this: “This Little Prig Stayed Home”—the prodigal elder brother who so resented the prodigal son.

## **Conclusion**

Friend,

It pays to serve Jesus, it pays every day,  
It pays every step of the way. (Frank C. Huston)

You know, many years ago, there was a man named Mr. Stead. He married a woman named Louisa. Mr. Stead lived in New York City, had a little daughter named Lily. Mr. Stead took Louisa and Lily to the beach. From New York they went to the beach. They were going to have a picnic. They were going to swim and build sandcastles. Mrs. Stead stayed up there to fix the picnic lunch. Mr. Stead and Lily went down the beach to build a sandcastle. When they were down there, there was a boy out in the water who was in difficulty, a teenage boy, and he began to scream for help. Mr. Stead was not a good swimmer, but he couldn’t let that boy drown. So, he made his way out into the water to try to save him. But, you know that sometimes a drowning

person will panic and drown the person who tries to save him. And, both Mr. Stead and that teenage boy drowned and left Louisa Stead and little Lily by themselves to survive. They just tried to eke out a living.

One day, they were down to nothing. One night, Mrs. Stead said to Lily, “Lily, if God doesn’t give us something to eat, we’ll not have any breakfast in the morning.” And then, she looked down at Lily, and Lily had little ragged shoes on. And, she said, “And Lily, sweetheart, you need some shoes. We’re going to pray and ask God to give us groceries and some money to buy you some shoes.” And, they bowed their head, and prayed, and went to bed that night. The next morning, when Mrs. Stead woke up and got ready to open the front door, she pushed the front door. It opened with difficulty, and there was a scraping sound. She pushed it open; and, on the other side of the door, that had been holding the door shut, was a big box of groceries and an envelope with enough money to buy Lily some shoes. Mrs. Stead took those groceries and put them on her kitchen table.

And, after breakfast, she sat down, and she wrote these words:

’Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus,  
And to take Him at His Word;  
Just to rest upon His promise,  
And to know, ‘Thus says the Lord!’

Jesus, Jesus, how to trust Him!  
How I’ve proved Him o’er and o’er  
Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus!  
O for grace to trust Him more!

They had their breakfast. After breakfast, they went downtown and bought some new shoes for Lily. And, Mrs. Stead came back, and sat down, and wrote these words:

I’m so glad I learned to trust Thee,  
Precious Jesus, Savior, Friend;  
And I know that Thou art with me,  
Wilt be with me to the end. (Louisa M. R. Stead)

And, that’s how we got that song, “’Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus.”

You look at your pastor, and let me tell you something: Don’t bargain with God. Trust Him! And, whatever is right, He’ll do it, because it pays to serve Jesus.

Bow your heads in prayer. And oh, if you’re a teenager—you’ve not yet given your heart to Jesus—come early in the day. Don’t bargain with Him, but get in the vineyard, get in the field, and serve the Lord Jesus. And, if it’s late in the day for you—you’ve been standing idle; you haven’t been in the vineyard—the door is open. Maybe it’s high

noon for you. Maybe you're strong and virile, but you've been busy about other things. You need to get in the vineyard.

Justice means that, when we die, we'll have to pay for our sin. We'll die and go to Hell. But, mercy is that we don't have to pay for our sins. And, grace is that God makes us perfectly righteous, when we put our faith in Jesus.

Would you pray a prayer like this, if you're not saved: "Dear God..."—that's right, just speak to Him—"Dear God, I know that You love me. I know that You want to save me. Lord Jesus, I want to be saved. I need to be saved. Come into my heart; forgive my sin; and save me today. In Your holy name I pray. Amen"?

Now look up here. If you prayed that prayer—if you prayed that prayer—in a moment, I want you to do something very wonderful. I want to say a word to those of you who are watching by television: If you're watching today by television, there's a number on the screen. If you'll call that number, there's somebody standing by who will pray with you, as you receive Jesus today. You don't even have to give your name. I'm not asking you to buy anything or join anything. If you want to be saved, just call the number on the screen. A friend is standing by, right this moment.

And, in this building, in just a moment, there'll be some friends standing at the head of each of these aisles. And, when we stand and sing an invitational hymn—and, by the way, up in that balcony, in the aisle-way around the balcony, there'll be ministers standing around there—and when we begin to sing, whether it's early in the day for you or late in the day for you, I want you to come.

I want you to know it's late in God's day, and the sun is about to set. Christ is about to come. You need to get in the vineyard. You need to be saved. Oh, you need to thank God for His amazing grace and say, "Lord, I just want to trust You to save me." As soon as we begin to sing, I want you to leave your seat, and come forward, and tell the minister, "I'm trusting Jesus."

Others of you who are saved and don't have a church home, remember God's plan for you is to serve in the vineyard, not to sit idle. You need to come and say, "I want to place my membership here and go to work for the Lord Jesus."

So, if you want to be saved, if you trust in Christ, come and tell the minister that you're trusting Christ. And, if you are saved and need a church home, come and tell him, "I want to place my membership here." Let's stand together, as we sing. You step out and come.



# When God Cleans House

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: May 6, 2001**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 21:12–13**

*“And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves.”*

MATTHEW 21:12

## Outline

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## Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and turn to Matthew chapter 21? And then, look up here, and let me ask you a question: Where does God live? I mean, if you wanted to write God a letter, do you have the address? Do you know the zip code? The truth of the matter is that God has been living in a series of different houses.

### A. A Primary House

God’s first dwelling place was a man named Adam. That was God’s primary house. And, God lived in Adam. Adam was designed to be a God container, a house, a temple of God. And, God made Adam, and God dwelt in Adam. But then, Adam sinned, and God moved out of Adam, because we learn something about God: God will not live in a dirty house. And, the house was designed, and then the house was desecrated; and then, the house was desolated, and then the house was destroyed. God said, *“In the*

*day that [you eat], [you'll] surely die.*" (Genesis 2:17) So, God moved out of Adam.

### **B. A Pattern House**

The second house that God moved into was not a primary house, but God moved into the temple, and that was a pattern house. The temple, called the "house of God," where God dwelt in the holy place—and when I'm saying "temple," I also include the tabernacle, because both were basically the same—the temple was just a more substantial tabernacle. And, the tabernacle was a temple in a tent, but both the same thing: a house of three rooms. Like Adam was a house of three rooms—body, soul, and spirit—the temple was a house of three rooms: the outer room, the outer court represented the body; the inner court represented the soul; and the innermost place, the Holy of Holies, represented the spirit. And, the temple was a pattern. It was just a great object lesson.

But, God lived there. He lived in that temple, in the Holy of Holies. God's presence was there. Between the cherubim was the Shekinah glory of God. But again, this temple was sullied. It was dirty. It became a den of thieves, and God moved out of it. And, Jesus said, *"Your house is left unto you desolate."* (Matthew 23:38) No longer was it God's house. "Now," He said, "it's your house." They went on with their religious ceremony, but it wasn't God's house; it was their house. They were having religion, but they didn't have reality. It was a house designed. God said, "See thou make it according to the pattern." (Exodus 25:9, Hebrews 5:8) It was a house desecrated. It became a den of thieves. It was a house desolated. *"Your house is left unto you desolate."* (Matthew 23:38) And, it was a house destroyed. Jesus said, "Not one stone will be left upon another." (Matthew 24:2; Mark 13:2; Luke 19:44; Luke 21:6) And so, God moved out.

### **C. A Perfect House**

Now, God had a third house that He lived in—not a primary house, and not a pattern house, but a perfect house. That perfect house that God lived in was Jesus. Did you know Jesus was a house of God? He called Himself there, in the Gospel of John, a temple. And, He threw this challenge out to them in John, the second chapter: He said, *"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."* (John 2:19) He was talking about the temple of His body.

He was a perfect house. He was a house designed: *"A body thou hast [given] me."* (Hebrews 10:5) He was a house. He was a house desecrated. You say, "No, not Jesus." Yes, He was. This perfect house became desecrated. How did it become desecrated? He took my sin and your sin, and "He who knew no sin God hath made to be sin for us." (2 Corinthians 5:21) And, that perfect house became desecrated. And then, when that perfect house became desecrated, that house became desolated. God moved out, and He had to cry, *"My God, my God, why hath thou forsaken me?"*

(Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34) I'll tell you why: God can't live in a dirty house. And, Jesus was bearing our sin. And God, who cannot bear to look upon iniquity, moved out. And then, a house destroyed—Jesus knew that His body would be destroyed. That's the reason He said, *"Destroy this temple, and in three days [I'll] raise it up."* (John 2:19) He was talking about the temple of His body. You see, there's a pattern: a house designed, a house desecrated, a house desolated, and a house destroyed. And, God moved from a primary house to a pattern house to a perfect house.

#### **D. A Permanent House**

But now, there's a permanent house that God lives in. And, where is God living? God has moved in not to move out any more. What is God's permanent house? Well, you're looking at it. Me. You. Go look in the mirror. First Corinthians chapter 6, verse 19: *"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God"*—you're the temple of the Spirit of God—*"which [you] have of God, and [you're] not your own? [You're] bought with a price."* (1 Corinthians 6:19–20) God lives in you. And, He's not going to move out again. Jesus said the Holy Spirit will come to *"abide with you for ever."* (John 14:16) God has settled down. He's stopped moving. He lives in us. Now, that's a phenomenal thought—to think that God lives in us and He will not move out again.

In the Old Testament, God had a temple for His people; in the New Testament, He has a people for His temple. God lives in us. Paul told the Corinthians, *"[You] are the temple of God."* (1 Corinthians 3:16) And again, 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 19: *"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost...which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price."* (1 Corinthians 6:19–20) So, you are a temple, and you need to understand this.

"Well," you say, "if God won't live in a dirty house, and I have sin in my heart and in my life, what does God do if He doesn't move out? If He's moved in to stay, what does He do?" I'll tell you what He does. He doesn't move out. He cleans house.

Now, what I want to talk to you about tonight is "When God Cleans House." What does God do if you sully or desecrate the temple in which you live? Look in Matthew chapter 21, and let's begin reading in verse 12: *"And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves."* (Matthew 21:12–13) And then, go, if you will—fast-forward to John, the second chapter, and read the parallel passage in John chapter 2, verse 13: *"And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: and when he had made*

a scourge”—that means, boy and girls, a whip—“*of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers’ money, and overthrew the tables; and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father’s house an house of merchandise.*” (John 2:13–16) And, here our Lord cleansed the temple. Now, there are some great lessons there for us because it typifies what God is going to do to those of us who get sin in our hearts and in our lives.

Now, I want you to think about this subject tonight: “When God Cleans House.” When I, as a temple of God, let my temple, my body, become sullied, when things happen that steal away the glory from God, what will the Lord Jesus Christ do? Well, let’s look, first of all. Let me give you some points, and they won’t be on the image magnification, but write them down.

## **I. The Profaning of the Temple**

First of all, go back to Matthew 21, and look at what I want to call, in verse 12, “the profaning of the temple”: “*And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves.*” (Matthew 21:12) Now, you say, “Pastor Rogers, does that mean that we ought not to buy our meal on Wednesday night? Does that mean that we ought not to have a bookstore in our church?” No, that isn’t what this refers to at all. By the way, this building is not the temple. This is a big sheep shed. Now, I’m grateful for it. This is not the temple. *This* is the temple—I am a temple; you are a temple.

You know, it’s an amazing thing that there were people who will do things out there that they wouldn’t do in here. For example, a man may light up a cigarette out there; he wouldn’t light up one in here. I say, “Well, why wouldn’t you smoke in here?” He said, “Well, man, this is God’s house. I wouldn’t want to profane it.” You got it wrong. You are God’s house. There are people who will use language out there that they wouldn’t use in here. Well, why? If you’re going to desecrate anything, it would be far better to desecrate this pile of bricks than it would be this temple of God. Do you see what I’m saying? “[*You*] are the temple of God.” (1 Corinthians 3:16) Now, He’s not talking here about having a bookstore, or selling meal tickets, or something like that. This building is not the house of God in the classic sense. You are the temple of God—1 Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 19. And, we are a temple.

Now, what did the temple exist for? Well, the temple existed to give God the glory: “*Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit.*” (1 Corinthians 6:20) There was a literal temple here. They were stealing away the glory that belonged to the Lord, and they were merchandising. The very coins had the image of Caesar on them. They were rendering unto Caesar the things that belonged to God.

Now, what is a carnal Christian? A carnal Christian is somebody who has made his temple a den of thieves. A carnal Christian is somebody—you, madam; you, sir; you, teen, whoever you may be—that has allowed your temple to become a den of thieves. What is a thief? A thief is somebody who steals away that which belongs to God. Now, you are created to give God glory. Anything in your heart and in your life that steals away the glory that is due to the Lord Jesus Christ makes your body a den of thieves. So, the temple can be profaned—verse 12.

## II. The Purging of the Temple

But, not only is there the profaning of the temple; there's the purging of the temple. Now, our Lord here cleansed the temple. And, just put your bookmark there and go back, or go forward, to John again, because this passage in John is even more explicit. John chapter 2, and let me show you how the Lord Jesus purged the temple. Look, if you will, in verse 15: *"And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables."* (John 2:15)

Now, here's what God did. He had two methods. Here's what the Lord Jesus Christ did to purge the temple. And, all of this just an object lesson that we can understand here in our own lives.

### A. A Whip of Chastisement

First of all, there was a whip. It was a whip of chastisement. He took cords and made a whip. Now, you think of the meek and mild Jesus. Jesus was meek and mild, but He was not weak and pale. Jesus was a man, a very robust man. He was the kind of a man who could fast for forty days and forty nights, eat with wild beasts. He was the kind of a man who could walk over those rugged hills in Galilee. He was the kind of a man that set His face like a flint, was not afraid of danger. I see Jesus as a perfect specimen, a rugged, muscular man. He didn't look effeminate. He didn't look like He just came out of a beauty parlor somewhere. He was a manly man. And, I can see Christ, in my imagination, with His whip in His hand. It's what I want to call the "whip of chastisement."

Now, with that in mind, I want you to go to Hebrews chapter 12 and look with me for just a moment, and I want you to see how God cleanses the temple. He's not going to move out, but look, if you will now, and think of the whip in Jesus' hands. And, go to Hebrews chapter 12, and look in verse 6: *"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth"*—now, here is a picture of the Lord again with a scourge in His hand. He *"scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."* (Hebrews 12:6) And—*"If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sonsy for what son is he*

*whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all”—that is, all true sons—“are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure”—well, that doesn’t mean they enjoyed it. It means “after their own will, what they decided to do”—“but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather let it be healed. Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.” (Hebrews 12:6–14) Now, I’m telling you, *God is far more interested in your being holy than He is your being happy.**

Now, let’s look at this whip of chastisement—the partakers of it. He says all true sons are chastened. Now, if you’re living in sin; if your so-called temple is a den of thieves; if your body, your life, is not giving glory to God, and God does not bring a whip to you, God does not bring the scourge to you, don’t boast about it. You know what it’s a sign of? You’ve never been saved. If you can live high, wide, and handsome, if you can continue in sin—if you’re living in adultery right now, there’s dishonesty in your life, there’s profanity in your life, pornography in your life, bitterness in your heart, resentment, pride, cantankerousness—and you can go on day after day after day, and God doesn’t chastise you, do you know what it means? You’re lost and on the road to hell. The Bible says, “Every son that God receives, He chastens. If you’re without chastisement, whereof all true sons are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons.” (Hebrews 12:6,8) Now, that’s a word that we think is a gutter word, or an unclean word, but not in the way God’s Word is using it here. That means you were born out of wedlock. You’re not God’s true son. God did not sire you. God did not father you. God said, “You’re not my son. If you were my son, I would have chastened you. And, if you’re not chastened, it’s just simply a sign that I never sired you; I never fathered you.”

I’m telling you that you are to glorify God in your body and in your spirits. “*Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost...which [you] have of God.*” (1 Corinthians 6:19) Now, if you make your body a den of thieves—that is, if you allow things in your heart and in your life that steal away the glory from God—then God promises He’s going to chastise you.

Now, God’s put the whip on me many times. I believe He has you. And, we never have said, “Oh, wonderful! Praise God! Hallelujah! I’m getting a whipping!”

† My dad used to whip me, and I think most of us had fathers who, because they

loved us, would chasten us. And, we didn't have a woodshed, but we did have a pump house; and it was about the same thing. And, my dad was an expert at this thing. He'd get me by with his left hand around my left wrist. And, he could take off his belt in one movement, just like that. And, I've often thought, you know, my dad would have been put in prison for ten thousand years for child abuse if he lived today, but I could see the fire in his eye. He was a man of great patience, but there was a time when I crossed the line. And, I never really complained about getting whipped—that is, that it was unjust. He never knew half of it that I should have been whipped for, and so I still figured, you know, at the bottom line I was ahead of the game. But, as I've told you before, my dad used to say, "You know, I do this, Adrian, because I love you." Well, I thought, "You know, I surely am his favorite. He loves me a whole lot more than he loves my brother."

And, I learned something about that also—that when you're being whipped, there's a certain physics. You need to learn physics. Kids ought to be taught physics early in school. And, you learn the law of centrifugal force. And, you know, if your dad gets you by the left arm, and he has his right hand applying that belt, and you're out there on the end catching the end of it, man, that's where it stings. The thing to do, guys and gals, is get in as close as you can. Get in, and get him around the knees, and say, "Daddy, I love you! I love you! I love you! I love you!" It's much harder. You get way out there on the end, you're going to catch it. And really, is that not what chastisement is for—is just to bring us in close to the Lord? And, if you are being chastened, in all seriousness, just come to the Lord, and love Him. Say, "O God, I love you! I love you!" *"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: [but] afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby."* (Hebrews 12:11)<sup>f</sup>

Now, I know that we have a lot of eggheads today who've got pudding between the ears that tell us that, you know, we ought never to have any corporal punishment. They're not smarter than God. Of course, no one should abuse a child; no one should give a child physical damage. But, God knows exactly what we ought to do—that the rod of correction brings wisdom, and so forth. And, God does that for us. Do you think that God doesn't love us? *"Whom the Lord [loves] he [chastens]"*—He loves us—*"and scourgeth every son whom he [receives]."* (Hebrews 12:6) So, don't get the idea that Jesus was in a fit of rage when He did this. He was moved with anger, but it wasn't rage and it wasn't vindictiveness; it was righteous indignation. And, here's the God of love with a whip of chastisement. That's the first thing He did to cleanse the temple: a whip of chastisement.

## **B. A Work of Confusion**

But, here's a second thing: there was a work of confusion. Now, God is a God of love,

but He used a whip. *“Whom the [Father loves] he [chastens].”* (Hebrews 12:6) And, God is a God of order. As a matter of fact, He said, *“Let [everything] be done decently and in order.”* (1 Corinthians 14:40) But, can you imagine what it must have been like that day in the temple when the Lord Jesus there begins to turn over the tables? I mean, the coins are running all over the temple floor. Can you imagine what it is when He’s loosing the animals, and letting the birds go, and driving everything out of the temple? Can you imagine? It was terrible. There’s chaos everywhere—animals running here and there, birds flying, coins going, people running from the whip. I mean, this is the temple; this is their holy house, and Jesus is bringing confusion.

Do you know He’ll do that to you? Sometimes we wonder, “Why is all this confusion in my life? I had everything so well planned.” And, God brings confusion. He upsets your plans. Nothing seems to make sense. He turns your tables over, and you say, “Why isn’t it working out?” Well, there could be a number of reasons, but one of them just may be that you’ve made your temple a den of thieves. And, He has two great ways to cleanse the temple: a whip of chastisement and a work of confusion.

Now, I want to say this: that Jesus never would have entered a pagan temple to do what He did. He wouldn’t have done that. He would never have entered the temple of Zeus or Bacchus or Aphrodite. He went into the temple of God to do this. And, you see, *“whom the [Father loves] he [chastens].”* (Hebrews 12:6) That’s the reason I want to say that if you’re living in sin, and you’re failing to give Him glory, and God doesn’t turn the tables over, and God doesn’t use the whip, you might just go back and ask yourself, “Have I ever been saved to begin with?”

### **III. The Purpose of the Temple**

Now, I’ve talked to you about the profaning of the temple. I’ve talked to you about the purging of the temple. Let’s just go back to our passage where we started in Matthew 21, and I want you to think with me a little bit about the purpose of the temple. Why would our Lord do this? What is the purpose of the temple? Let me tell you what the purpose of the temple is. Why are you a temple of God? Now remember, this Old Testament temple was only a classic object lesson. God is trying to teach us something about the true temple, which temple we are. What is the purpose of the temple?

#### **A. It Is a Place of Prayer**

Number one: It is to be a place of prayer. Look in verse 13: *“And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.”* (Matthew 21:13) Now again, don’t think of this building as the place of prayer. Yes, we can pray here, but you are the temple. You are the place of prayer. Out of your life, out of my life, daily the sweet incense of prayer ought to be rising up. That’s the



reason the Apostle Paul said in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, verse 17 we are to “*pray without ceasing.*” (1 Thessalonians 5:17) You see, in the temple there was an altar of incense, and the priests were to keep that incense burning continually. And, that sweet smoke was just rising up into the nostrils of God. That’s only an illustration of my life and your life. I’m to be praying without ceasing. Now, that doesn’t mean I’m to be moving my mouth and making noise all the time, but it means that always out of my heart praise and prayer is to be rising to God. You say, “How can you do that, Adrian, if you’re trying to work out a mathematical problem, or you’re doing something that’s intricate that involves all of your attention, or when you’re asleep?” No, there’s an attitude of prayer. Right now while I’m speaking to you, my heart is praying—right now.

¶ Let me give you an illustration. Perhaps there is a mother who has a sick child, and she’s been up with that child for two or three nights. The child has been feverish and sick. And finally, the child goes to sleep, and this mother says, “I must get some sleep.” So, she lies down to go to sleep, and she’s so tired horns can blare outside—it won’t wake her up. There can be noise on television, and it won’t wake her up. Somebody can slam a door—it will not wake her up. But, one whimper out of that child—she’s awake. You know why? Even when she’s asleep, she’s attuned to the needs of that child. And, that’s very much like what it’s like to pray without ceasing. Your heart is to be in constant communion with the Lord.¶

Does that seem weird to you, or strange? Then you explain what Paul meant when he said in 1 Thessalonians 5:17: “*Pray without ceasing.*” (1 Thessalonians 5:17) Now, it doesn’t mean that you’re verbally rattling off prayers, but you stay in communion with God. Your temple is to be a house of prayer. It is a place of prayer. Now, you say, “Well, you’re not supposed to pray about everything.” Oh well, then, why did Paul say in Philippians 4, verse 6: “*In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God?*” (Philippians 4:6) Don’t make the mistake of dividing your life up into the secular and the sacred.

By the way, a good test of whether or not you ought to do anything is, can you pray about it? That’s it. Can you pray about it? Can you ask God to help you do it? Now, if you’re going to a film, you say, “Now Lord, I want you to go in this film with me. I want you to really bless me as I go see this film.” You say, “Oh man, I couldn’t ask Him to do that.” Well then, don’t go. You want to smoke a cigarette? You say, “Now Lord, I’m smoking this cigarette to your glory. Help me smoke this cigarette”; you feel silly. “You see, I’m reading this porno magazine, Lord. Help me to do it”—no, you feel silly. Friend, anything that you cannot pray about and ask God to enable you and help you to do, it is wrong. Does that make sense to you? You see, “whatever you do in word or deed, do all to the glory of God.” (Colossians 3:17) Why do we pray? We don’t divide life up into the secular and the sacred and say, “Now, that’s a God thing; I’ll pray about it. This is

something else; I won't pray about it." No. *"In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."* (Philippians 4:6)

## **B. It Is a Place of Power**

What is the purpose of the temple? Number one: It is a place of prayer. Your body is to be a temple of God, and it is to be a house of prayer. But, not only is it a place of prayer; it's a place of power. Notice, if you will, in verse 14: *"And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them."* (Matthew 21:14) He healed them. There were those who were blinded by Satan and those broken by sin, and He healed them. Well, you say, "Adrian, does that mean, therefore, that I am to be healing the blind and straightening lame limbs?" Not in the physical sense. Jesus said, "Greater works than these that I do shall ye do." (John 14:12) Now, all of the miracles of glory were only illustrations of the miracles of grace. "Greater miracles than these that I do shall ye do." (John 14:12)

Well, He raised the dead. What could be a greater miracle than that? Bringing souls to Jesus Christ, opening blind eyes, helping those who have been crippled and maimed by sin to be whole and wholesome spiritually. "Oh," you say, "that's just a copout because you can't open blind eyes." No, it's not. Let me tell you something: if I had the kind of healing power that a lot of these fakers claim that they have—and really had it—and let's say this morning in the morning service we had a person come down here, a paraplegic, hopelessly, from a human viewpoint, crippled—withered limbs, spinal cord severed—and I were to come down there and lay my hand on that person in front of all of you, and everybody knew this man's condition—it was bona fide that way—and I were to say, "In the name of Jesus be healed," and he stood up here whole, you know what would happen? You couldn't put people in here tonight with a shoehorn. That's right. They'd be here. I mean, because they might not be all that interested in having their sins forgiven, but boy, they sure would be interested in having their bodies healed, wouldn't they? They would be interested in some sort of a ministry that would make them whole. There were crowds that followed Jesus for that.

Now, Jesus did not come primarily as a healer. If Jesus had come primarily as a healer, you tell me why, in the Gospel of John, when He went to the man at the Pool of Bethesda, and He healed him, why didn't He heal everybody? Why not? Why didn't He just heal everybody? He didn't come as a healer. All of those miracles that Jesus did were prophecies of the greater miracles, where Jesus said, "Greater miracles than these that I do shall ye do, because I go to my Father." (John 14:12)

Now, the Holy Spirit is going to come. I'm telling you something. If, in the same service that this man in the wheelchair is healed, a little eight-year-old boy comes—like I think I saw one this morning who may have been eight—gives his heart to Jesus, who

pays any attention to that? That's not going to make the newspapers. I want to tell you something: *It takes more of the power of God to save an eight-year-boy than it does to raise a paraplegic from a wheelchair.* Now, you may not believe that, but friend, when God made this world, when He spoke worlds, universes, into existence, He just spoke, and it was so. He spoke, and universes dripped from His fingers. He just spoke it all into existence, no difficulty. But, in order for Him to save that eight-year-old boy, He had to die in agony and blood upon the cross. The only time God ever had difficulty, any pain, was Calvary. And so, I'm saying that the miracles of grace are greater than the miracles of glory. All of those miracles in the temple so long ago, they only prophesied and portended the greater miracles.

What is the purpose of the temple? It is to be a place of prayer, a house of prayer, and it's to be a place of power. Is there power in your life? I mean, if God is at home in me, there ought to be power in my life. What is there about Adrian, or what is there about you, what is there about Joe that cannot be explained? The only part of us that cannot be explained is the only part we have any right to ask anybody to believe in. What's the difference between you and the man that lives next door to you if there's not something supernatural in your life?

### **C. It Is a Place of Praise**

The temple is a place of prayer. The temple is a place of power. And thirdly, it's a place of praise. Look, if you will, in verses 15 and 16: *"And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were sore displeased, and said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?"* (Matthew 21:15–16) It was a place of praise. You see, when Jesus Christ is alive in the temple (you), it's going to be very obvious. And, when Jesus Christ is alive in you and God is working through you, there will be praise—not praise to you; there will be praise to Him. My life, if I'm a temple, if God lives in me, if He inhabits my humanity, then three things ought to be true about the man standing here, God's permanent home: it ought to be a place of prayer, a place of power, and a place of praise.

## **Conclusion**

† Last week, I was in Texas, and I saw *The Houston Chronicle*. On the front page of *The Houston Chronicle* was an unusual article. There was a color picture, and it showed a woman—a full-grown woman—and it was strange-looking picture. She had her ear on a man's chest—up near his chest. It was on the front page of the paper. The man was not her husband, nor was he her son, nor was he related to her in any way, and yet she had

her ear on his chest, and I'll tell you why: the man that she had her ear up to his chest was a man who'd received a heart transplant, and the heart transplant that he had received was the heart of this woman's son. And, she was listening to the heartbeat of her own son. And, when I saw that, I thought, "O my God, could you put your ear to my chest and hear the heartbeat of your Son?"<sup>†</sup>

That's what I want. You see, *salvation is not getting man out of earth into heaven; it is getting God out of heaven into man.* And, we become a temple of God. And, as He inhabits our humanity, He displays His deity.

There's the profaning of the temple. We make it a den of thieves. How? By failing to give Him glory. There's the purging of the temple. There is the whip of chastisement and the work of confusion. God doesn't do that because He doesn't love us but because He does. There's the purpose of the temple: prayer, power, praise, when God is alive in us.

Now, do you see yourself as a temple of God? Do you? Well, I'm going to tell you something: if you're truly saved, God has moved into you, never to move out again. But, I'll tell you this much: He may not move out, but He will clean house. You believe that? "*Whom the [Father loves] he [chastens], and [scourges] every son whom he [receives].*" (Hebrews 12:6) Now, God does not willingly afflict, and God is not in the purpose of capricious chastisement. God loves you too much for that.<sup>†</sup>

# When God Cleans House

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: September 19, 2004**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 21:12-16**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Profaning of the Temple
- II. The Purging of the Temple
  - A. A Whip of Chastisement
  - B. A Work of Disruption
- III. The Purpose of the Temple
  - A. It Is to Be a Place of Prayer
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Conclusion

## Introduction

Well, take God's holy Word, and turn, if you will, please, to Matthew chapter 21, and in a few moments we're going to begin to read from verse 12. Now, when you got saved, God came into you to live in you. You had become a temple of the living God. Where is God's house? Is this God's house? The Bible says God does not dwell in houses made with hands (Acts 7:48; Acts 17:24). You are God's house. He lives in you. You are a temple of Almighty God. The Old Testament Temple was only a prophecy, only a pattern, for the believer. All of these things have a spiritual lesson that go far beyond simply Jewish ritual. Now, in the Old Testament—listen—in the Old Testament, God had a temple for His people; in the New Testament, God has His people for a temple. Say right now to yourself, "I am a temple of God." Has that ever really entered your heart and mind?

You know what most people think getting saved is? They think that getting saved is going to Heaven. Well, that's not getting saved. That's the result of being saved. Salvation *is not getting* man *out of* Earth *into* Heaven; *it is getting* God *out of* Heaven *into* man. Do you understand that? When you get saved, God moves into you. You become a holy temple of God. Now, if you are a temple of God, are you a fit temple? I mean, can God be pleased to dwell in you?

Some college students had for their team mascot a goat. They didn't have anywhere to keep the goat. And, some of the college boys said, "Well, he can stay in our room in the

dorm.” Somebody said, “But, what about the smell?” “Well,” he said, “the goat can get used to that.” College boys may live in a dirty house—listen to me—but God will not live in a dirty house.

“Well,” you say, “God’s going to move out.” No, He won’t move out. He comes in you to dwell in you forever. But, I’ll tell you, while God might not move out, I’ll tell you what God will do. God will clean house. You’re that house, and God will do a work on you, a cleansing work, if you’re truly His.

Now, look, if you will, in Matthew, chapter 21, verse 12: *“And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves. And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them. And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore”—very—“displeased, and said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?”* (Matthew 21:12–16).

God will not move out, but God will clean house. Three basic thoughts I want to lay on your heart today.

## **I. The Profaning of the Temple**

First of all, the profaning of the temple. Look, if you will again, in verse 12: *“And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves”* (Matthew 21:12). What had happened to this glorious, wonderful temple in the Old Testament, which is a type, a prophecy, of the New Testament, was they had made it a den of thieves.

Now, He’s speaking to the moneychangers. The moneychangers were very clever and very dishonest. People would come to the Temple to worship God and to make a financial offering, but they had this Roman money, and they could not use this Roman money in the Temple. They had to use the kind of money that they worshiped God with in the Temple. So, when they came to the Temple, they had to go to the moneychanger, and he would change the Roman coins for Temple coins. So far, so good. But, here’s the way it worked. When they charged for selling, for making this transaction, they did not give an even transaction. It was not, as you would say, dollar for dollar, but it was \$1.15, or whatever, for a dollar. And then, when the people would take this money into the church treasury, or into the Temple treasury, and leave it there, they would take it back out and sell it to somebody else, and all the time just raking off the profit. Pretty good deal, wasn’t it? I mean, for them it was a

lousy, wicked thing that they were doing. They were stealing from the people. They had made the house of God a den of thieves. They profaned the Temple.

Now, what does the Temple exist for? The Temple exists for one purpose. Why are you here? Why are you saved? What is God's plan for you? One purpose—and this is to glorify God. Now, put in your margin 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 19: *“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God,”*—now, listen to this—*“and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price:”*—now, listen carefully—*“therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's”* (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). Now, you don't belong to you. Jesus suffered, bled, and died upon that cross for you.

When I saw the film *The Passion*, it broke my heart. And, while I had preached on the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ many times, to see that graphically portrayed on the screen moved me deeply. And, the one thought that I had was this—not one thought, one thought among many, but perhaps the prime thought: “Adrian, are the things you are living for worth Jesus dying for?” Now, why did He buy us with a price? We're bought with a price: *“therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”*

Now, what were these people doing? They were taking the tribute that belonged to God and they were using it for themselves. They were stealing away the tribute that belongs to God. Now, you're bought with a price. Don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit?

Now, may I ask you a personal question? Don't answer it out loud, but for God's sake, answer it. Are your body and your spirit glorifying God? Are you truly a temple of God? “Well,” you say, “Pastor Rogers, yes, I glorify God in my spirit. God knows my heart. God knows that I love Him.” But, this scripture says, *“Glorify God in your body, and in your spirit.”*

Now, you can't see my spirit. All you know about me you know from my body. “Well,” you say, “I know about you from what you wrote.” My body wrote that. You say, “I know about you from what you think.” No, you can't tell what I think until my body speaks what I think. Friend, all you know about me—I don't care what you think you know—the only thing you really know is what you see in my body, what my body expresses.

Now, may I ask you a question? Are you glorifying God in your body? Your body is out where people can see it. What about your eyes? Are your eyes glorifying God? The next time you want to know whether a television program is fit or not, just ask yourself this question: Is what I'm watching to the glory of God? The music that you listen to—ask yourself this question: Is this music glorifying God? Can you thank God for it? Can you say, “Lord, this is for Your glory”? The things that you take into your mouth, whether you be overeating, or using nicotine, or taking some terrible substance into your body, can you do that to glorify God in your body? Those of you who are smoking cigarettes, for example—I

don't want to pick on you, but you need to quit. You say, "I can't quit." That's a lie. You can quit. Now, listen. It would be all right for you to smoke if you could light up and say, "Now, Jesus, this is for Your glory. This is..." You can't do that.

You see, what you take into your mouth, what you see with your eyes, what you hear with your ears, what you do with your hands... Those of you who've been going down to the casino to gamble—and, I hope it's very few of you—but do you think that God gave you those hands to manipulate a slot machine? Listen. Your feet—do you glorify God with your feet? Where are you going? Are you going to places that a Christian has absolutely no business going to?

Now, what does the Bible say? The Bible says that we sometimes can make our bodies profaned. Here was a temple in the time of Jesus, and what they had done, they had turned the Temple into a den of thieves. You say, "At least, I'm going to Heaven, pastor, because I may not be glorifying God in my body, but I am glorifying God in my spirit."

One man told another man, "Look, I know I'm not living right. I know my eyes, my ears, my hands, my feet, I know they're not right, but I am saved. And, remember the thief on the cross. He didn't do anything for Jesus, and yet he went to Heaven." The friend rightly said to him, "Sir, there's a difference between you and the thief on the cross. He was a dying thief. You are a living thief. You are living a life that is stealing the tribute that belongs to Jesus Christ." I am telling you that God saved you for one purpose, and that is to glorify Him.

Again, listen to the Scripture: "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost...which ye have of God...?"—now, listen—"You are not your own; you are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." Your life is to be a life of perpetual glory to God. And, what is revival? Revival is when the glory of God rises up in us individually and then corporately. That's the profaning of the temple.

## **II. The Purging of the Temple**

Secondly, I want you to notice the purging of the temple. What did Jesus Christ do in that day? Look in Matthew 21, verse 12: "*And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves*" (Matthew 21:12). Now, put in your margin John 2, verse 15: "*And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables*" (John 2:15).

Now, Jesus will not live in a dirty house, but He will clean house. And, let me tell you how He does it.



## A. A Whip of Chastisement

First of all, He does it with a whip. Now, you say, “This is the loving Jesus?” Yes. Jesus loves *you as you are, but He loves you too much to leave you that way*. And so, He takes a whip out. The Book of Hebrews tells us about this. Look, if you will, in Hebrews 12, verses 5 through 8: *“And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:”—listen to this now—“for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth...”—a scourge is a whip. Did your daddy ever carry you to the woodshed? Mine did. Do you know why? He goes on to say that—“whom the [Father] loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons”* (Hebrews 12:5–8).

Now, what does that mean? It means that if you make this temple a den of thieves, and Jesus does not take a whip to chastise you, don’t boast about it. It’s a sign that you have never been saved. God will chastise His own. God will chastise you. Who are the partakers of it? Why, He says, “Look. All are partakers,” talking about all Christians. What is the promise of it? He says in verse 8 that it is going to come to you. And, if you don’t have it, if God doesn’t take a whip to cleanse your temple when you’re living in sin, you don’t belong to God. Now, you may sit in church. You may applaud the music. You may hear the sermon. But, God said, “I never fathered you. I never sired you. You have never been born from above. You are illegitimate. You’re not a true son of God.”

And, I want you to notice the purpose of it. The purpose of it is to make us holy before God. Look, if you will, in Hebrews 12, verses 10 and 11: *“For they”—that is, our fathers—“verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure;”—that doesn’t mean they enjoyed doing it. That’s just old English. It means because they thought it needed to be done—“but he for our profit,”—that is, God chastens us for our profit—“that we might be partakers of his holiness...”—now, why would God chastise you? Because He wants you to be holy—“that we might be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening for the present time seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby”* (Hebrews 12:10–11).

Now, no chastening for the present time is joyous. Did you ever say, when you were getting a spanking or a whipping, “Boy, this is wonderful! I’m having a great time”? Of course not! But, your father, your mother, had a purpose. They wanted you to grow up to be the kind of a child that they could be proud of and rejoice in. God has a purpose.

Now, some of you right now are being chastened. I mean, it's as though God has a whip, and He is chastening you in so many ways. But, I tell you, dear friend, that that chastening is profit and not loss.

### **B. A Work of Disruption**

Now, one way that God cleanses the temple is through chastisement. Another way that God will cleanse your temple is through disruption. Look, if you will, again in John 2, verse 15. I referred you to that before: *“And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables”* (John 2:15). Now, this is Jesus. God is a God of order, and Jesus is a Savior of love, and yet you see Him with a whip, and you see Him tearing up the whole thing. He's letting the doves out of the cages. He's taking the money of the moneychangers and throwing it on the floor. And then, He finds these tables, and He turns them over. He turns over this table. He turns over that table. He turns over this table. This is the Temple. And, here is the Lord Jesus Christ in the Temple, disrupting everything.

You know what Jesus will do to your plans? He'll turn over your tables. He will turn over your tables. He loves you too much to let you succeed in your sin. He'll take a whip and a scourge—that's chastisement. And then, He'll come into your life, and He will bring disruption. And, you'll say, “Why doesn't anything work out right for me?”

When my children don't seem to be walking with the Lord as much as they ought, I pray for them. I don't pray they'll succeed; I pray, “Lord, let the chariot wheels drag!” Why? I don't want somebody to have a well thought-out plan in life, and success, and prosperity, when there's sin in their heart and in their life. I want Jesus to overturn their tables.

He'll overturn your tables. Friend, you may have it all figured out. You say, “Well, why would He do that?” Well, use a little common sense. Do you think that Jesus would have gone into a pagan temple and done that? No, not at all! He goes into His own temple. “Ye are the temple of God.”

## **III. The Purpose of the Temple**

Now, thirdly, I want you to notice, not only the profaning of the temple, and the purging of the temple, but the purpose of the temple. I bring you back again to the purpose for which you have been saved and bought with a price. And, what is the purpose of the temple?

### **A. It Is to Be a Place of Prayer**

Number one: It is to be a place of prayer. Look in verse 13: *“And [he] said unto them, It is written, My house shall be a house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves”* (Matthew 21:13). Now, in the temple there was an altar of incense, and that incense was rising

continually to God. And, the Bible teaches us clearly and plainly that incense rising from that altar of incense is a picture of our prayer continually rising to God; I mean, continually. Your house is to be a house of prayer. If you do not have prayer rising continually from your heart, you need revival. Now, I'm not just talking about, "Now I lay me down to sleep." You have no greater calling than to make this house, this temple, that you are a house, a place, of prayer.

Now, it's to come up continually. Luke 18 and verse 1: "*And he spake a parable unto them to this end,*"—now, listen—"*that men ought always to pray, and not to faint*" (Luke 18:1)—that is, not to quit praying. First Thessalonians 5, verse 17: "*Pray without ceasing*" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). You say, "How can you pray without ceasing? You have to sleep." You can be in communion with God in your sleep. I wake up in the middle of the night praising God.

A mother may have a child who has been sick for a long time. And, finally, that child goes off to a fitful sleep. She's been up, perhaps, a whole day, a whole night, two days, nursing that child. Finally, the child goes to sleep, and the mother goes to sleep. Her body is desiring rest and sleep. And, there can be all kinds of noise. Somebody can be playing the television. She pays no attention to it. The sirens may go by with a fire truck outside. She pays no attention. Somebody may come in and slam the door. She pays no attention. But, listen to me. One whimper from that child, and she's awake. Why? She's tuned, even in her sleep, to that child.

You ought to pray without ceasing; that is, out of your heart. The incense is to be rising all of the time. Do you find yourself just driving along, saying, "Jesus, I love You"? I do. "Lord, I love You." When I go through life to do this thing or that thing—I have a task, a committee meeting, whatever it is—I want to pray about it. It was said of Dwight L. Moody, "He never made long prayers, but he was never long without prayer." We are to pray without ceasing.

Listen. Philippians chapter 4, verse 6: "*Be careful for nothing;*"—that is, "Don't worry about anything"—"*but in every thing*"—everything, everything—"*by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God*" (Philippians 4:6). You pray about everything.

Now, don't divide your life between the sacred and the secular, because he says you're to pray about everything.

Charles Stanley, a friend of mine, became the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Atlanta, Georgia. And, they were going through some difficulty when he first came, so he had the deacons and the Finance Committee there, and they had a real problem, and he said, "Gentlemen, let's pray about it." And, one of those businessmen said, "Now, listen,

pastor. This is not something spiritual; this is business”—“this is business.” Now, what had he done? He had tried to separate the sacred from the secular.

You will never find the word *secular* in any concordance. *“In every thing by prayer and supplication...let your requests be made known unto God.”*

You want me to tell you a good test as to whether or not you can do something? Can you pray about it? Can you pray about it? Can you say, “God, help me to do this?” Some of you may be so foolish as to pray when you go to the casinos I mentioned before. But, friend, that is foolish. That is ridiculous.

We have people that we need to pray for. I prayed early this morning for my pastor friends around America. I prayed for the President. I prayed for spiritual leaders in America, and Joyce prayed with me. Now, you can’t pray for everybody, but God puts those upon your heart for whom you’re to pray. First Samuel chapter 12, verse 23: *“Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you”* (1 Samuel 12:23). There’s no substitute: not intellect, not work, not emotion. There is no substitute for intercession and for prayer.

So, what is the purpose of the temple? It is to be a place of prayer. “My house is a house of prayer for all people” (Isaiah 56:7). Now, do you need revival? If you find it hard and difficult to pray, if prayer is not welling up and coming out, I can tell you your heart is not right with God. You have not used the temple for the purpose for which you are saved. You are to be a place of prayer.

## **B. It Is to Be a Place of Power**

Number two: You are to be a place of power. Look in verse 14—Matthew 21, verse 14: *“And the blind and the lame came to him”—listen—“in the temple; and he healed them”* (Matthew 21:14). People who were blind and people who were broken, and He healed them. You say, “Well, Pastor Rogers, if I have the Lord Jesus in me, does that mean that I can lay hands on the sick and they will recover?” Well, that happens. I believe I’ve laid hands on the sick and prayed for them, and they’ve recovered. I believe I’ve seen God do miracles. But, all of those things were pictures and prophecies of the greater things. The incense is a picture of the greater thing, which is prayer. The healing of the blind and the lame is an illustration of the greater thing, which is soul winning. You say, “You just say that for an excuse, pastor, because you can’t heal anybody.” That’s not right. The Bible says of John the Baptist—and, by the way, Jesus said there was not a greater than John the Baptist, and the Bible says of John the Baptist—“John did no miracle, but many believed on Jesus through his word” (John 10:41–42).

I'd like to have the power to heal the sick. I don't. But, I'm going to tell you something. God has given me a gift, and God has given you a gift. God has given me a command, and God has given you a command, that we might bring souls to Jesus Christ. What is the greater miracle? What is the greater miracle? Opening blind eyes? Straightening broken limbs? The greater miracle is when somebody is born again. Now, you say, "Well, that's just rhetoric." No, it's not. Listen to me. When God made this world, how did He do it? Of His own will. From His fingertips came planets and satellites and myriads of galaxies. Of His own will He scooped out the oceans and heaped up the mountains. He spoke, and it was so.

A college boy asked his preacher, "Preacher, do you think there's life on other planets? The preacher said, "No, I don't." He said, "Well now, preacher, wait a minute. If there's no life on other planets, why did God go to all that trouble to make them?" The pastor said, "What trouble?"—"What trouble?"

It's so! God spoke, and it was so! But, to save a soul, He put His darling Son on the cross in agony and blood. And, the only time God had any trouble, if we could say it reverently, was bloody Calvary. I'm telling you the greater miracle is the salvation of one soul. *One little teenage girl that comes down this aisle this morning to give her heart to Jesus Christ is a greater miracle than all of the healings this world has ever seen.*

### C. It Is to Be a Place of Praise

Your house is to be a house, a place, of prayer. It is to be a place of power. And, friend, it is to be a place of praise. Look, if you will now, in chapter 21, verse 15: "*And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful works that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were [very] displeased, and said unto him, Hearest thou not what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?*" (Matthew 21:15-16).

When your house becomes a house of prayer, and when your house becomes a place of power, *ipso facto*, as day follows night, it will be a place of praise. You will be constantly praising the Lord. Psalm 34, verse 1: "I, dear Lord, will constantly praise you; your praise will be continually in my mouth" (Psalm 34:1).

When you have given the temple of your body over to Him, praise will be rising up to God constantly. You can't help it. You'll be saying, "Thank You, Lord! Thank You! Praise Your name! You're great! I love You, Jesus! Glory to Your holy name!" I don't mean just in church. You say, "Well, I come to church to worship God." Friend, you bring your worship to church. Seven days a week, 24 hours a day, night and day, your temple is a place of praise. Not only will you praise Him, but others will praise Him for you, because of you.

## Conclusion

Now, don't make this just a sermon. I'm asking you a question, and it's a serious question right now. What is there in your life that would cause somebody else to praise God? What is there in your life that cannot be explained by your will, or by your manners, or by your education, or by your culture, or by your friendship? Where is the difference? Are you constantly praising God, and is your life causing others to say, "Hosanna to the Son of God"?

The profaning of the temple: stealing the tribute that belongs to Jesus. The purging of the temple: a whip of chastisement and a work of disruption. He'll do that in your heart and in your life. The purpose of the temple: it's to be a place of prayer; it's to be a place of power; it is to be a place of praise.

I remind you one more time, I'm not talking now about the Old Testament Temple. That's only a picture. That's only a type. First Corinthians chapter 6, verse 19: "What? Don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which you have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19). And, friend, when we do that, that's revival, would you agree? And, when we do that individually, then we're going to do it corporately. And, this world will see a difference.

# When God Cleans House

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: September 19, 2004**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 21:12-16**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Profaning of the Temple
- II. The Purging of the Temple
  - A. A Whip of Chastisement
  - B. A Work of Confusion
- III. The Purpose of the Temple
  - A. It Is to Be a Place of Prayer
  - B. It Is to Be a Place of Power
  - C. It Is to Be a Place of Praise

Conclusion

## Introduction

**T**ake your Bibles, please, and turn to Matthew, the Gospel of Matthew. In just a moment, we're going to begin reading in verse 12. And, while you're turning to it, may I ask you a question? What or where is the house of God? You may say, "Pastor, this is the house of God." No, it's not. It's our meeting place. It's a great big sheep shed, but it's not the house of God. Where is the house of God? If you want to know, go look in the mirror.

The Bible teaches that we are temples of God. A temple is a place where God dwells with His Spirit. And, I'm a temple of God, and you are a temple of God. Now, when you got saved, God entered into you. And, if God is not in you, you're not saved. So many people have the mistaken idea that salvation is getting man out of Earth into Heaven. Salvation *is not getting* man *out of* Earth *into* Heaven. We're going to Heaven, but friend, that's a by-product of salvation. *Salvation is getting* God *out of Heaven into us*. That's what salvation is. Now, God comes into us to live in us. And, if our bodies are temples, and God lives in us, then what kind of a temple is He dwelling in? Is He dwelling in a dirty house? You know, God doesn't like a dirty house. The title of our message today is, "When God Cleans House."

Some college students had a goat for a mascot, and they had no place to keep the goat. And, two college students said, "Well, we'll keep the goat in our room." And, they said, "You can't do that. What about the smell?" "Oh," they said, "the goat can get used to that." Now,

college boys may live in a dirty dormitory room, but God will not move out. But, also, He will not live in a dirty house.

Now, the Old Testament Temple that we're going to read about in a moment is but a blueprint and a prophecy of His New Testament temple, which is you. I remind you that, in the Old Testament, God had a temple for His people; in the New Testament, right now, He has a people for His temple. You are the temple of God.

Now, look, if you will now, in verse 12: *"And Jesus went into the temple of God,"*—that's the Old Testament Temple now—*"and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves. And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them. And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were sore"—or "very"—"displeased, and said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?"* (Matthew 21:12-16).

Now, if you're a temple of God—and you are—what is the purpose of your life? Can I give you the purpose of your life? The purpose of your life and true revival are wrapped up in these two verses that I'm going to give you, 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verses 19 and 20. First Corinthians chapter 6—just put it in your margin—verses 19 and 20—Paul asks a rhetorical question: *"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you...and ye are not your own?"*—now, listen—*"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's"* (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Jesus paid a fearful, awful price for you. To redeem you, Jesus hung in agony and blood upon a cross. When I saw the film *The Passion*, as many of you saw it, my heart was moved, and I had to ask myself this question: "Adrian, are the things you're living for worth Jesus dying for?" I have been bought with a price. You, sir, have been bought with a price. You are not your own. You are a temple of God, a royal residence, and He is to live in you.

Now, what is the purpose of the temple of God? Plain English, what is your purpose, since you're a house of God? You're to glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. How do you glorify God in your spirit? By worship. By praise. By meditation. By abiding. But, how do you glorify God in your body? Presenting your body a living sacrifice to Him (Romans 12:1).

Let me tell you something. All you know about me my body has revealed to you. You know what I look like. You know what I sound like. You know what I think. But, you can't see what I think; but, when I speak, then you understand what I think. Or, when you read



what I've written—what my hand, my body, has written—then you might understand what I think. When I cry, or when I laugh, then you can understand my emotions. Where I go, and where I do not go, that helps you to understand my character. Are you thinking with me now? All you know about me is what my body does. You can't see my spirit. All you can see is my body. Now, if my body is to glorify God, then I have to ask myself this question: What do you see when you see me? What do you see when you see my eyes? Do you see me watching filth on television and Hell's Box Office? What do you see? You hear me listening to obscene music with these ears? What do you see? Do you see me taking into my mouth that which will hurt my body: alcohol, nicotine, gluttony? That's all you know about me—is what you see.

Now, the Bible teaches that everything you do you're to do for the glory of God, and it's to be seen in your body. Therefore, glorify God in your body. What about your hands? Can your hands glorify God playing a slot machine, and you say, "This is for Your glory, Lord. This is for Your glory," as you pump in quarters, or whatever they pump in? Can you say that? Every place that your feet go, can you say, "Lord, I'm going here for Your glory"? Now, if it does not glorify God, you have misused and abused the temple of God.

I say it again. Now, you listen to me, and listen carefully. You have one purpose in life, and that is to glorify God. "You're not your own. You are bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit."

You girls, the way you dress: does it glorify God? Go to the mall and see these kids walking down there with their bellybutton hanging out and some sort of a jewel in it. Good night! And, they're wearing these jeans—half on, half off—they look like they've been sprayed on and then shrunk. Does that glorify God? Would you dress that way, young lady, if the Lord Jesus were your date? I'm saying that we need to take our bodies—our eyes, our ears, our hands, our mouth, our feet, the very way that we dress—and glorify God in our spirit and in our body. *"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost...which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's"* (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).

Now, I want you to think with me with that thought now, "When God Cleans House," three basic thoughts. Very simple.

## **I. The Profaning of the Temple**

First of all, I want you to see what I'm going to call the profaning of the temple. Now, many people don't realize that they have profaned the temple of God, which temple they are. Now, let's get the New Testament lesson and bring it into this day. Matthew 21, verse 12:

*“And Jesus went into the temple...and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves”* (Matthew 21:12). And then, look, if you will, in John. Put this in your margin. I’ll read it to you. Don’t you turn to it. John chapter 2, verse 15: *“And when he”—that is, Jesus—“had made a scourge of small cords,”—the word scourge means, “whip”—“he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers’ money, and overthrew the tables”* (John 2:15).

Now, what had happened is this. They had taken the house of God and turned it into a den of thieves. They were merchandizing the things of God. For example, what about the moneychangers? Well, in the Temple you had to use Jewish coin. You couldn’t use Roman coin. So, here’s a person who’s come a long way, and he needs to change his money into that which is acceptable in the Temple. Now, the Roman coin paid tribute to Caesar, but they were coming in there to pay tribute to God. So, they would go to the moneychanger, and the moneychanger would say, “You need a dollar? It will cost you \$1.15 in Roman coin.” And so, they had a pretty good deal. And, they would take the money in, make that money exchange, rake off the profit. The person would go in there and bring the money into the Temple, the Jewish money. Then, they would go back and get that money, back out to the moneychanger, and sell it again. For them, it was a pretty good deal.

Now, there were doves and other things that God had commanded to be used in worship, but these people were crooks. They were misusing, abusing, the Temple of God. What they were doing was stealing away the tribute that belongs to Almighty God.

## **II. The Purging of the Temple**

Now, what does God do when you do that? I mean, if you’re a child of God, if you are truly born again, what does God do?

### **A. A Whip of Chastisement**

Write down “chastisement.” Jesus made a whip, a scourge, and He went into the temple with that whip, that scourge. Now, He is a God of love, and He loves you just like you are, but He loves you too much to leave you that way. And so, He takes a scourge. Put in your margin Hebrews 12—you might want to turn to it—verses 5 through 8: *“And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.”* Remember, Jesus made a scourge of cords, and the Bible says He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. *“If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father*

*chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers,*”—that is, all the children of God are partakers— *“then are ye bastards, and not sons”* (Hebrews 12:5–8).

Now, what does this mean? Think with me for a moment about the partakers of this chastisement. Who does God chastise? Not the devil’s kids. If my wife, when our children were little, were to see some kids having a scrap in the front yard, doing some things they ought not to do, she would call our children in and chastise them. She didn’t spank the neighbor’s kids. That’s a good way to get in trouble. But, we have every right, God has every right, as we have every right, to chastise our own. And so, chastisement is one way that God does it.

Now, the promise of it, in verse 8, is that all true believers are going to be chastised. And, the purpose of it is to cleanse the temple. Look in Hebrews 12, verses 10 and 11: *“For they”*—that is, our fathers—*“verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure;”*—that means, “after their own will”—*“but he for our profit,”*—underscore that: *“for our profit.”* Not for our loss, but for our profit—*“that we might be partakers of his holiness.”* God does not necessarily want you to be healthy or happy. He wants you to be holy. And, God may chastise you by taking away your health or your happiness, if it can produce holiness. *“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous...”*—when you were spanked as a child, or when your father took you to the woodshed, you said, “Oh glory! This is wonderful. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!”—*“No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby”* (Hebrews 12:10–11).

Now, you say, “Well, God loves me too much to chasten me.” You’ve got it backward. You’ve got it backward. As a matter of fact, if you defile the temple of God, which temple you are, and God does not take a scourge, and scourge you, it’s a sign that He doesn’t love you. It’s a sign that you’ve never been saved. It’s a sign that you’ve never been born again. Don’t get high, wide, and mighty, and begin to strut, and say, “Well, God never scourges me.” Well, listen. If you’re a Christian, and you’re saved, and you’re defiling His holy temple, bought with a price, He has every right to take a whip and scourge you. Say *amen*. Every right. Not because He doesn’t love you, but because He does.

## **B. A Work of Confusion**

Now, there is a whip of chastisement. He made a whip. And, there is a work of confusion. Go back again to John 2, verse 15: *“And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen;”*—now, watch this—*“and poured out the changers’ money, and overthrew the tables”* (John 2:15). Now, not only is He a God of love, but He’s a God of order. God wants everything done *“decently and in*

order” (1 Corinthians 14:40). But, see what He does. He brings confusion. He opens the cages and lets the doves out. He looses the sacrificial animals. He goes in there and takes the moneychangers’ money and throws it on the floor of the temple, and it goes rolling across. And then, He takes their tables and overthrows their tables. This is the Temple of God, and He Is bringing confusion to the Temple.

Has God ever done that for you—God brought confusion in your life? You see, these people had it all worked out just right. It was all set up, and Jesus ruined their plans. Has He ever stepped in and overturned your tables? When you let your body and your spirit become a den of thieves, He has every right to move in and overturn your tables.

Joyce and I pray regularly for our children that they might know and love the Lord, but we do not pray that they will succeed outside the will of God. As a matter of fact, I have prayed many times for various ones of my children, when I did not feel they were walking as close as they ought, “Lord, let their chariot wheels drag!” I wasn’t praying that they would sail through life. I’m praying just the opposite: that God will overthrow their tables.

What does He do? If you are a child of God, and you fail to glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s, what does He do? There’s a whip of chastisement. There is the work of confusion. This is what God does. It may be all well planned to you, but God will overturn your tables.

### **III. The Purpose of the Temple**

Now, here’s the third thing I want you to notice. I want you to notice, not only the profaning of the temple, and the purging of the temple, but I want you to notice with me the purpose of the temple. Again, what is your purpose? What is my purpose? What is it? To sell insurance? To mow lawns? To raise children? To run a business? What is your purpose? Look at your pastor now. You have but one purpose. It’s to glorify God. To glorify God! To glorify God! *“Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s”* (1 Corinthians 6:20).

Now, what is the purpose of the temple, as we break it down?

#### **A. It Is to Be a Place of Prayer**

Well, first of all, the temple is to be a place of prayer. Look in verse 13: *“And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer”* (Matthew 21:13). You, as a temple of God, are to be a house of prayer.

In the Old Testament temple and in the tabernacle there was an altar called the altar of incense. And, they would burn fragrant incense from that altar, and the aroma was rising constantly toward Heaven. Incense, in the Bible, is a picture of the believer’s prayer. And,

out of your heart, out of your temple, continually, is to be that sweet-smelling savor in the nostrils of God, of prayer.

Now, if your house is not a house of prayer—I don't mean, "Now I lay me down to sleep" type of prayer; I mean, if the incense is not constantly rising to Heaven—you need revival. You cannot help but pray when your heart is right to God. And, that prayer is going to be coming up continually at all times. Let me give you some verses. Jot them in your margin. Luke 18:1: *"And he spake a parable unto them to this end,"*—now, listen—*"that men ought always to pray,"*—*"always to pray,"* *"always to pray"*—*"and not to faint."* First Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 17: *"Pray without ceasing"* (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

You say, "Pastor, I can't pray without ceasing." Yes, you can. Prayer does not have to be verbalized always for it to be prayer. You can live in the Spirit even when you're asleep. I can wake up in the middle of the night and realize that I'd been communing with God while I was asleep, wake up and praise Him vocally, and go back to sleep. You say, "But, what if there are other things that concern me?" Well, they don't keep you from praying—not the spirit of prayer.

Let me give you an illustration. Here's a mother that has a sick child. And, that child has a fever, and that child hurts and aches, and that mother is up all night with the children, and maybe the next day, and maybe the next night. Finally, the child goes off to a fitful sleep, and the mother says, "Now I must sleep." And, she lies down to sleep, and she falls into a hard sleep. And, there are noises outside. The car horns are honking; a fire truck may go by; children are playing; somebody slams a door. None of that awakens her, because she's in a deep, hard sleep. But, one whimper from that child, she's awake. What does it mean? Her heart, her mind, is tuned to that child. Your heart, your mind, ought to be tuned to God that way. It was said of Dwight L. Moody, "He never made long prayers, but he was never long without prayer."

Now, the Bible says, in Philippians 4, verse 6, *"Be careful..."*—that is, "Don't worry about anything"—*"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing"*—*"everything,"* *"everything"*—*"by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God"* (Philippians 4:6).

Now, friend, if you can't pray about it, you have no business doing it. If you can't ask God to help you at the casino, you have no business going there; if you can't ask God to bless this cigarette, say, "Lord, I'm doing this for Your glory; bless it." Listen. There are certain things you know you could not ask God to bless. And yet, this scripture says, *"In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."*

"Well," you say, "pastor, I have two sides to my life. I have my Christian life, and I have my other life. There, my other life means I don't pray about those things; I pray about the

spiritual things.” Ladies and gentlemen, when you get saved, everything is spiritual—everything is spiritual. You’ll not find the word *secular* in your concordance. Don’t get the idea that there are some things that you’re to pray about and other things that you’re to work out by yourself. I say it again, if you cannot pray and ask God to bless it, you have no business doing it.

Charles Stanley, my dear friend, came to the First Baptist Church of Atlanta, Georgia, many years ago. And, when he became pastor, the church was having financial problems. And so, he met with some of the leaders of the Finance Committee and the deacons, and they were trying to figure out what they were going to do. And, Charles Stanley said, “Well, let’s pray about it.” And, one of the men around that table said, “Now, pastor, we don’t need to pray about this. This is business.”

Think about that. I’m afraid that many of us do that. We try to divide our lives into the sacred and the secular, but you cannot do it. *“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”* There is to be coming out of the temple, which is you, that sweet incense rising up to God as you pray without ceasing. And, if you don’t intercede, you have sinned. First Samuel chapter 12, verse 23: *“Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you”* (1 Samuel 12:23). Prayerlessness is a sin.

### **B. It Is to Be a Place of Power**

Now, your temple, you are to be a place of prayer. Secondly, your temple is to be a place of power. Notice chapter 21, verse 14: *“And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them”* (Matthew 21:14). Here, after the Temple was cleansed, the mighty power of God was released in the Temple. The blind and the broken were touched by the power of God when the Lord was free to reign and to rule in His temple. And, friend, when you are right with God, when there is revival in your heart, there will be miracles in your life.

You say, “Now, wait a minute, pastor. Do you mean I’m to open blind eyes, and I’m to straighten crooked limbs?” Well, maybe so. I mean, I’ve prayed for the sick, and I believe I’ve seen them radically and dramatically healed, but God has not given me the gift of healing. But, I tell you, healing is not the greater miracle. Our Lord didn’t heal all; He healed some as an illustration of the greater miracle, the opening of blind eyes and the restoring of broken bodies spiritually.

You know, some people will say, “You know, if we were what we ought to be, we would be laying hands on the sick, and they would recover. Every service would be a miracle service as we see God do extraordinary miracles.” Not necessarily so. You don’t do miracles,

necessarily, because you're Spirit-filled. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb (Luke 1:41), and yet the Bible says John did no miracles. None! None! But, many believed on Jesus through what John said (John 10:41-42). I'd rather have the power to lead boys and girls, men and women, to Jesus Christ, open blind eyes and straighten twisted lives, than to heal physically. You say, "Pastor, you're just saying that. You don't mean it. That's just an excuse because you don't do it." No, it's not. Listen, my friend. The greater miracle is the opening of blind eyes spiritually and the setting forth of twisted lives to a straight path.

A college boy asked his pastor, "Pastor, do you think there is life on other planets? He said, "No, I don't." He said, "Now, pastor, there are billions and billions and billions of heavenly bodies. Don't you think there's life on some of these?" He said, "No, I really don't. The college student said, "Well then, why did God go to all the trouble to make them?" The pastor said, "What trouble? What trouble?"

I mean, He spoke, and it was so. Universes dripped from His fingertips. All He had to do was speak, and creation was. He says, "Be," and it was! That was no trouble for omnipotence. The only time God had any trouble, if I can say it respectfully, was when Jesus died on the cross. It took no special effort from God for God to create the universe, but in order to save your soul, the greater miracle, Jesus hung in agony and blood on the cross. Do you understand that? The greater miracle than opening blind eyes is the salvation of a 13-year-old girl who may come this morning down this aisle to say, "I give my heart to Jesus Christ." Do you believe that?

### **C. It Is to Be a Place of Praise**

But, I'm saying this: that your temple is to be a place of prayer. And, if your temple is a place of prayer, it will be a place of power. And, if it is a place of prayer and power, it will be a place of praise. You will be praising God, and others will be praising God as a result. Look, if you will, please, now in chapter 21, and notice in verse 15: "*And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were sore displeased, and said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?*" (Matthew 21:15-16).

Now, how do you glorify God? In your body and in your spirit, the temple that is called you. You make it a place of prayer. You see it as a place of power. And then, as night follows day, it will be a place of praise. You will be praising the Lord, glorifying God. Out of the temple of your body will come praise. Not only will you be praising the Lord—and, I hope you do that. Do you ever find yourself just driving along, saying, "God, You're so wonderful!

Jesus, I praise You! Jesus, I love You!” and that praise is welling up, and welling up, and welling up, because you have been saved? And, because the prayer and the power is there, the praise is there—but, others see what God is doing; others see the miracles in your life in your temple, and they begin to praise God and say, “Hosanna!” Even little children can see it. Little children can recognize God in you.

## Conclusion

Church, listen to me. Up in the balcony, sir, you listen to me. Over here, lady, you listen. Down here, you listen. I’m asking you a question. Does your life bring praise and glory to Jesus Christ? Answer that question. That’s a serious question. That’s not a rhetorical question. Answer it silently, but answer it honestly. Is your body a place of prayer? Is your body a place of power? Is your body a place of praise? You are the temple of God. “What? Don’t you know that your body is the temple of God, a temple of the Holy Ghost, which ye have of God; for ye are not your own; you are bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

That’s revival. When you, as individuals, begin to let your life be a place of prayer and power and praise—you, and you, and you, and you over there; yes, and you way in the back—when you allow your body to become that, motivated by your spirit, it’s going to happen to individuals, and, as night follows day, it will happen in our church. Don’t you long for that in your own life? You say, “Pastor, I really don’t.” Well, there’s nothing wrong with you that a good revival or a good old dose of salvation wouldn’t cure. You need to have this longing for God, to thirst for Him, as we sang, “As the Deer Pants after the Water Brooks.”

You say, “Pastor, I don’t have God in my life. You said that salvation was not getting man out of Earth into Heaven, but getting God out of Heaven into man. How can I get God into me? How can I become a temple of God?” Revelation chapter 3, verse 20—Jesus said, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock:”—in this service He’s knocking at your heart’s door. When you see a sunset, you hear a baby cry, you hear glorious music, that’s Jesus knocking at your heart’s door. You hear a sermon, He’s knocking, knocking, knocking, knocking. And then, the Bible says—“*if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him*” (Revelation 3:20). Do you want Him in your life? Open the door! Open the door! He’s not going to break it down. It’s not enough for you to slide an offering under the door or whisper a prayer through the keyhole. You open the door and say, “Lord Jesus, come into me. I want to be a temple of the living God.” And, I promise you, He will come into you.



# The Cleansing of the Temple

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: March 5, 1995**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 21:12-17**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Profaning of the Temple
- II. The Purging of the Temple
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Conclusion

## Introduction

**W**e were in Matthew chapter 20. Would you find Matthew chapter 21 tonight—a very interesting episode: “The Cleansing of the Temple.” And, you may know that the temple in the Old Testament, and even in Jesus’ day, was a building that was a picture of the believer. The temple was a blueprint of the believer. There are great spiritual lessons as we study the temple. As a matter of fact, the book that I have just written deals with this truth, entitled *The Power of His Presence*. In the Old Testament times, God had a temple for His people. In New Testament times, He has a people for His temple. And, Paul said to the church at Corinth, “Ye are the temple of God.” And he asked this question in 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 19: “What? Know ye not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? Don’t you understand that? You’re not your own. You are bought with a price. And therefore you’re to glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:19).

I preached a sermon some time back on this subject: “Where on Earth Does God Live?” And, I told you that God has lived in a series of houses, and each of these houses was a temple. The first house was Adam, and God lived in Adam. And, Adam sinned, and God moved out. And then, God lived in that tabernacle and that temple that was erected there. The temple and the tabernacle were different forms of the same kind of building. It was a house for God to dwell in, and the Shekinah glory of God dwelt there. But, again, that temple was profaned. It was to be a house of prayer for all people, but they made it a den of thieves, and Jesus said, “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate” (Matthew 23:38). “It

was My Father's house, but now it's your house." That is, God moved out. The next temple that God lived in was the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He was a temple of God. He said of Himself, in John the second chapter, *"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up"* (John 2:19). They didn't know that He was speaking of the temple of His body, and He was a perfect temple. And, He lived and walked among us, and the Godhead dwelt in Him bodily (Colossians 2:9). He was a house of God. And then, we crucified Him. And, actually, God the Father had to move out of that temple even. And, Jesus bore our sin on the cross, cried out, *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"* (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34) because when a temple is desecrated, then it is desolated. And, Jesus became sin for us. And then, God moved into a new humanity, and the Church becomes the temple of God. The wonderful thing is this: that God moved into that primary temple, which was Adam; then He moved out. And then, He moved into that pattern temple, which was a building; then He moved out. Then, He moved into that perfect temple, which was the humanity of Jesus. And, when Jesus was on that cross, God the Father was separated from God the Son. But now, He has moved into us, and He has moved into us to stay in us. God has stopped moving. God has settled down. And, He has sent His Spirit to abide with us forever. There is nothing—absolutely nothing—that can separate me now from the love of God and the presence of God.

Well, if I am a temple of God, and God will never leave this temple, what happens when the temple gets desecrated, when the temple gets defiled? What happens is this: He will cleanse the temple. And, I want you to see, in chapter 21 and verse 12, what I'm speaking of: *"And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves. And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them. And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were sore displeased, and said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise? And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there"* (Matthew 21:12–17).

Now, that has a wonderful lesson for us if we're a temple of God, because remember that the Old Testament temple was an object lesson to teach us how God is to live in our hearts and in our lives. And, as we prepare our hearts tonight for the Lord's Supper, there are three things basically that I want you to see.

## **I. The Profaning of the Temple**

The first is the profaning of the temple. Now, that temple in that day had been profaned. They'd made it a den of thieves. The problem was not that they were buying and selling: that was perfectly acceptable. The problem is that a bunch of crooks and shills had moved in and had taken over the legitimate business of providing sacrificial animals.

Here's the way they had worked it out. They said, "If you've come from a long place, and you want to worship in the temple, you've got to have a sacrificial animal." Well, so far, so good. "We'll provide an animal to you." Nobody wants to sacrifice an animal that has cost him nothing. David said, "God forbid that I should sacrifice to the Lord of that which doth cost me nothing" (2 Samuel 24:24). So far, so good. But, when the people came, they had the coinage of the realm, and they said, "Now, we cannot use this money in the temple, so we have to change the money to temple money. So, we take your money that has the stamp and inscription of Caesar on it, and we will give you temple money. And, with the temple money you can buy the sacrifices." And so, they had a very good rate of exchange, and they were doing quite well with it. So, they would take the temple money, exchange it for the money of the realm, the coinage of the realm. They would take that money with that superscription of Caesar. They'd put it over here. The people would take the temple money and use that to buy the sacrifice with, so they got the money right back again. And, somebody else would come, and they would do this again. And, the whole time they're just raking off this profit. It was just kind of a form of religious extortion. It infuriated the Lord Jesus, because that house was to be a house that was to give glory to God.

Now, you say, "Adrian, what does that have to do with me if I am a temple?" Well, if you are a temple, you have one purpose. Do you know what I exist for? You say, "Well, you're the pastor of the church, or you're the husband to Joyce, or whatever it is you exist for." No, I exist for one reason: to give glory to God. Do you know what you exist for? Not two reasons, but one and one only: "What? Know ye not that you are not your own. You are bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." That's what 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 19, tells us. We are a temple of God.

Now, anything that steals away the glory from the Lord Jesus Christ out of my life has become a thief. Anything that takes the glory that belongs to Jesus and steals it away is a thief in my life that steals the glory that belongs to the Lord Jesus. Now, a carnal Christian has made his temple a den of thieves. If there are things in your life that don't glorify the Lord Jesus, that dissipate His glory, then you have made the temple of your body a den of thieves. The Old Testament temple existed to give glory to God. The Christian, as a temple of God, exists to give glory to God. So, in verse 12, you see the profaning of the temple.

## II. The Purging of the Temple

Now, in verse 12 also, you're going to see the purging of the temple. Look again, if you will, in verse 12, and the Bible says, *"And Jesus went into the temple...and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple,"*—now, here's the purging of the temple—*"and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves"* (Matthew 21:12–13). And, in John the second chapter, we read that, not only did He overthrow the tables, but He took some chords and wove them together and made a whip. Well, let's just turn to that. Turn to John chapter 2, and look in verse 15 with me, and you'll see it, and you might be amazed that the Lord would do such a thing. Look, if you will, in verse 15: *"And when he had made a scourge"—that means a whip—"of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables"* (John 2:15).

Now, we see that in the Passion Play. I don't know, are you going to have that scene in the Passion Play this year? You see the Lord Jesus. He comes in. He's absolutely incensed. The zeal of His Father's house has eaten Him up. He's outraged. And, He drives out these who are making merchandise, who have become thieves in His Father's house. And then, He just comes and He dumps over those tables. Now, He has a whip of chastisement and a work of confusion. You can't imagine the confusion that was in the temple. I mean, animals, doves, and sheep, and oxen running everywhere, and people scouring for cover. Who is this? The Lord of love with a whip, the God of order messing up everything. I mean, the Lord of love with a whip, the God of order bringing confusion.

And, friend, that's exactly what He'll do when you profane your temple. A carnal Christian makes the temple of his body a den of thieves. And, when the Lord Jesus Christ gets ready to cleanse your temple, He has two methods. Number one: the whip; and, number two: He'll turn over your tables.

Now, think about the whip of chastisement. Did you know that the Lord will take a whip to you? You say, "To me?" Absolutely! He loves you that much. Turn to Hebrews chapter 12, and let's see how the Lord's going to cleanse His temple. Go ahead and take your Bibles. Lick your fingers and turn to it—Hebrews chapter 12, and begin in verse 5: *"And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth"*—that word means, "uses a whip on"—*"every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure [chastisement]"*—*"chastening"*—*"God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without [chastisement], whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons"* (Hebrews 12:5–8). Now, what

is that saying? God here speaks of this whip of chastisement, and He talks of those who are partakers of it, and He says, “When you are my child—when you’re my child—I will use the whip when it is necessary.”

So, suppose tonight that you have your name on this church roll, and suppose you’re living a life of open and flagrant sin. Does that mean that you’re getting away with your sin? Not at all! If God does not chastise you, if the Lord does not attempt to cleanse His temple, which is His, if He does not take that scourge and move in to cleanse His temple, do you know why? You’ve never been saved. God says, “Whom the Lord loves, He chastens.”

You know, sometimes people get saved, they give their hearts to Christ, they get baptized, and then trouble comes. They’re chastised. Do you know what? The devil says, “God doesn’t love you, or this wouldn’t be happening to you.” Wrong! God loves you, and that’s why it’s happening to you. That’s what the verse says: “Whom the Lord loves, He chastens.”

I’ve told you before, my dad, when he whipped me, used to say, “Son, I’m doing this because I love you.” I didn’t believe it then. I believe it now. Then, I thought, “Well, if you do this because you love me, you sure do love me a lot more than you love my brother. And, I’m your favorite.” But, he did do that because he loved me. He loved me too much to let me get away with some of the things that I endeavored to get away with.

And, God loves you too much to let you go on with carnality in the temple of your body that steals away the glory that belongs to God, that makes your temple a den of thieves. Now, if God does not chastise you, it doesn’t mean that you’re getting away with sin; it means you’re going to meet your sin at the final judgment. God judges us three ways: as sinners—that’s at the cross; as sons—that’s with chastisement; and, as servants—that’s at the Judgment Seat of Christ. And, there are three kinds of judgment. Now, thank God, I’m not going to be judged for my sin, because that was at the cross. That’s settled. I’ve settled that out of court. *“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus”* (Romans 8:1). But, if and when I sin, God loves me so much that the same Lord Jesus, the loving Lord, the Lord of love, took a whip and cleansed the temple. And, He knows how to do it today. The Lord knows how to chastise those.

By the way, He did it for our profit, not for our loss. Go back again to Hebrews, and look at that. He says, if we have this kind of chastisement—and maybe you’re being chastised right now—here’s what He says He’s doing it for. Look in verse 11: *“Now no chastening...”*—this is Hebrews 12, verse 11—*“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous...”*—some of you are going through deep grief. You don’t say, ‘Oh, happy day! I’m being chastised!’ I never did say, “Hot diggity dog! I’m getting a whipping!” when my dad got on to me. But, now I’m glad he did—*“no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous,*

*but grievous: nevertheless...*—I hope you’ve underscored that—*“nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed”* (Hebrews 12:11–13). What our Lord is doing is, our Lord is not getting even with you when He chastises you. He is correcting you, because He loves you.

Now, the second thing our Lord did: not only did He take a whip, but He turned over the tables. There was the whip of chastisement. There was the work of confusion. He just turned over those tables. I mean, the money runs everywhere. The animals scurry. It had been so well planned. You can just imagine how they had everything stacked up. They had their ledgers. They had their books. And, He just makes confusion out of it.

Has the Lord ever turned over your tables? Has the Lord just walked into your life and it just absolutely seems like bedlam breaks loose? And, you say, “How could this happen? Why can’t I get things in order? Why are not things working as they ought to work? Isn’t God a God of order?” Yes. And, the God of order loves you so much that He’ll turn over your tables, that He will say, “I’m tired of the way you’ve been living. You’re a carnal Christian.” And so, with the whip and the confusion He just comes in, and He begins to chastise, and He begins to confuse, and He brings all of this order—not because He doesn’t love us, but because He does love us. I could never imagine Jesus walking into a pagan temple and interrupting the worship there—only the temple of His Father. And, this is God’s way of dealing with His children.

### **III. The Purpose of the Temple**

Now, I’ve talked to you about the profaning of the temple, and the purging of the temple. Let me talk to you for just a moment about the purpose of the temple. What is the purpose? I mentioned this already, but what is the purpose of my house, my body, where our Lord lives? Well, after the temple was cleansed, then you’re going to see what the purpose was.

#### **A. A House of Prayer**

Look, if you will, in verse 13. The first purpose of your house as it is cleansed is this reason right here—verse 13: *“And [he] said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer”* (Matthew 21:13).

Now, one of the marks that your temple is not clean is that you don’t have a prayer life. One of the marks of the fact that your temple has been purged and no longer profaned is that the sweet incense of prayer is rising up continually from your temple. You have no greater calling than to pray. Luke 18:1 says, *“Men ought always to pray.”* First Thessalonians 5, verse 17, says, *“Pray without ceasing”* (1 Thessalonians 5:17). That means, pray when

you feel like it, pray when you don't feel like it, pray until you do feel like it": "*Pray without ceasing.*"

Have you ever awakened some morning and didn't feel like praying, so you thought maybe it would be just a waste of time, or wrong, if you prayed, and didn't feel like praying? Your feeling doesn't have a lot to do with it. You're not more spiritual because you feel good.

There are mornings when I wake up that, very frankly, I don't feel like praying. There are times when I preach when I don't feel like preaching. I preach anyway. Do you know why? Because my feeling doesn't have that much to do with it. It's God's Word. My heart is clean. It doesn't matter how I feel. Sometimes I come out here to preach, and, folks, I'm telling you I can't even think straight. I get one foot in a lard bucket, and I can't get it out. And, my *tangue* gets all *tongled* up. And, things come out backward. And, you know, that's the way it is. I think, "Well, you know, it's going to be a bad morning." And, Heaven comes down. And, I realize, "Well, Rogers, it's not the way you feel. It's not your emotion. It's not whether you think you're hitting on all eight, whether you got a good night's sleep or not. It's the power of God."

It's the same way in your prayer life. When you wake up some morning, and you have a dull headache, and you just, you know, maybe you ate sauerkraut and ice cream and rode on a roller coaster and then went to bed, and then you wake up the next morning, and you just don't feel good, you say, "Well, I won't pray. God won't hear my prayer. I don't feel good," and then later on you take an Alka-Seltzer, and you're feeling better now, and you say, "Well now, I'll pray. God will hear my prayer now." Do you think God's in that little *plop, plop, fizz, fizz*? I mean, do you think that God's in that? Is that what made you holy? No, it just made you feel better.

Look, you pray when you feel like it. You pray when you don't feel like it. And, you pray continually. I spend my life in prayer. And, I have times when I pray, but I pray all the time—I mean, all the time. I sit on that seat and I pray. I write a letter for a friend: I pray. I pass a church: I pray for that church. I read a church bulletin: I pray for that pastor. I write a letter: I pray for the person that I'm writing a letter to. I'm about to make a conversation: I pray for the individual. And, out of my heart is going out prayer all the time.

Now, I don't say that to brag, because I'm far from what I ought to be in my prayer life, but the Bible says we're to pray without ceasing. The purpose of the house is to be a house of prayer. That's what the Old Testament temple was. And, you're a New Testament temple. And, God's house is to be a house of prayer. And so, He takes that whip of chastisement and that work of confusion to bring you to the place where you need to be, which is to be a place of prayer.

## B. A Place of Power

Now, secondly, it is to be a place of power. Look in verse 14: *“And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them”* (Matthew 21:14). Because there was prayer, there was power. Now, you say, “Pastor Rogers, does that mean that I’m to be healing those who are blind and crippled? Absolutely! Those who are blinded by Satan and broken by sin! The miracles in the Bible, the physical miracles, were illustrations of the greater spiritual miracles. And, beloved, that’s not an easy way out. I’m not trying to excuse us from not opening blind eyes or healing crooked limbs. I am telling you that as the Apostle John gave the miracles in the Gospel of John, he says, *“These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ...and that believing [in him] ye might have life through His name”* (John 20:31).

John the Baptist—the Bible says he was filled with the Holy Spirit. He did no miracle, but many believed on Christ through his testimony. You read that in the last part of John chapter 10 (John 10:41–42). I’d rather have it said about me that I could lead people to Christ than I could raise the dead. I’m saying this, however: that when the temple is cleansed, it is a place of prayer. And, when it becomes a place of prayer, it becomes a place of power. And, those who are blinded by sin, blinded by Satan, and broken by sin are going to find through the temple of your life and the Holy Ghost of God that inhabits your temple that power. Now, you have to ask yourself this question: Is there power in your life? Now, Jesus did these miracles, but He said, *“Greater works than these that I do will ye do”* (John 14:12)—that is, leading people to Jesus Christ.

## C. A Place of Praise

Now, here’s the third thing. When the temple is cleansed, it will be a place of prayer, it will be a place of power, and it will be a place of praise. Look, if you will, in verse 15: *“And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did...”*—oh, I love that. Isn’t He wonderful?—*“when [they] saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were sore displeased, and said unto him, Hearst thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?”* (Matthew 21:15–16). When Christ is working in His temple, it will be so obvious, and people will see Him working, and they will give Him glory.

Do you know what the desire of my heart is? When people get to know Adrian, they’ll praise Jesus. That is the desire of my heart. When people come in contact with me, when people meet me, and have been around me, they will want to love and praise the Jesus that



I love. I am a temple. And, the purpose of the temple—it is to be a place of prayer, a place of power, and a place of praise, where praise goes up to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, these people who were there, they couldn't understand what was happening; these Pharisees—look, the chief priests and scribes—the Bible says they saw the wonderful things that He did, and the people praising, and, very frankly, folks, it confused them. They couldn't explain it, but they could not deny it.

## Conclusion

I'll tell you something else I want about me that I hope you want about you. I want there to be a quality in my life that people cannot explain but they cannot deny; something they cannot explain apart from Jesus Christ, but they cannot deny that there is something there. *The only part of me that I have any right to ask anybody to believe in is the part they cannot explain apart from God.* What is there from my life and your life that is inexplicable apart from the power of Almighty God?

You see, we are a temple of God. There is the profaning of the temple by a carnal life and a carnality that steals away the glory that belongs to Him. There is the purging of the temple, as our Lord with a whip of chastisement and a work of confusion just comes in. The God of love and the God of order does that. Why? That the purpose of the temple—a place of prayer, a place of power, and a place of praise—might be made known. Now, folks, it doesn't apply to this building; it applies to you—applies to you. You—you—are the temple.

There are some of you who have habits that you wouldn't practice in here, but you'd practice out there. You know what I mean? You go out there and barbeque your testimony. Now, you wouldn't do that in here, but you do it out there. Well, why wouldn't you do it in here? You say, "Oh, well, *this* is the house of God." *You're* the house of God. There are people who use language, they use language out there in the office, in the schoolroom. They wouldn't use it in here. I say, "Well, why wouldn't you use that language in here?" "Oh, *this* is the house of God." No! *This* is the house of God. *You* are the temple of God. And, don't you let any thief steal the glory that belongs to Jesus. If you do, He'll take a whip, and He'll turn over your tables.

"Well," you say, "He hasn't turned mine over yet." Well, maybe you just don't belong to Him. He didn't cleanse a pagan temple. Your body, your life—you are to be a place of prayer, a place of power, and a place of praise. And, people, by the very presence of God in His temple, in your life, are to say, "*Hosanna to the son of David.*"

# Come Celebrate Jesus

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** April 25, 1999

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 22:1–14

*“The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son.”*

MATTHEW 22:2

## Outline

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- B. It Is a Rich Feast
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  - 2. Today’s Godless Youth Are Restless
  - 3. Today’s Godless Youth Are Ruthless
  - 4. Today’s Godless Youth Are Remorseless
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II. The King’s Wrathful Indignation

- A. Frivolity
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III. The King’s Willful Determination

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Conclusion

## Introduction

Find Matthew 22, and when you have found it, look up here—Matthew chapter 22.

Some years ago, I received an envelope, and it was from the White House, and I wondered why would I be receiving an envelope from the White House. Ronald Reagan was the president. And, when I opened it up, it said that Joyce and I were invited to come to the White House for a state dinner. Ronald Reagan was entertaining the president of another country, and Joyce and I were invited to come to a state dinner at the White House. I had to read it two or three times because I thought I was reading somebody else’s mail, but sure enough, we were invited. And so, we got out some of our better clothes and went to Washington. And, I still acted a little bit, I’m sure, out of place. When we got there, we realized others were coming in limousines. We came in a

yellow cab. But, we went in, and it was a wonderful time, never to be forgotten.

But folks, I have a more wonderful invitation for you today—not to be invited to some state dinner by some president or some king, but the King of kings and the Lord of lords has invited you to a banquet in the honor of His dear Son. And, it is my privilege today—my privilege, I say—to offer that invitation to you. It is my good fortune to tell you that you have been invited to come celebrate Jesus.

## I. The King's Wonderful Invitation

Now, I want you to read here in Matthew chapter 22 about the King's wonderful invitation. Read the first three verses: *"And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables"—now, let me just pause here and say that a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. He—"spake unto them...by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come."* (Matthew 22:1–3)

Now, here is a story of a king, a mighty potentate, who has a son that he dearly loves, and his son is being married. And, they're going to have a great and a grand and a glorious feast. And, the king says, "Go out and issue these special invitations, and invite these people to come." Now folks, let me just pause right now and say one of these days, there is going to be a celebration like you have never seen or heard about, and you are invited to come. And, my prayer is that you will not be in hell when all of that is going on.

Now, listen to me. I don't want you to miss it. Revelation chapter 19, verse 7 tells us it's going to be a celebration. It says, *"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready"—"be glad and rejoice."* (Revelation 19:7) In other words, "Let's have a party!" Now, this parable was given to the Jewish nation, but it has a personal, as well as a national, application. I want you to see why I say it's a celebration.

### A. It Is a Royal Feast

Look at this feast. Look, for example, in verse 2. It is a royal feast. *"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son."* (Matthew 22:2) Jesus is the royal Son of heaven's King. Now folks, listen to me. *You will never, never settle the sin question until you settle the Son question.* This is a king who made a marriage for his son. Did you know that the whole Bible is written to tell you about God's Son?

If you're making notes, put a few in your margin here. Psalm 2—that's the Old Testament. Psalm 2, verse 7: *"I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me"—*

listen. Jesus is speaking—“*the LORD hath said unto me*”—“Jehovah has said unto me”—“*Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.*” (Psalms 2:7) Islam says that God does not beget and He cannot be begotten. They need to read this verse: “*Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.*” (Psalms 2:7) And then, that same psalm says, in Psalm 2, verse 12: “*Kiss the Son, lest he be angry.*” (Psalms 12:2) And then, the Lord Jesus Christ, that very Son Himself, said in John 3, verses 16 and 17: “*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.*” (John 3:16–17) Who is that? That’s Jesus, the Son of God. And then, John 3, verse 36—listen to it: “*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*” (John 3:36) And then, over in Matthew chapter 17 and verse 5, God spoke out of the glory and said, “*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.*” (Matthew 17:5)

What am I saying, folks? This is a royal feast, and it honors the King’s Son. Listen to me. If you have never given your heart to Jesus, if you have never bowed the knee to Jesus Christ, you’re not right with the Father if you’re not right with the Son. You cannot honor the Father without honoring the Son.

¶ You see, suppose I had a wedding for my son and I said, “This is going to be the finest wedding that Joyce and I can possibly afford, and we’re having everything ready,” and then we invite you to come. And, we say, “You’re a special guest. You’ve been invited to come.” And, you might say, “Well, I’m not coming.” I say, “Why not?” “Well, I don’t like your son. As a matter of fact, I don’t want to have anything to do with your son. And, besides that, I don’t think much of you, either.” Well, friend, what an insult! Now, this is what so many are saying to God the Father.¶

This is a royal feast. This is a king who has said, “I invite you.” And, to dishonor the Son is to dishonor the Father.

## **B. It Is a Rich Feast**

But, not only is it a royal feast; it is a rich feast. Look, if you will, in verse 4: “*Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed*”—do you know what he’s talking about here? Filet mignon. What he’s talking here about is prime rib. What he’s talking here about is the very best—“*and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.*” (Matthew 22:4) This is not only a royal feast; it is a rich feast.

The devil wants to hide your eyes from the riches that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. The devil wants you to think negatively about God rather than to think positively about God. Friend, there’s no way that I could describe unto you the things that God

wants you to have in the Lord Jesus Christ. The devil doesn't want you to see that.

I think of what happened out in Littleton, Colorado, and I compare that to John 10:10, where Jesus speaks about the devil, and it says, "*The thief cometh not, but...to [kill], and to [steal], and to destroy*"—but Jesus said—"I [have] come that [you] might have life, and that [you] might have it...abundantly." (John 10:10) The devil doesn't want you to see that. The devil wants you to think negatively about God. Think of these kids out there. Do you know what their problem was with these young men? They thought negatively about God. Let me tell you the four marks of today's youth without God.

### **1. Today's Godless Youth Are Rootless**

First of all, these young people are rootless. They have no belief. Nobody has told them to come celebrate Jesus. Nobody has told them, or they have not accepted it if they have heard, the joys that they could have in the Lord Jesus Christ. And, they are rootless.

### **2. Today's Godless Youth Are Restless**

And, because they are rootless, they are restless. They're looking here, they're looking there, for something to fulfill them, and they drift into groups like the goths and these other things.

### **3. Today's Godless Youth Are Ruthless**

And then, because they are rootless and because they're restless, they become ruthless. It's nothing for them to take somebody else's life because they don't love themselves. Don't think it's wrong for somebody to love one's self; it's wrong not to love yourself. Jesus teaches that I'm to love you as I love me. We're to love others as we love ourselves. And, a person who does not love himself or herself is dangerous. And, these people, they don't care about life—theirs or anybody else's. And so, these who are rootless and restless become ruthless.

### **4. Today's Godless Youth Are Remorseless**

And, they're remorseless. The Bible speaks of them as being past feeling. They'll blow you away for a pair of tennis shoes and sit in court and grin about it. That's a generation that doesn't understand the riches that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I'm telling you, friend, the devil wants you to think negatively about God. It began in the Garden of Eden. In Genesis chapter 3, verse 1, the Bible says, "*The serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?*" (Genesis 3:1) The first thing that Satan said about God was a negative thing. "Has God said that you shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (Genesis 3:1) He wanted Eve to think negatively about God. Friend, God is a loving God. God is full of grace. He's not severe

and cruel. As I said, He's not some cosmic killjoy who, every time He sees someone having fun, moves in to break up the fun, break up the party; everything is a no-no. Well, that's not our God. As a matter of fact, what God had said to Adam and Eve when God put Adam and Eve in the garden was a resounding "yes" to their joy and their pleasure.

Now, in Genesis 3:1, Satan says, "Did God say you shall not eat of the fruit of every tree of the garden?" (Genesis 3:1) What a lie that was! Genesis 2, verse 16: The Bible says, "*And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat.*" (Genesis 2:16) Ha! There was only one tree that they couldn't eat of. God had given them Eden with all of its bounties, all of its beauties, all of its blessings, and the devil wanted them to think negatively about God.

That's the reason I have entitled the message today "Come Celebrate Jesus." Friend, I am inviting you, not to a funeral; I'm inviting you to a feast. Listen to me. The Bible says in Psalm 37 and verse 4: "*Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he [will] give [you] the desires of [your] heart.*" (Psalms 37:4) Psalm 84, verse 11: "*The LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.*" (Psalms 84:11) The Bible tells us over there in 1 Timothy 6, verse 17 that it is God "*who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.*" (1 Timothy 6:17) There is a heaven. There is a hell. I would be a Christian if there were neither heaven or hell just to know the Lord Jesus Christ in this life. Don't you let the devil get you to thinking negatively about God.

### C. It Is a Ready Feast

Now, think about this feast. Think about this invitation. It is a royal feast to celebrate heaven's King. It is a rich feast, and it is a ready feast. Look again at this scripture in verse 4. He says, "*All things are ready.*" (Matthew 22:4)

¶ One thing I've learned: when Joyce fixes a meal for us and says, "Come," we'd better come—we'd better come. I mean, when it's on the table, when the food is hot, and she's worked and done all of this, and she says, "Come," it is time to come, and there is no need to wait. We don't have to beg for it. We don't have to pay for it. We don't have to pray for it. We come, sit, and dine!¶

Now, what is all of this saying? This is saying that you cannot honor the Father without honoring the Son.

¶ Ronald Dunn told a story. Actually, he heard it from a man in Scotland named George Duncan. But, George Duncan knew of this situation. There was a man—a Britisher, a very, very wealthy man. This man had one son. He loved his son with all of his heart. The son got in the Royal Air Force in World War II, was shot down, died. Then the man's wife died. The man, incredibly wealthy, had no heirs, so he left his entire

estate—all of it—to charity, to churches, to worthy causes. It was all to be auctioned off, according to his will, and given to all of these things. But, he had one of the world's greatest art collections, and the art collection was also to be offered and auctioned as a separate entity. And so, people from all over not only the British Empire, but the world, came because this was priceless art and this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to get this art.

And so, they were sitting there, but the auctioneer from Sotheby's stood up and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, according to the will, this piece of art is to be auctioned first." And, there it was sitting on a tripod with a spotlight on it. It was a portrait. It was a portrait of the man's son. Most of the people out there did not even recognize him, the man's son, and the painter was not a known painter. And, nobody bid on it except for one man, an old servant in the family. And, the old servant knew the boy and thought it would be nice to have a painting of the boy; and so, the old servant bid on that particular painting. Nobody else bid. The auctioneer brought down his gavel and said, "This piece is sold, and the auction is over." And then, the lawyer stood up and said, "We could not tell you this before, but in the will it was stipulated by the owner of all of this that whoever bought this picture gets the whole lot with it."

I thought about that, and I said, "That's so true." Friend, God is so much in love with His Son. He said, "When you get Jesus, you get everything."<sup>f</sup>

And so, here's a feast. It is a royal feast. It is a rich feast. It is a ready feast.

## II. The King's Wrathful Indignation

Now, here's a second thing I want you to see: I want you to see, secondly, the king's wrathful indignation. Look, if you will, in verses 3 through 7 here. The king now is very angry. And, why is it? "[He] sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage"—that is, come celebrate Jesus—"But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: and the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth"—underscore that. That means he was full of wrath—"and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city." (Matthew 22:3–7)

Now, it's unbelievable—it is inconceivable—that you would receive an invitation from heaven's King to come celebrate Jesus and you would not come. But, these said, "No." Do you know the three reasons they said, "No"? Well, look here, and you're going to find out.

### **A. Frivolity**

In verse 3: *“They would not.”* (Matthew 22:3) That’s just frivolity. They were careless about it. It doesn’t say they could not come; they just would not come. They’re like some today who will hear me through television, through tape, or in this auditorium. You’ll hear me say to you, “Come celebrate Jesus,” but you won’t do it. It’s not that you could not. It is merely that you will not. You will not give it a serious thought. May God have mercy on you! And, may you come to the Lord Jesus today and not do that!

### **B. Mockery**

But, not only frivolity, but—notice the progression now—the next step is mockery. Look, if you will, in verse 5. The Bible says, *“They made light of it.”* (Matthew 22:5) You see, if a person denies the Lord long enough, he moves from frivolity to mockery. He begins to joke about holy things, to trample under his feet the precious things of God. He laughs his way into hell, but he can’t laugh his way out.

### **C. Hostility**

And then, that frivolity and that mockery turns to hostility. Look, if you will, in verse 6, and see what happens there: *“And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.”* (Matthew 22:6) There’s a great hostility today against heaven’s King, the Lord Jesus Christ. And, how it breaks my heart to think of this hostility that is there. Your heart can get progressively harder and harder, and that’s the reason the Bible says in Hebrews 3: “If today you’ll hear God’s voice, don’t harden your heart.” (Hebrews 3:7–8)

Listen to me, precious friend. Listen to me, please. God is inviting you to celebrate Jesus. Don’t pass it by. Your frivolity will turn to mockery, and your mockery will turn to hostility; and your heart will get harder and harder. God will not be mocked, however. (Galatians 6:7) And, the Bible says that the measure of His grace is also the measure of His wrath. The grace refused is the wrath that will be given to those who say “no” to God’s Son. You see, the Bible says that God bid them to come. (Matthew 22:3) Not only is it an insult; it is insurrection. To refuse to come to Jesus Christ is a clenched fist in the face of Almighty God.

## **III. The King’s Willful Determination**

Now, here’s the third thing I want you to see: I want you to see the king’s willful determination. We’ve talked about His wrathful indignation. But notice, thirdly, the king’s willful determination. Begin in verse 8, and look at it: *“Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy”*—now, listen to this. Verse 9—*“Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as*



*many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.”*  
(Matthew 22:8–10)

Now, what does the king say? Listen. There’s the king wonderful invitation. Some refused it. There’s the king’s wrathful indignation. But, there is the king’s willful determination. Know what God is saying? God is saying, “There’s going to be a wedding party. I am going to do it. And, the wedding is going to be furnished with guests. If these don’t come, others will come.” And friend, I want to tell you this: if you don’t come to Jesus, somebody else will. And, your refusal is not going to shut heaven down, and your refusal is not going to end the party. We’re going to celebrate Jesus. You can be burning in hell, but we’re going to celebrate Jesus.

He says, “Go out—go out and invite them. The wedding will be furnished with guests.” (Matthew 22:10) Now, what does he say to his servants? Look in verse 9. He says, “Go!” Who are His servants? I’m looking at His servants. We’re servants of the King. And, what is the King saying? He’s saying, “Go!”

And, where should we go? Look at it in verse 9. He says, “Go to the highways!” Now, he doesn’t say, “the highway”; he says, “*the highways*.” All of us have different routes that we travel, but God has commanded us that we are to go into the highways—as we go, to share the Lord Jesus Christ. And, what shall we say? Look in verse 9: “*Bid [them] to the marriage.*” (Matthew 22:9) That is, every one of us are commanded by the King to go into the highways, and we’re to say to those that we see, “Come celebrate Jesus.” That’s what He’s telling us to do. We are to invite people to a celebration.

And, who should we invite? Look, if you will, in verse 10. Who should we invite? He says, “*[the] bad and the good.*” (Matthew 22:10) Now listen, the King is saying to me, “Adrian, go!” “Where should I go? What should I say?” “Tell them to come to the celebration.” “Who should I invite?” “Adrian, invite the bad and the good. Invite the down-and-out. Invite the up-and-out. Invite the poor. Invite the rich. Invite the young. Invite the old. Invite them all. *There’s none so bad he cannot be saved; there’s none so good he need not be saved.* Invite them all to come to the party.” That’s what I’m doing this week, that’s what you’re to be doing this week, because He’s saying this to His servants. And, listen to me, friend. Who should we invite? Everybody.

And, how many should we invite? How many? Look in verse 9, and I want you to see this. Invite “*as many as ye shall find.*” (Matthew 22:9) Some party! It’s not limited. There are some people who believe in a limited atonement. There are some people who just believe that a certain few can be saved, but that’s not what this story says. He says, “Go out into the highway. Tell them to come to the wedding. Find the bad. Invite them to come. Find the good. Invite them to come.” (Matthew 22:9–10) How many shall we invite? As many as you can find!

Now folks, that’s your job. That’s your responsibility in this day in which we live. And,

who should go? Who is it? Who is He talking to? Look in verse 8; look at it: *“Then saith he to his servants...”* (Matthew 22:8) Now, look up here at me. How many of you today claim to be a servant of God? Let me see your hand. Hold it up if you’re a servant of God. All right. Now listen, do you think this is put in this Bible just to fill up space? Well, I’m telling you, friend, He says, “Go!” He said, “Go into the highways.” He says, “Tell them to come to the celebration.” He says, “Tell the good to come. Tell the bad to come. Tell as many as you can find to come.”

Do you know what bothers me, Brother Whitmire? I’ll tell you what bothers me. It is the hands around us—the hands. You know what bothers me? The down-stretched hands from heaven. As our Lord is saying, “Go, invite them to come to the wedding,” there are the upstretched hands in hell, those who are burning in hell, saying, “Send somebody to warn my brothers that they not come to this place.” (Luke 16:27) There are the outstretched hands of this world that need to hear about the Lord Jesus Christ. Then, “Somebody come tell us.”

I think of these young men out there at Littleton wearing these black trench coats, saying, “Heil Hitler!” Bill Bennett said this morning on television, “If there were some students in that high school who’d been carrying a Bible and saying, “Hail, the King of kings and the Prince of Peace,” they would have brought them in and rebuked them, but not, “Heil Hitler!” “Oh, everybody has a right to express themselves.” Well, friend, not only do we have a right; we have an obligation. I’m telling you, wouldn’t it have been wonderful if somebody had gotten these boys and led them to Jesus? They feel that they need to be loved. Nobody understands them. They were outcasts. Jesus is saying, “Go out. Find the bad, find the good everywhere you go, and tell them to come to the party, come celebrate Jesus.” That’s to whom He’s saying it. He’s saying it to His servants.

We’re going to be having a crusade this week. And, very frankly, the success or failure of the crusade is sitting right out here. Some of you are going to be at ballgames. May God pity you! Some of you are going to be sitting at home watching television. Others are going to be cutting grass. Others doing this thing or that thing—laid back. The Bible says, “A son that sleeps in harvest is a shame to his father.” (Proverbs 10:5) This crusade will only be successful to the degree that you go as the servants of Almighty God, that you, as a servant, you, as a servant, will go to the highways. Find your friends this week, and tell them to come—come celebrate Jesus. Hands: the down-stretched hands of heaven; the upstretched hands from hell; the outstretched hands of this world; and the folded hands of God’s people. May God have mercy! Are you a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ? I’m telling you, folks, “a son that sleeps in harvest is a shame to his father.” (Proverbs 10:5)

Now, think about the king’s willful determination. Several things I want you to see

here.

### **A. The Marriage Will Be Furnished with Guests**

First of all, the marriage will be furnished with guests. Look again at verse 10: *“So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good”*—now, don’t miss this—*“and the wedding was furnished with guests.”* (Matthew 22:10) I want to say, again, your refusal is not going to shut heaven down, and you’re not going to stop the party. You may be in hell while the party’s going on, but the party will go on. The King has determined it. This is the King’s willful determination. So, that’s the first thing I want you to see, is that the party will be furnished with guests.

### **B. The Guests Will Be Furnished with Garments**

But, here’s the second thing I want you to see: the guests will be furnished with garments. It’s very important that you see this as we come to the close this morning. Look in verses 11 and following: *“And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he”*—that is, the man without the wedding garment—*“was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.”* (Matthew 22:11–14)

Now, let’s look at that for just a moment. The guests are going to be furnished with garments. Here’s a man who came to the wedding. Think about it. He wasn’t frivolous about it because he came. He wasn’t full of mockery, nor was he full of hostility. He offered no excuses. He’s there at the wedding party. And, the king comes in, and he looks at the guests. And, there’s a man who’s not dressed right. He’s not wearing a wedding garment. And, he is bound hand and foot and cast away. The Bible says that when the king asked him, “How come you don’t have on a wedding garment?” the man was speechless. Why was he speechless? Because he had nothing to say. I mean, he couldn’t say, “I didn’t know that I was supposed to have on a wedding garment.” He couldn’t say, “I didn’t have time to get a wedding garment.” Nor could he say, “I could not afford a wedding garment.” And, why? In these weddings in that day, the wedding garment was furnished at the door.

Can you imagine? They said, “Go out into the highways. Find the bad and the good, and bid them come to the marriage.” Here’s a beggar down there, a poor, pitiful, penniless beggar. “Friend, how would you like to go to a banquet?” “Where? Any banquet would be fine for me.” “To the palace.” “To the palace? Me? What for?” “Well, the king is going to put on a feast like you’ve never seen before, and he wants you.” “He

wants me, this filthy beggar? He wants me to come? Look at these rags.” “Oh, that’s all right. That’s all right. The king, who has invited you, is the king who will clothe you in splendor. You come—you come.” And there, at the door, the servant says, “Give me those rags! Give me those rags! There. Go to the royal bath, bathe. Take this splendid garment, and put it on, and come celebrate the king’s son.” And, there he comes.

But, I see this man. Evidently, he felt he was all right like he was. “No, thank you. I don’t need that. I prefer to wear what I have on.” And then, with a little indignation, he says, “Do you mean to tell me that I am not dressed well enough?” You see, he represents so many who think they’re coming to the party, but they have never been clothed with the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. They still have on the rags of their own self-righteousness. Listen to Isaiah 61, verse 10: *“I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation.”* (Isaiah 61:10) When you come to the party, it’s not only that you’re bidden. I’m telling you that He will take your rags of self-righteousness, and He will clothe you with the precious righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, which was purchased by the shed blood of Christ on that cross. So, we can say,

*My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.*

*[...]*

*Dressed in His righteousness alone,  
Faultless to stand before the throne.*

—EDWARD MOTE

When you go to the party, friend, you’re going to be dressed just right, because when you accept this invitation that I’m going to give you today, the Lord is going to say, “Yes, and I’ll take your old rags of self-righteousness, and I’ll give you a garment white, clean, pure to come and celebrate Jesus.”

## **Conclusion**

Now, here’s a question. Let me ask you this question: Would you sign this letter? Would you sign it? It’s addressed to the King of heaven:

“Almighty God, I was sitting in Bellevue Baptist Church on April 25, 1999. I heard Adrian Rogers, your servant. He preached a message out of your Bible from Matthew 22. He said that you want to honor your Son. He said there’s going to be a royal wedding, a marriage of the Lamb. He said it’s going to be a royal feast. He said it’s a rich feast. He said it is a ready feast. And, he invited me. But, very frankly, I am not coming. I don’t care to celebrate your Son. Count me out! Have me excused. I don’t want to celebrate Jesus.”

Would you sign that letter? Or would you, on the other hand, say, “Just as I am

without one plea, O Lamb of God, I come to thee.” I’m telling you, friend, there’s going to be a party, and you’re invited. And, if you refuse, you have insulted heaven’s King and you’re guilty of insurrection and have done despite to the Lord of glory. He’s the One who has invited you, and He has a robe for you to wear when you come to the party.†

# The King Is Calling

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** July 10, 1983

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 22:1–14

*“Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.”*

MATTHEW 22:9

## Outline

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## Introduction

Matthew chapter 22. Do you have your Bibles? Wonderful. If you didn't, bring one next time. If you don't have one and can't afford one, come see me. I'll get you one—personally get you one—if you don't have a Bible and can't afford one. Everybody ought to have a Bible, and everybody ought to bring a Bible when they come to church. We don't come to church just to hear a speech, to make an oration, but to look, together, into the Word of God. Matthew chapter 22, beginning in verse 1. Tonight, the title of our message is “The King is Calling.” Now, we know the King is coming, but the King is calling.

*“And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm,*

*another to his merchandise: and the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So the servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to his servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.” (Matthew 22:1–14)*

Now tonight, God has given me a wonderful privilege, and that is to extend to you, on His behalf and on behalf of His dear Son, an indescribably wonderful invitation. It is my good fortune to tell you that you—yes, you—have been invited by the King of heaven to the wedding of His Son. And tonight, I have the good fortune to tell you about it, and I pray that you pray for me, as I tell you that the King has called to you. And our Lord is issuing to you, through this His servant tonight, the most glorious, wonderful, and indescribably magnificent invitation that you could possibly receive.

## **I. The Setting**

Now, let's look at this passage of Scripture—and in order to understand any parable, you have to kind of get the background and the setting. So, first of all, in verses 1 and 2, I want you to see the setting of this parable. And you remember what a parable is: *a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.*

Now, let's look at the scripture: *“Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son.”* (Matthew 22:1–2) So, this is a parable about a wedding. And, we're going to see in a moment that this illustrates the fullness of salvation that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. And the joy and real beauty of a wedding is used to illustrate the glory of eternity with Jesus Christ. The book of the Revelation does the same thing, and you might want to put in your margin “Revelation chapter 19 and verse 7”: *“Let us be glad and rejoice...for the marriage of the Lamb is come.”* (Revelation 19:7)

What a day—what a day that's going to be! How wonderful it's going to be! It is a time of great gladness and of great joy. *“Let us be glad and rejoice...for the marriage of the Lamb is come.”* (Revelation 19:7) There is going to be, absolutely, as surely as Adrian Rogers is standing in this pulpit, an event known as the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, and there's no need whatever for you to be in hell when all that's going on

because, you, my friend, have been invited tonight.

Now, this parable, as we're going to see, was addressed to the Jewish nation, and it has specific application to the Jewish nation. But while it was written nationally, it also has a personal application as well as a national application. It has an application for every person here tonight, for indeed, not only has the Lord invited the people that we call today "the children of Israel," but God has invited every man, woman, boy, and girl upon the face of the earth to the setting—an Oriental wedding.

## II. The Son

Now, the next thing I want you to notice: not only the setting, but the son. Look, again, in verse 2: *"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son."* (Matthew 22:2) Now, the son, here, represents the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Jesus Christ is the royal Son of the King of glory, and it is absolutely important that you understand who God's Son is because your eternal destiny hinges on your relationship not only to God the Father, but to God the Son. *You will never settle the sin question until first of all you have settled the Son question.*

† There are some people who have the idea that they can be right with God without being right with God's Son. I talked with Bill Murray, who was the son—is the son—of Madalyn Murray O'Hair, the famous, or infamous, atheist. Bill Murray and I were in Washington to testify in some hearings on the matter of school prayer, and I watched Bill Murray. And I noticed a sadness in his life, in that there was something about this boy who had been raised in an atheistic home and now was telling everybody that he was a believer, that he believed in God, and that he believed that children ought to be free to pray in school. He and his mother were the principals in that famous Baltimore case that caused the Supreme Court to rule—seemingly, at least—against voluntary prayer in schools. We know the fact of the thing is that voluntary prayer, for the most part, has been removed from our school classroom.

Now, I watched him, and there was something that just didn't seem to ring true. And I was on the subway with him—and I just know that when a man has Jesus in his heart, he has joy in his heart and he has life. My spirit was not bearing witness. I said to this young man, "Bill, I'm supposed to go back to Memphis; you're supposed to go back to Houston. And I will cancel my plane reservations if you'll cancel yours. And I want us to go to a hotel room, and I want to talk to you, son. Will you do it?"

He did. We went into a hotel room. And for several hours, with an open Bible, I talked to him about what it means to be saved and to know Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Savior. And when I finished, I said, "Bill, have you done this?" "Oh," he said, "yes, I believe in God." I said, "Bill, I'm not asking you that. Have you asked Jesus Christ to come into your heart as your Lord and your Savior?" He said, "I believe in God. Isn't



that enough?" I said, "No, it's not enough." I said, "Is Jesus Christ the Lord of your life? Have you ever repented of your sin and received Christ as your personal Savior?" He said, "Not in that sense. I've not done it." I said, "Will you do it?" He thought it over; he hesitated. He said, "No. No, I will not do that. I cannot do that." He said, "If you say that 'Jesus Christ is God, and I believe in God; and He is God,' what difference does it make?" I said, "Bill, it makes a lot of difference. Jesus said, *"No man [can come] to the Father, but by me."* (John 14:6) You cannot honor God the Father without honoring God the Son. And God is interested in His Son. God has said, *'This is my beloved Son...hear ye him.'* (Matthew 17:5) No one comes through the Father except through Jesus, the Son." We prayed; we agonized, and we wept. And that night, he did not say yes to Jesus Christ. He has, since that night. I praise God for that—that he is now testifying that he has had a born-again experience, receiving Christ as his personal Savior and Lord.†

Now, I want to make something clear, dear friend: it is not enough that you say that you believe in God the Father. Let me show you some scriptures here. Look, if you will, in Psalms chapter 2 for just a moment. You know, there are some people who think that the idea of the Son of God is a New Testament concept. But look, if you will, in Psalms chapter 2: *"The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed."* (Psalms 2:2) Do you know what another word for *anointed* is? *Christ*. The Greek word *Christos* is the New Testament counterpart of this Old Testament word *anointed*. A *christened* one is an *anointed* one, so let me read it this way: *"The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against [Jehovah], and...his [Christ]."* (Psalms 2:2) Now, skip on down to verse 12: *"Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."* (Psalms 2:12) In whom? In the Son. *"Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish."* (Psalms 2:12) There is no way that you can escape the fixes of hell and the wrath of God unless you know God's precious, wonderful Son.

Let me show you this same thing in John, the third chapter. Turn to the third chapter of John for a moment. Look with me in some very familiar scriptures. Is there a boy or a girl who does not know John 3:16 by heart? But listen to it in the idea of the parable of Matthew 22. John 3:16: *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him"—God's Son—"should not perish, but have everlasting life"—that's exactly what Psalm 2 has just told us. Listen to verse 17—"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him"—through whom? Through God's Son—"might be saved."* (John 3:16–17) Skip on down to John chapter 3 and verse 36: *"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on*

*him.*” (John 3:36) You might turn to Matthew chapter 17 and verse 5, where God spoke out of the glory and said, *“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.”* (Matthew 17:5) You cannot honor the Father and deny the Son at the same time.

You say, “Well, I don’t understand that.” There may be some Unitarian-minded person, or someone else, who says, “I don’t understand the Christian doctrine of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. I don’t understand how God the Father and God the Son can be coequal and coeternal.” Well, friend, I’m glad there are some things about God that you can’t understand and that I can’t understand. As a matter of fact, *I wouldn’t have any confidence in a God that I could understand.*

Someone has said about the Trinity: “Try to explain it, you’ll lose your mind; deny it, you’ll lose your soul.” God says, *“This is my...Son; hear ye him.”* (Matthew 17:5) *“Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way.”* (Psalms 2:12) Back again in Matthew chapter 22—this is the parable about the Son of God. Verse 2 says, *“The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king, which made a marriage for his son.”* (Matthew 22:2) God loves His Son, and God wants a bride for His Son.

### III. The Serving

Now, the third thing I want you to notice: not only the setting and the son, but I’d like for you to notice the serving. There were some servants, therefore, and verse 3 tells us about them: *“And [he] sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come”—not the servants would not come, but the people would not come, to whom the invitation was given—“Again, he sent forth other servants, saying... Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.”* (Matthew 22:3–4)

Now, who are these servants that the king is sending forth to invite other people to the wedding? Friend, you want to know who the other servants are? Look around. That’s us. The servants are soul winners who have been commissioned by the King of glory to go and invite people to this wedding. And I said tonight, I had a wonderful privilege that is mine, but it is not mine alone—it is yours also. And the great burning, crying need of the hour is not for more preachers to stand behind the pulpit, but for more people in the pew—laymen with the soul winner’s heart and a servant’s heart who will obey the King of heaven and go out and invite people to the marriage of His Son.

Now, listen to me. The great heart of God yearns—*yearns*—for people to come to this wedding. He has invited you. He wants you to come. And, therefore, it is our duty, it is our obligation, and it is our responsibility to invite all that we know to this wedding. You are never more like the Son than when you’re out winning souls.

Now, this month—I don’t know whether you’ve noticed the posters or not—but it’s built around the idea of hands. The first month, those hands were reaching up. The next

month, those hands on that plaque and that poster were reaching inward. This month, they're reaching outward. There are some hands that cause my heart to be concerned, that move me; they are the down-stretched hands of the Savior—the nail-pierced hands, as He stretches forth His hands to us, as He says, “Go, invite people.” But not only are there the down-stretched hands from heaven; there are the upstretched hands from hell. Did you know that the people in hell are concerned about soul winning? In the sixteenth chapter of the book of Luke, there's a man in hell who said, “Send somebody to warn my brothers, lest they come to this place of torment.” (Luke 16:28) And in hell, there are hands that are stretched up, imploring us to go and to preach.

Friend, not only are there the down-stretched hands of the Savior and the upstretched hands of the lost, but there are the outstretched hands of the people without Christ—people who are stretching out their hands to you and saying, “Come over and help.” Now, they may not literally stretch their hands out, and they may not do it with their voice; but if you will watch, we're living in a world of people who are hurting. And they are agonizing, and they are just like you. You came to Christ. You're happy in Jesus. You're glad that somebody told you about Jesus. And the world is filled with people just like you who are waiting for someone to go. The down-stretched hands from heaven, the upstretched hands from hell, and the outstretched hands of a lost world, saying, “Come over and help us.” And I tell you, the hands that really concern me are the folded hands of our members. We sit here—complacent, fat, sleek, well-fed, well-housed sheep. “This is a day of good tidings, and surely some mischief is going to come upon you if we hold our peace.” (2 Kings 7:9) One of these days, we're going to face our Lord with bloody hands, unless we witness, unless we are the key servants to go out and tell them that the royal invitation has been issued from the King of glory.

¶ There was a preacher who kept, in his study, a painting. The painting was of a shipwreck, and there were lifeboats out there. And there were sailors in the lifeboats, and there were people in the water floating around on bits of the boat and bits of debris. And the men in the lifeboats were reaching out, and, with their hands, they were grasping the hands of those in the water so as to pull them in the boat; and their hands were joined. A little boy came into the study, and he looked at that painting of those in the lifeboats reaching down to those in the water. And being a little boy, not understanding about shipwrecks, he said to his daddy—he said, “Daddy, are they trying to save those people by just shaking hands with them?”¶

I wonder about us—I mean, when souls are perishing. It's all right, friend, to have friends. It's all right to glad-hand people. It's all right to welcome people and say, “We're glad to have you here.” But I tell you, that person sitting next to you tonight may be lost and on the road to hell. And wouldn't it be a shame—wouldn't it be a crime—if all we do is shake hands with them rather than to rescue the perishing and care for the dying and

we don't so live, and don't so pray, and don't so witness that those people who sometimes occupy the seat next to us are going to die and go to hell because we really didn't care, we were so anxious to get out during the invitation, or we let our mind gather wool when the preacher is pleading for souls, and we don't pray, "God have mercy upon us"?

The servants are soul winners. The need of the hour is men and women with a servant's heart who will hear things of heaven and go to the invitation.

## **IV. The Supper**

Now, the fourth thing I want you to notice—I want you to notice the supper. Look again in verse 4: "*Again, he sent forth the servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.*" (Matthew 22:4) Now, the supper represents the joy of salvation. Remember, I've already told you that the book of the Revelation says, "The marriage of the lamb is come. Let us rejoice and be glad." (Revelation 19:7) Now, if you're not a Christian, listen to me, please. When I invite you to Jesus Christ, I am not inviting you to a funeral; I'm inviting you to feast. My dinner is now ready. There are some people who get the idea that in order to be saved they have to stop having joy. Notice what this feast is.

### **A. A Royal Feast**

First of all, it's a royal feast—a feast. The King of heaven has invited you to an occasion. You've been invited to the "White House." And I want to tell you that I'm so blessed when an invitation comes to my desk with that kind of invitation on it, and there, it's from the president of the United States. That impresses me. But, my friend, that's insignificant. To think that the God of heaven—God—has invited you to a royal feast.

### **B. A Rich Feast**

But not only is it a royal feast; it is a rich feast. He says—look at it: "*My oxen and my fatlings are killed.*" (Matthew 22:4) Do you know what that means? That's not pork and beans, folks; that's not tube steak. That's the best. That is the best of the very best—a royal feast, a rich feast.

You remember the wedding feast in John, the second chapter, when Jesus provided the refreshments. They ran out of wine—not intoxicating wine. It's not what it was now. But Jesus turned water into wine. And when the host, the master of ceremonies—when he tasted it, he said, "I've never tasted anything like this before." Can you imagine what it's going to be like when He prepares the whole meal, folks? I mean, the whole thing—from hors d'oeuvres all the way to the finish, from the dessert and the refreshments, as well as the feast.

### C. A Ready Feast

Look at it again: “*All things are ready*”—verse 4—“*come unto the marriage.*” (Matthew 22:4) You see, friend, I’m not inviting you to something that you have to beg God for and perhaps He’ll save you and perhaps He won’t. It’s ready. It’s for you. He has prepared it. He sent me to invite you, and He’s told you to invite others. He wants you to come in so that the wedding may be filled.

Oh, the joy of salvation! I’m not about to tell you that if you come to Jesus Christ, you’re not going to have any troubles. You’re going to have trouble whether you come to Jesus Christ or whether you don’t, friend. “*Man that is born of woman is...full of trouble.*” (Job 14:1) But I’m telling you that if you come to Jesus Christ, regardless of what troubles come your way, you’re going to have “*joy unspeakable...full of glory.*” (1 Peter 1:8)

A man named Mr. L. B. Bridgers lost his family in a wild and tragic fire, but later on he wrote these words:

*There’s within my heart a melody  
Jesus whispers sweet and low:  
Fear not, I am with thee, peace, be still,  
in all of life’s ebb and flow.*

*Jesus, Jesus, Jesus,  
sweetest name I know,  
fills my every longing,  
keeps me singing as I go.*

—LUTHER B. BRIDGERS

This was after his wife and family were lost in a fire. Friend, tragedy may come to us. Heartache may come to us all. Sickness may come to us all. Sorrow may come to us all. But only joy comes to those who know Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour. And His salvation, here, is a feast—a royal feast, a rich feast, and a ready feast—verse 4.

### V. The Scoffing

But now, the next thing I want you to notice: not only the supper (verse 4), but I want you to notice the scoffing (verses 5 and 6). You would think that people would be thrilled to come to this supper, but notice in verse 5: “*But they made light of it, and went their ways*”—they scoffed; they sneered at it; they sniffed at it—“*one to his farm, another to his merchandise: and the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.*” (Matthew 22:5–6) It’s almost unbelievable, it’s inconceivable, that men would treat the King of glory—their Creator, their Ruler, their Sovereign—this way; but indeed, they did. And indeed, they do.

And I want you to notice the progressive steps of their unbelief. Look, for example, in verse 3: *“And [he] sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.”* (Matthew 22:3) That’s indifference. But now, notice in verse 5: *“But they made light of it”* (Matthew 22:5)—that’s mockery. And now, notice verse 6: *“And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them”* (Matthew 22:6)—that’s hostility. Do you see the progressive hardening of the heart? First of all, indifference to the call of God; secondly, mockery at the call of God; thirdly, hostility to the invitation of God. What is our Lord showing us in this parable? He’s showing us that when a man hears an invitation from the King of heaven, if he is indifferent to that invitation, if he does not receive that invitation, he doesn’t stay just where he is; his heart becomes increasingly harder. The Bible says in Hebrews chapter 3 and verse 7: *“To day if ye will hear [God’s] voice, Harden not your hearts.”* (Hebrews 3:7–8)

¶ We used to tell a story about Mr. Fridtjof Nansen, who was an explorer from Oslo, Norway. Mr. Nansen went to the Arctic, and he left his wife there in Oslo. They did not have the modern means of communication—helicopters and radios and things—in that day. And this man, who was an explorer, went, and for over two years—thirty long months—she had not heard from her husband. She did not know whether he was dead or alive, perhaps frozen in some arctic waste. She sat and waited and prayed. But on a given day, as she sat by her windowsill, a little dove circled by her house and made his way down to that particular windowsill, that one windowsill in all of the earth that he was trained to come to, because he was a homing pigeon. And that dove lighted on that windowsill and pecked on the glass panes.

When she saw it, she threw open the window, reached out, and gathered that little feathery arrow into her hands, and she kissed that dove again, and again, and again, and again. And she kissed it, and she looked down on its leg; and there was a little twill tied to the leg of that dove. And in there was a little tissue paper. With trembling hands, she unfolded that tissue paper and read these words: “All is well.” That’s all it said: “All is well.” But can you imagine the joy of receiving that message? Now, could you, in your wildest imagination, imagine Mrs. Fridtjof Nansen sitting there in her chair when that little dove would come and light and peck on her windowsill? Can you imagine her continuing to go on with her knitting, going on with her cooking, and not paying any attention to that little animal just gently pecking, wanting to come in? Or, even more, can you imagine her, in hostility, driving it away? I want to tell you, my dear friend, that the Holy Spirit is God’s dove sent from heaven to tell you that God loves you. There’s a message from God.¶

The Holy Spirit is gentle. Don’t ignore Him. Don’t drive him away. Don’t be indifferent to the calling of God. You may so insult the Holy Spirit—you may so drive the Holy Spirit

away—that He will not speak to you again. God says, *“My spirit shall not always strive with man.”* (Genesis 6:3) I cannot believe that human beings would treat an invitation from glory the way these human beings treated that king in that day. And yes, I can believe it, because I’ve done enough witnessing to know that some will be indifferent, others will scoff and scorn, and some will be absolutely hostile. The Bible says, *“The time will come when they who kill you will think they will do God a favor.”* (John 16:2)

## **VI. The Sentence**

Now, the next thing I want you to see, not only the scoffing, but I want you to see the sentence. Notice in verse 7: *“But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.”* (Matthew 22:7) Now, what is Jesus telling us in this parable? Is God a God of love? Yes, He is, but God is also a God of justice, He’s also a God of wrath, and He’s also a God of holiness. And you cannot trample under your feet the blood of His Son; you cannot do despite unto His Holy Spirit and not face the wrath of a holy God. (Hebrews 10:29) And so, here is God’s invitation that has turned to indignation.

Do you know why Jesus’ heart was broken as He sat upon the Mount of Olives? You see, you’re going to have to understand Matthew chapter 22 in the light of Matthew chapter 23. You see, Jesus knew that the people of that day that had stoned the prophets would crucify Him and they would reject the invitation of God’s King. He gave us this parable in Matthew chapter 22. And then, look, if you will, in chapter 23, and begin reading in verse 37. Here is what the Lord Jesus is saying, with salty tears forcing down His cheeks—remember that king destroyed their city: *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.”* (Matthew 23:37–38) Jesus knew what was going to happen. This is why Jesus wept. Jesus prophesied not one stone would be left upon another. (Matthew 24:2; Mark 13:2; Luke 21:6)

In the next chapter of Matthew, in 70 AD, the words of Jesus were fulfilled. Titus, the Roman governor, came, and judgment fell. The streets of Jerusalem flowed with blood, like water runs down the gutters of Memphis, Tennessee, after a heavy rain. There were thousands upon thousands, upon thousands, upon thousands of crosses that were erected in that city. On every cross there was a crucifixion, as the Romans took the inhabitants to that city and nailed them on crosses. Don’t think Jesus was the only one nailed upon a cross. History tells us that there were so many crosses made that there were not enough trees to make any more crosses. They cut down the trees. The blood ran through the city. They destroyed the crops. Cannibalism stalked Jerusalem after the

onslaughts of Titus so that people were killing and eating their own children and killing and eating one another. Jesus knew that it would happen. Jesus said, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! How often would I have gathered you, but you would not! You would not.” (Matthew 23:37; Luke 13:34) Chapter 22, verse 7 tells us that the king was wroth: “[The king] was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers.” (Matthew 22:7)

Now, Titus was a pagan, and Rome was a pagan government. Somehow we get the idea, because we are, quote, “a Christian country,” that somehow we’re God’s little darlings, and the Russians, or the Chinese, or the Cubans can’t do anything to us. Don’t you kid yourself. “Unto whomsoever much [has been] given, of [the same] shall...much [be] required.” (Luke 12:48) And there’s nothing to say that we might not suffer a holocaust in this country worse than anything that happened to the Jews in that day. We have had a word from God. There’s been more preaching in America than any other country. You can tune your radio, you can tune your television, you can go to your bookstore—you can, anywhere—Bibles are everywhere. I’m preaching on the radio, but I tell you, what we have in America, we have those, number one, who are indifferent; we have, number two, those who scoff; and we have, number three, those who are absolutely hostile. And the King of heaven sees it, and I wonder how long He’s going to hold back His judgment. “For unto whomsoever much is given, of [the same] shall...much [be] required.” (Luke 12:48) That is the sentence.

## VII. The Saved

But now, I want you to notice the saved. Look, if you will, in verses 8 through 10: “Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage”—now, that’s what I’m doing; that’s what you’re doing. That’s what we’re up to. Anybody that we find, young or old, rich or poor, invite them to the marriage—“So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both good and bad: and the wedding was furnished with guests.” (Matthew 22:8–10)

Pay attention to me. You’re not going to stop God with what He’s up to, and God is going to build His Church. “I will build my church.” (Matthew 16:18) Every now and then, I hear people say, “Well, the Christian era is over, and the Church is on its way out.” That’s absolutely, totally ridiculous. If you won’t receive the gospel, somebody else will. And I want to tell you that if you refuse Jesus Christ, you’re not going to shut heaven down; you’re just going to shut you out; that’s all. “The wedding was furnished with guests.” (Matthew 22:10) “I will build my church.” (Matthew 16:18) People are going to be saved. And the fact that you do not come to this wedding doesn’t mean that there’s not going to be a wedding, and it does not mean that the God of glory is not going to



have a bride for His Son. But the point is, why should you be lost while others are being saved? Why should you miss this blessing? Because anybody may be saved. You may refuse, if you will, but others are not going to refuse. And there will be many in heaven, and you can be one of them.

## **VIII. The Speechless**

Now, the last thing I want you to notice: not only the saved, but I want you to notice the speechless. Look, if you will, in verse 11: *“And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless”*—the man was speechless—*“Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”* (Matthew 22:11–13)

Now, here’s a strange man. He doesn’t fit in the first category of those who are, number one, indifferent; those, number two, who are mocking; and those, number three, who are hostile. This man was invited, and he said, “All right, all right, I’ll come,” and he came. And the king comes in and looks at him and says, “What are you doing here without a wedding garment on?” And you need to understand an Oriental wedding. In an Oriental wedding—and especially the wedding of a king—the wedding garment was provided by the host. In that day, you didn’t provide your own food, and you didn’t provide your own wedding garments. As you would come to the door, you would be given a beautiful change of clothing so no matter who you were, you would not appear before the king without a beautiful garment on.

Now, what happened to this man was this: that he had refused the wedding garment that was offered to him. He tried to get into the wedding without the wedding garment. Now, the Bible says, when the king said to him, “How did you come in here without a wedding garment?” he was speechless (Matthew 22:12); that means he had no excuse. He couldn’t say he didn’t know because the wedding garments were there at the door. He couldn’t say he had no time, for he had time then. He could not say that he didn’t have any money, for the wedding garment was free.

Now, there are some of you who are sitting in this church tonight who have never been saved, never been born again, and you think that the whole message has been to everybody else. You say, “Well, I’m not one of those indifferent, I’m not one of those mockers, and I’m not one of those hostile people. I’m going.” Well, I want to ask you a question: Do you have a wedding garment? Have you been clothed with salvation? You see, there are some of you who are going to be absolutely speechless when you stand before the King of heaven because you’re religious, but you are lost; you’re a church member, but you’ve never been born again. You’re dressed in the rags of your self-

righteousness rather than the wedding garment of His righteousness.

## Conclusion

Now, let me give you a verse of Scripture. Isaiah chapter 61 and verse 10: *“I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness.”* (Isaiah 61:10) Can you say that: *“He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe or righteousness”?* (Isaiah 61:10)

*When He shall come with trumpet sound,  
Oh may I then in Him be found.  
Dressed in His righteousness alone,  
Faultless to stand before the throne.*

—EDWARD MOTE

Sad, indeed, it will be for those who go to hell who were indifferent to the gospel. Tragic, indeed, it will be for those who suffer eternity without Christ who made light of the gospel. Pitiful, indeed, it will be for those who will go to hell who were hostile to the gospel. But, doubly tragic, horribly pitiful, for those who sang in the choir, for those who served as deacons, for those who preached the gospel, for those who gave of their money, for those who acted as ushers and all of the rest of it, who were religious but lost, and somehow think that they can come to the wedding without a wedding garment.

I'm not trying to make you doubt your salvation, but I want to ask you a question: Do you know you're saved? How do you know you're saved? Because you walked down some aisle and shook hands with a preacher? That can't save you. Because you're baptized? That can't save you. Because you're a member of Bellevue? That can't save you. You know the plan of salvation? That can't save you. *You're not saved by the plan of salvation; you're saved by the man of salvation, and His name is Jesus.* You can know the plan. A lot of people know the plan; they're not saved. I'm asking you: Do you have a wedding garment?

One of these days, you're going to stand before Him, and the Judgment will be there, and the wedding of the Lamb will be there, and you will realize that you have utterly no excuse. You can't say that you didn't know because I told you so. You can't say because you didn't have time because you have time tonight. You can't say, well, you didn't have any money to buy a garment because the garment is free. The King of heaven has sent an invitation.

I'm finished, but let me ask this question: Would you sign this letter? Listen. Would you sign this letter to the King of heaven? That's to whom it's addressed: "While sitting in Bellevue Baptist Church on Sunday night, July the 10th, 1983, I received a very pressing invitation from your servant, Adrian Rogers, to the marriage of your only

begotten Son. I pray thee, have me excused.” Would you sign that letter? “On July the 10th, 1983, I received a pressing invitation from your servant, Adrian Rogers, who invited me to the marriage of your Son. Have me excused. I don’t wish to come.”

You say, “No, I’d never sign it.” Well, friend, whether you sign it or not, you’ve done just as well if, tonight, you don’t give your heart to Jesus Christ.†

# The King Is Calling

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: August 2, 1992**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 22:1-14**

**Main Scripture Verse:** *“And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son.”*

Matthew 22:1-2

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## Introduction

Take God’s Word tonight, and be finding Matthew chapter 22, would you, please? When you’ve found it, look up here—Matthew chapter 22.

You never know what you’re going to get when you open the mail. I went to the mailbox some time ago—actually, the year was 1986; the month was September—and I opened the mail. There was a very special envelope there, and up in the corner it said “The White House.” And when I opened the mail, it was an invitation, and this is what it said. It said, “The President and Mrs. Reagan request the pleasure of the company of Dr. and Mrs. Rogers at dinner on Wednesday, September 10, 1986, at 7:30 o’clock.” And then, in the left-hand corner, it said, “Black tie.” “Well,” I said, “Joyce, how about this? They want us to come to the White House to dinner.”

And I can tell you, we did go. And I can tell you, it was a very interesting affair. And we got there, and there was a long line of limousines. It was one of those state dinners, and those limousines were lined up and letting people out. And Joyce and I arrived in a rag-tag taxi. But once we got inside, no one else knew the difference, because I had a black tie just like everybody else and a beautiful wife by my side. It was a thrill, and I would be less than honest if I did not tell you that it was a thrill to go to a state dinner in the Rose Garden of the White House. But what I thrilled to at that time is nothing to be compared to what God has prepared for every one of us described here in this twenty-second chapter of the Gospel of Matthew.

And as God's envoy tonight, I want to issue to you the greatest invitation, I believe, that you'll ever receive. I want you to see what it says: *"And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables,"*—now, let's just pause right there and say that, you know what a parable is? It's a story laid down alongside something else, and it's very close to the word *parallel*, so there's a truth here. And there's a story that parallels that truth called a *parable*. Someone has well described a *parable* as "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning." That is, there's more than meets the eye in a parable. Now Jesus, the Master Teacher, taught often by parables—*"and [he] said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: and the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen."* (Matthew 22:1–14)

The King is calling, and He's calling you. I want you to see some things tonight as we look at this parable.

## I. The Setting

First of all, I want you to see the setting of it. The setting in this parable is an Oriental wedding, and the Lord is saying that salvation is like a wedding. And, right out, I want to tell you, dear friend, that our Lord is inviting you to a feast and not a funeral when our Lord invites you to salvation. He's saying that salvation is like a wedding, because, you see, a wedding is a thing of joy and rapture. And God has chosen this to illustrate the joys, the thrills, of knowing our Lord. As a matter of fact, when we get to heaven, one of the things that we're going to enjoy in heaven is what the Bible calls the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. You can read about that in Revelation chapter 19, verse 7, where the Bible says, "*Let us be glad and rejoice...for the marriage of the Lamb is come.*" (Revelation 19:7) So, when I invite you to salvation, when I offer this invitation to you tonight, it's not something that is morose. There's something wonderful that's going on, and there's something even more wonderful that's going to happen: the marriage of the Lamb. And, my precious friend, I don't want you to be in hell when all of that is going on. I don't want you to miss it.

Now in this parable here—and we're just talking about the setting—Jesus is talking to the Jewish people, and He is warning them against refusing His offer of salvation. And so the primary application is to the Jew, but it is more than national; it can also be personal, and it is certainly universal. And there are certain universal principles that are here tonight.

## II. The Son

And so I want us to see, as we jump right into it, I want us to see, first of all, the key person in this parable. Look, if you will, in verse 2: "*The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son.*" (Matthew 22:2) Now the key in this parable is the son of the king, and it represents the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the royal Son of the King of heaven. You don't have to be too bright or too intelligent to figure that out. And what this parable is teaching, my dear friend, is your eternal destiny—are you listening?—your eternal destiny hinges on God's Son and your relationship to Him.

Now the problem is the sin question, but you cannot solve the sin question until you relate yourself to the Son question. You don't have any chance of salvation—you have no hope of heaven—apart from the Son of God. The entire Bible was written to tell you about the Son of God: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The hero of the Bible is God's Son. I was reading recently in Psalm 2 and verse 7 where God the Father speaks to the Lord Jesus and says, "*Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.*" (Psalm 2:7) And in prophecy, God the Father speaks of the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and His incarnation: "*Thou art my Son.*" (Psalm 2:7) And He goes on to say in that same second

psalm, warning the nations, *“Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way.”* (Psalm 2:12) That’s the Old Testament, but it speaks of the Son of God.

And then you come to the New Testament, that classic passage, John chapter 3 and verse 16, where it says, *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him”—in God’s Son—“should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him”—through God’s Son—“might be saved.”* (John 3:16–17) And that’s the reason the Bible says in John chapter 3 and verse 36, *“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life;”—but listen to this—“but the wrath of God abideth on him.”* (John 3:36) There is no possible way that you can be right with the King without being right with the King’s Son. That’s what this parable is going to tell us. And, you see, when the Lord Jesus Christ was transfigured, God the Father spoke out of heaven, and God the Father said in Matthew chapter 17 and verse 5, *“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”* (Matthew 17:5)

Jesus is the Son of God, and being the Son of God makes Him co-equal and co-eternal with God. My son is like me. He’s not a cow. He’s not a bird. He’s not a Buick. He’s not a saxophone. He is my son. Therefore, because he’s my son, he’s of the same nature and essence as I am. Jesus Christ is the very Son of God. You say, “Well, I don’t understand that. Do we worship one God or three Gods?” Friend, we worship one God who has revealed Himself as three persons for all eternity. Jesus did not become the Son of God at Bethlehem. He has always been the Son of God. If God is the everlasting Father, then an everlasting Father has to have an everlasting Son. You say, “I don’t understand it.” Well, congratulations! I don’t understand it either. As a matter of fact, I was reading recently in the book of Isaiah, where God says, “What are you going to compare me with?” (Isaiah 46:5) Somebody says, “What’s it like?” It’s not like anything. You say, “Well, I don’t understand it.” Don’t let that worry you. Einstein didn’t understand electricity; neither do you. I heard Dr. Havner say one time, “I don’t understand electricity, but I’m not going to sit around in the dark until I do.” Somebody has said, concerning the Trinity, “Try to define it, you lose your mind. Deny it, you lose your soul.” *“This is my beloved Son.”* (Matthew 17:5) There’s a King. He made a supper for His Son.

### **III. The Servants**

Not only do I want you to see the son, but I want you to see the servants. Look, if you will, in verse 3: *“And [he] sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.”* (Matthew 22:3) Do you know what the need of the hour today is? It is for servants who are willing to issue the wedding invitation. God is sending forth His

servants. The servants are soul winners, but you'll not be a soul winner without a servant spirit. Do you want to be like Jesus? Do you? I don't believe that you're ever more like Jesus than when you're seeking the lost. Jesus Christ said of Himself in Luke 19, verse 10, *"The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."* (Luke 19:10) My dear friend, if you want to be like the Lord Jesus Christ, you need to be a servant, doing what the King of heaven wants you to do: going out and saying, "There's a supper, a royal supper, and you have been invited."

Look at your hands tonight. There are some hands, when I think about them, that bother me. Let me tell you what hands bother me, that cause me concern: the down-stretched hands of Almighty God, as He stretches out His hands in supplication to His Church; the nail-pierced hands, as the Lord says, *"Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"* (Isaiah 6:8) I'll tell you, some other hands that bother me are the upstretched hands from the very pit of hell, as there's a man described in Luke 16 who says, "I have some brothers who are not saved. Send somebody to warn them, lest they come to this place." (Luke 16:28) I'll tell you some other hands that bother me. They're outstretched hands. There are people who are saying, "Come over and help us. Give us the message." And I'll tell you, there are people in this world who would shout for joy to hear the message that puts some people to sleep in the pew: stretched-out hands, saying, "Come help us." But I'll tell you, the hands that bother me the most are the folded hands of God's people. We're not servants. We're not taking the message. We're not sharing the message of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I was reading the other day that in almost every city in America today there is a Buddhist temple. Have you ever seen a fat Buddha? I've got some Baptists I'd like to volunteer to be the idol: "Feed me, pastor." Friend, I don't care what else you do—I don't care how well you sing; I don't care how eloquently you teach; I care not how circumspectly you walk; I care not how sacrificially you give—if you're not endeavoring to win souls to Jesus Christ, you're not right with God. You say, "Well, God didn't call me to be a soul winner; God called me to be a preacher, a teacher; God called me to be a singer." There's nothing wrong with you that an old-fashioned revival or a good dose of salvation wouldn't cure. Friend, you are to be a servant, and a servant is to go with the message. And that servant is to say, "There is a King, and that King has made a marriage for His Son; and you have been invited."

#### **IV. The Supper**

Not only do I want you to see the son, and the servants, but I want you to see the supper. Look, if you will, in verse 4: *"Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are*



*bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.*" (Matthew 22:4) Now, as I told you as we introduced this, God likened salvation to a wedding, to a feast, not to a funeral. I want you to see what kind of a feast it is.

### **A. A Royal Feast**

It is a royal feast—it is a royal feast. It is the King who's made this feast. Don't feel sorry, friend, if you're excluded from this place or in that place. The King of heaven has invited you, and there's no greater honor.

### **B. A Rich Feast**

But not only is a royal feast, friend; it's a rich feast. Look at it—look at it. He says, "I have killed my oxen and my fatlings." What does that mean? Friend, that's the best of the best. He's talking about filet mignon. "I have killed my oxen, my fatlings." Do you know what it would mean for a man to kill an oxen? You see, God loves us so incredibly. I was thinking this afternoon when I was thinking about this, at the wedding feast, when the Lord Jesus stepped in and just provided the refreshments, He didn't provide the whole entrée—just the wine. And the master of ceremonies said, "Hey, I never tasted anything like this before." Friend, you wait till you get to the marriage supper when He goes all the way from soup to nuts—I mean, when He does the whole thing. That's just an illustration—just an illustration.

### **C. A Ready Feast**

You see, my dear friend, it's a royal feast. It's a rich feast. And it is a ready feast. Look in verse 4. He says, "It's all ready. All things are ready. Come to the marriage." (Matthew 22:4) You don't have to wait till tomorrow to be saved. As a matter of fact, the Bible warns you about boasting about tomorrow. (Proverbs 27:1) The Bible says, "*Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*" (2 Corinthians 6:2) "*To day, if ye will hear [God's] voice, harden not your hearts.*" (Hebrews 3:15; Hebrews 4:7)

I'll tell you one thing about Joyce: She's a great cook. She's one of the finest homemakers the world has ever known. But I tell her she has this little peccadillo, this little idiosyncrasy: When she gets it ready, she says, "Come"—she means it. "Come! I mean, it's ready! I've been in here getting everything ready. You've been in there watching television, reading the paper, doing this and that. It's ready! That doesn't mean, go wash your hands; it means they ought to be washed already. Come on! It's ready—it's ready!" How much more this royal feast, this rich feast, it's a ready feast! And, my dear friend, if you sit in this church tonight as an unsaved man, an unsaved woman, and you postpone salvation, you've done great

despite to heaven's King. He says, "I have killed my oxen. I have killed my fatlings. I mean, dinner is served! Come—and come now!" And, my friend, what a libel it is to God to say, "Well, if I come, you know, I just have to pay such a price. I don't know whether I want to be an ol' Christian." Are you kidding? Like one woman said, "You know, I'd like to have religion. I just dread the process." Friend, *I would be a Christian if there were no heaven and if there were no hell—there are both—but just to know the Lord Jesus Christ in this world.*

You say, "Well, pastor, does that mean if I give my heart to Jesus Christ, if I trust Christ, I'll not have any problems?" No, you'll have problems. Everybody has problems. But, friend, the Christian—the Christian—has a vital relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ that turns his problems into blessings, eventually. L. B. Bridges lost his wife and family in a fire. And, Brother Jim, he wrote a song the same night, the same day, in which his family died in a terrible fire. We sing that song, and I love to sing it. You know what it says? Listen to it:

There's within my heart a melody  
Jesus whispers sweet and low:  
"Fear not, I am with thee, peace, be still,  
In all of life's ebb and flow."

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus,  
Sweetest name I know,  
Fills my every longing,  
Keeps me singing as I go.  
—LUTHER B. BRIDGES

## V. The Scoffers

Friend, it's a royal feast. It's a rich feast. It's a ready feast. But I want you see something else: Not only the supper, but I want you to see the scoffers. Look in verses 5 and 6: "*But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: and the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.*" (Matthew 22:5–6) It's almost unbelievable that people would have done this. I mean, here's a king, he makes a supper for his son, an exquisite supper to honor his son. He invites these people. Will they come? No, let me tell you what they do—and I want you to see these three steps here.

## A. Indifference

First of all, there's indifference. Look, if you will, in verse 3: *"They would not come."* (Matthew 22:3) They just don't come. That's all. They're just indifferent. *"They would not come."*

## B. Mockery

But now, wait a minute. I want you to see what happens to this indifference. Look in verse 5: *"They made light of it."* (Matthew 22:5) An indifference now turns to mockery.

## C. Hostility

But it's not finished yet. I want you to see this evolution, this progression. Look, if you will, in verse 6, the last part of it: *"And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them."* (Matthew 22:6) Indifference, mockery, hostility: It will happen every time. When God the Father speaks to you, and you're indifferent, you just don't remain there. Either you're going to respond to what God says, or your heart is going to get a little harder. You're going to get a little further away from God. And where you have just simply been indifferent and walked out and refused the Lord Jesus Christ, after a while, in order to justify that indifference, you're going to start making light of the things of God. You're going to start saying things like, "Well, all they want down there at that church is your money. Old Rogers, he's a hypocrite. That *bla-bla-bla-bla—this* thing or *that* thing." Or, "I don't believe that Bible. It's full of contradictions." Or, "You know, this crowd, they can't even get together." And you begin to mock, to be flippant about things of God. Just keep on, and you'll join that godless gang, that Christ-less clique, that would persecute the Church of the Lord Jesus. And there are plenty of them out there. And I heard a politician in this city speak of you and of me recently as "that fundamentalist bunch," like somehow we're part of the danger in this community because we say it's wrong to kill little babies and because it's wrong to live a certain sexual lifestyle. And you're going to find that there comes to those who will not receive heaven's King and honor the Son of heaven's King, not only is there an indifference; there comes to be a mockery, and then an absolute antipathy, a hatred, to the things of God.

That's what Psalm 1 is talking about. Have you ever looked at the progression of evil in Psalm 1? You see, he's walking along with the ungodly. That's just his way of life. And then, he stands in the way of sinners. Their ungodliness turns to activity. Now, they're living a sinful life. And then, finally, he is seated in the seat of the scornful. (Psalm 1:1)

If you're here tonight without Jesus Christ, if you're listening by radio, or if, perchance, you get hold of a tape and you're listening to this tape right now as you're driving down the highway, if you are one who is indifferent, I beg you come to Jesus now. But if you are one,

my dear friend, who's making light of the things of God, I want to warn you with all of the urgency, emergency, of my soul, you're in deadly danger. But if you're one that has hostility to the things of God, the rest of this parable is a warning for you. And I want you to listen to it very carefully, because here you see the progression of sin.

## VI. The Sentence

Notice, first of all, there's the son. Then, there are the servants. Then, there's the supper. And then, there's the scoffing. Now, let's continue to read here and listen to the sentence. See what heaven's King does here in verse 7—look at it: *“But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.”* (Matthew 22:7) What is Jesus Christ teaching in this parable? He's teaching that a holy God will not continue to be mocked.

You say, “Well, I thought God is love.” God is love. He's infinite love, indescribable love, fathomless love. But the love of God is only part of the truth. The Bible also speaks of the wrath of God. And *when you take of the truth, and make part of the truth all of the truth, that part of the truth becomes an untruth.* My dear friend, God, who offers you a gracious invitation tonight, is a God who is a holy God, and He will not be mocked. And, according to verse 7, there comes a time when invitation turns to indignation. And here God is angry with the wicked who refuse the invitation to come to salvation.

I believe that Jesus told this parable in chapter 22 with a broken heart. Let me show you something very interesting. Just turn the page and go to chapter 23, and I want you to see what happened in chapter 23. Jesus is warning them about their city being burned; He's warning them about being destroyed. And Jesus now comes down from the Mount of Olives. He pauses. He looks down at that city, and copious tears begin to come down His cheeks. And this is what Jesus says as He convulses in sorrow. He says, *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”* (Matthew 23:37–39)

Now, go back and look at what Jesus said here in verse 7: *“When the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.”* (Matthew 22:7) What is Jesus talking about? Well, my dear friend, in just a few years, in 70 AD, the Romans were going to come. Judgment fell upon Jerusalem, and blood flowed through the streets of Jerusalem like water flows down the gutter after a hard rain. And thousands of crosses lined the city streets. They ran out of wood to crucify the Israeli

people on—the Jews on. They cut off the city from food. Cannibalism stalked the city. Jerusalem was burned. And Jesus, when He gave this parable, He was the Son of God. He had come, but He was refused and rejected. And not only were they indifferent, and not only did they mock, but they came with hostility. And our Lord warned of the judgment that would come. You see the sentence in verse 7.

## **VII. The Salvation**

But now, look in verses 8 and following, and you're going to see the salvation; you're going to see the saved. There are some who refused; they would not come. Does that stop heaven's King? Not at all! Look, if you will, in verse 8: *"Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests."* (Matthew 22:8-10)

Now, get this, if you don't get anything else tonight: My dear friend, heaven will be filled—heaven will be filled. You may refuse to give your heart to Jesus Christ; you may spurn the invitation, but others will come. And if you pass by your opportunity of salvation, that's all right. You can do as you wish. You can die and go to hell. You may be lost, but others will be saved. And your refusal will not shut heaven down; it will only shut you out. There is an elect. There are people who will be saved. We don't have to guess about it; we don't have to doubt about it. My dear friend, God will have a Church for the Lord Jesus Christ, a bride for the Lord Jesus Christ. There are those who will come. And that blesses me to know that. And one of these days, dear friend, we're going to sit, if we're saved, with that company in heaven at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, and we're going to give Him glory and honor and praise, and feast there together. You can refuse if you want. You can be indifferent if you want. You can mock if you want. You can be hostile if you want. But I'll tell you, dear friend, there are others who will hear the invitation. There are others out there in the highways and the hedges, good and bad, whose heart will leap with joy when they hear what they've been invited to—and they will come. Now the question is, why should some go to heaven and you go to hell—when God has invited you?

## **VIII. The Speechless**

I want you to see how this story takes a strange turn here, though. I want you to see another category: Not only the scoffers, and not only the saved; but I want you to see the speechless. Look in verse 11: *"And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in*

*hither not having a wedding garment? And he”—that is, the man without the wedding garment—“was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 22:11–13)*

Now here’s another category of man. This man was not indifferent—he came. He’s not a mocker; he doesn’t make light of it. He certainly doesn’t kill the servants and treat them shamefully. He’s not hostile to the things of God. He comes to the wedding. And when he comes to the wedding, the king comes out, and there the man stands in his street clothes. And the king looks at him, and he says, “Why did you come in without a wedding garment?”

Now you have to understand how a king would have a wedding in this day. And in this day, when the king would invite somebody to a wedding, they may not be able to find the appropriate clothing to wear. You know, when Ronald Reagan says, “Wear black tie,” if you don’t have one, you’d better go out and get one. But in that day, it was different, dear friend. You couldn’t rent a tuxedo in that day. And so the king had the wedding garments all there. There was a servant at the door. When you would come to the door for the king’s feast, the king would say, “Here, this is for you. Put on this garment. And let us store your own clothes for you, and we’ll take care of them for you.” But when you go into the king’s feast, the king is the one who provides your dress; the king is the one who provides your clothing. And that’s the reason, when the king saw this man standing there in his street clothes without the wedding garment, he said, “Why did you come in like this? This is an insult to my wedding.” The man, the Bible says, was what? He was speechless.

Now, let me tell you why he was speechless: because there wasn’t anything he could say. He couldn’t say, “Well, I didn’t know that I was supposed to have a wedding garment,” because he would have been told that at the door. He could not say, “Well, I didn’t have time to get one,” because one was already there for him. He couldn’t say, “Well, I didn’t have enough money to buy one,” because the king had provided it. I mean, there was absolutely nothing he could say. “Why don’t you have a wedding garment?” He might have thought of 1,001 excuses, but he couldn’t give a reason—not one reason! It was his own fault. I can see him as he draws himself up haughtily and says, “Well, don’t you think what I have on is good enough?” Well, I’ll tell you what the king felt about it, and whether it was good enough—verse 13: *“Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”* (Matthew 22:13)

Maybe this is the saddest of all. Maybe you sit here in this church tonight never having been born again. You see, you’re not indifferent, and you don’t mock, and you’re not hostile—you’ve just never ever received Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord.

You're dressed in the rags of your own self-righteousness. I love what Isaiah chapter 61 and verse 10 says: *"I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness."* (Isaiah 61:10) Has He done that for you? My dear friend, tonight our Lord is saying, "I want you to come to the marriage of my Son. And I'll tell you what I'm going to do for you," He says. "Before you come, I'm going to take the rags of self-righteousness that you have, and I'm going to give you a robe, where you can sing, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness; dressed in His righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the throne."

## **Conclusion**

I'm finished, but let me ask you a question before we conclude the service. Remember I told you I went to the mailbox, and I opened the mailbox, and there was an invitation to go to the White House for a state dinner? I wonder if you would sign this. I want you to listen to it now. If you're an unsaved person, if you've never received Jesus Christ, listen—listen. Would you sign this? "To the King of heaven: While sitting in Bellevue Baptist Church on August 2, 1992, I received an invitation from your servant, Adrian Rogers, to the marriage supper of your only begotten Son. I pray thee, have me excused." Would you sign that? "Adrian Rogers, your servant, issued to me on August 2 a pressing invitation to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, but I don't want to come. I don't want to honor your Son. I don't want to have anything to do with it. I'm not coming." Would you sign that tonight?

You say, "I wouldn't dare sign it." Well, you'll do exactly the same thing if you walk out of this building without Jesus Christ tonight. You may not do it with a pen in your hand; but, friend, I'm telling you something: The God of heaven has made a marriage for His Son, and that God has invited you. And the Bible says, "Whosoever will may come." (Revelation 22:17)

# The Great Debate Between Church and State

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: November 2, 1980**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 22:15–21**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. We Are to Pay for Our Government
- II. We Are to Pray for Our Government
- III. We Are to Praise Our Government
- IV. We Are to Preach to Our Country
- V. We Are to Perform for Our Country
- VI. We Are to Participate in Our Government

Conclusion

## Introduction

Today I want you to take your Bibles and turn to Matthew chapter 22, and we're going to begin reading in verse 15. The title of my message is "The Great Debate Between Church and State." Matthew chapter 22 and verse 15: *"Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk. And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?"* Now, "to give tribute" means "to pay taxes": "Is it lawful to pay taxes unto Caesar or not?" *"But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's."* (Matthew 22:15–21)

It's a constant amazement to me how relevant the Scriptures are to our times. Now, friend, when you read any passage of Scripture, if you really want to get something out of it, ask yourself these three questions: What did it mean then? What does it mean now? What does it mean to me personally?

Now, let me tell you what it meant then. They were trying, of course, to entrap the Lord Jesus Christ. They were either trying to get the Lord Jesus Christ to deny Caesar



and say, “I’m not going to pay any tax money to Caesar; my kingdom is not of this world, and I couldn’t care less about all of that; just leave me alone,” and make him look like an insurrectionist and a seditionist and a person who was a rebel and so forth; or on the other hand, they tried to get him to bow down and worship an ungodly king, which Caesar was, and to give homage and worship to Caesar, which would have been something the Lord Jesus never would have done. And so they thought somehow they had him on the horns of a dilemma.

But, you know, “*Never man spake like this man.*” (John 7:46) He said, “Bring me the tax money; bring me that coin. Whose image is on it?” “Well,” they said, “it’s Caesar’s image.” He said, “All right, you pay Caesar, render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s; and then give to God the things that are God’s, that belong to God.” And as a result of that I believe that we have today written into our Constitution, the Constitution of the United States of America, what we call today the doctrine of the separation of church and state.

Now, how are we going to find the answer of the relationship of the church and the state, and the state to the church? Not from some hypocritical politician. Those are the ones that came to talk to Jesus, and Jesus said, “You hypocrites!” The Herodians were the political party of that day, and Jesus knew that they were hypocrites. Jesus knew that they had an axe to grind. Jesus knew that they didn’t really want the truth. You are not really going to learn the truth from some hypocritical axe-grinding politician, and neither are you going to learn the truth about the separation of church and state from the ungodly, the humanist, and the atheist, and these who hate God, hate Christ, hate the church, and hate the Bible. Don’t go to them for the truth.

Where are we going to learn the truth, and how are we going to get the answer for the great debate between church and state, unless we go to God’s Holy Word? Now I want to remind you that the framers of our Constitution were men whose lives had been soaked in the Holy Scriptures, and therefore they wrote this as the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United State of America. And it says this—it’s very brief, very concise, and very plain—and I quote: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

Now that’s a very beautiful law. It says that Congress is not going to establish any church. There is to be in the United States of America no tax-supported church; there’s to be no state church, no government church. The government is not in the business of promoting some sectarian religion. That’s what it says. But on the other side, the state is never to put the bridle upon the church; the state is never to proscribe our right to worship God according to the dictates of our conscience and never to abridge our freedom of speech.

Now, that's what it's saying: that Congress is not going to establish any church, and Congress is not going to prohibit the free exercise of our worship. But let me say this: What we call the separation of church and state was never meant in their wildest dreams to mean the separation of God from the government. They knew better than that. As a matter of fact, when they declared their independence, they said, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men...are endowed by their Creator"—"by their Creator"—"with certain unalienable Rights." Dear friend, the government does not give your rights. God gives your rights; the government recognizes them. Do you understand that? Your rights do not come from the United States of America, and your rights do not come from the Constitution; your rights come from God. They knew that. They said, "We're not even going to argue about that."

And therefore you find out that our lives have been lived in the past in the heritage of a belief in God, and therefore, when Congress convenes to make our laws, first of all, they begin with prayer, and they pray to Almighty God for His instruction and His direction. We've written on our money, "In God We Trust," and when we pledge allegiance to the flag, we say, "One nation under God." Abraham Lincoln well said, "It is the duty of nations as well as men, to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God." And Americans have felt that way for a long time.

Now, having said that, I have a two-point message in which I only have one point. All right now, I wanted to preach today on two things. First of all, I wanted to preach our duty to human government, and the second point was going to be our duty to Holy God. We may have to wait until this evening to get the second point, but I tell you that there have always been those who have not wanted God to rule in the affairs of men. There have always been those who did not want God to have anything to do with the American government, and they thought perhaps somehow that we could throw off the yoke and bondage of our God. Turn to Psalm chapter 2 for just a moment. I want you to see the idea that is rampant in the world today, and I think that the psalmist by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit summed it up quite well—Psalm 2, beginning in verse 1: "*Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?*" That is, something that they're not able to do. "*The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh.*" (Psalm 2:1–4)

Now, when a man says he's going to separate God from government, God just laughs at him. You can't do it. The Bible says of the Lord Jesus, "*The government shall be upon his shoulder.*" (Isaiah 9:6) *You cannot take God from government and expect to a have a sane civilization any more than you could take the notes out of a piano and*

*expect to have* music. And these rights that we have, have come from God, and it is God that governs in the affairs of men.

Now Jesus said that we are to render unto Caesar—that is, to our government—the things that belong to our government. I want to mention six things that every Christian ought to give to his government—six things that every Christian owes to his government—as we ask ourselves what did it mean then, what does it mean now, and what does it mean to me personally.

Now Caesar is not our government today; the Constitution is our government. And, incidentally, what kind of a government do we have? Why, we don't have a democracy as such; we have a republic. A democracy just simply means the rule of the people. But America is a republic. That means that it is a rule by law. We have a constitution, and when we salute the flag, we salute the flag "to the republic for which it stands." There is a rule by law; we have a constitutional government. And so, therefore, what do we owe to our Caesar, to our constitutional government today? What does it mean to us personally now? I want to mention six things that every God-fearing Christian, in my estimation, ought to do.

## **I. We Are to Pay for Our Government**

Number one: We are to pay for our government. That's right, dear friend: Paying taxes is part of being a good Christian. Now, that's what Jesus said in the scripture that I just gave to you, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's." Let me give you some more tax scriptures. Turn to Romans chapter 13 for a moment—Romans chapter 13. All right, I want to begin reading in verse 6: "*For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they*"—that is, the government—"*are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom.*" (Romans 13:6–7) Now the word *tribute* could be likened to our income tax, and the word *custom* could be likened unto our sales tax. That's the closest parallel I could make, but the Bible just simply says here in these verses that we are to pay our taxes. There's no way that we can get out of it and be a good Christian.

Turn to Matthew chapter 17, if you will, and see here in Matthew chapter 17, beginning in verse 24: "*And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money*"—that is, the tax collectors—"*came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute?*" Doesn't Jesus pay taxes? Verse 25: "*He saith, Yes.*" (Matthew 17:24–25) Jesus is a private citizen who paid His taxes; and even though Jesus said, "*My kingdom is not of this world,*" (John 18:36) Jesus paid His taxes. We are to pay tribute; we are to give to Caesar the things that belong to Caesar. And, friend, that hurts.

I read the other day that you start in January and work till May—and from that time you’re working for the government: It takes you that long out of a year’s salary to make enough money to pay your taxes. About forty-two percent of all that we earn goes to taxes of some kind. I’m talking about forty-two percent of what we earn. And I know sometimes that’s very hard. One of the reasons that we’re being taxed so is because of the great extravagancies and the waste. And there are so many today who refuse to work for an honest living. And the Bible says, “If a man will not work, neither should he eat.” (2 Thessalonians 3:10) And there’s nothing that is as debilitating and takes the heart out of a nation as for half of the people to get the idea that they don’t have to work, because somebody else will take care of them; and for the other half of the nation to get the idea that it does no good to work, because they cannot enjoy the fruit of their productivity.

But even having said that, let me tell you something, friend. I’m still grateful to have an America to pay my taxes in. I really am. Did you know, dear friends, that most of the people in this world would gladly trade places with the most underprivileged people in America. We don’t have to build fences to keep people in. They’re still trying to get into this, the greatest nation upon the face of the earth. And, friend, it is our duty: Whether you agree with what the tax money goes for or not, there is no way that you can be a good Christian and cheat on your income tax, or get out of it. You are to pay tribute. The Bible is clear and plain on this point.

## **II. We Are to Pray for Our Government**

It is our duty, number one, to pay for our government. It is our duty, number two, to pray for our government. Look, if you will, in 1 Timothy chapter 2, and turn to it quickly with me, because you need to mark it—1 Timothy chapter 2. And I’m going to show you right here where we have failed as a nation, and this is why we’re in the mess that we’re in—1 Timothy chapter 2, verse 1: *“I exhort therefore, that, first of all,”*—not secondly, thirdly, fourthly, but first of all—*“supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and honesty.”* (1 Timothy 2:1–2)

Do you want me to tell you why America is in the mess that she’s in? Because we have forgotten how to pray for our leaders. “Oh,” you say, “but, Brother Rogers, we haven’t had the right leaders. We need new leaders.” Let me tell you something, dear friend. It doesn’t matter what kind of leaders we have. If God’s people will pray, God will take care of us.

“Now,” you say, “you’re just being a Pollyanna; you don’t understand the situation.” Friend, you don’t understand the situation. Let me tell you, I don’t care who the king is,

the Bible says that the king's heart is—now you listen to this in Proverbs 21:1—*“The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.”* I tell you, Almighty God is the one who sets up kings and removes kings. (Daniel 2:21) The Bible says if we have some leader who is not right, God can change him, or God can remove him.

But I want to tell you that the biggest burden for the way this country is run does not lie in Washington; it lies in the prayers of God's people. You ought to say *amen*. The Bible says, *“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face...then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”* (2 Chronicles 7:14) And there is a bigger burden that lies upon your shoulder than lies upon the shoulder of the President of the United States: to pray and to seek the face of God. How dare we elect any man to public office and then not pray for him? And whether we voted for him or not, he is our president, or he is our governor, or he is our mayor, or he is our alderman, or he is our councilman, or he's our sheriff, or whoever he is—and he deserves and needs our prayers. If we do not pray, we sin against Almighty God, and we're going to reap the results of it.

Did you know that the problem that we have in America right now with Iran is a prayer problem? Daniel spent some time in Iran as a young man—the prophet Daniel. It was then called Persia. And Daniel went to God and he had a very special prayer for his people that he wanted answered. Finally, an angel of the Lord came with an answer to Daniel's prayer, but the angel said, “Daniel, your prayer has been in heaven for a long time, but the answer was slow in coming because...”—now, pay attention—“because the prince of Persia hindered me.” (Daniel 10:12–13) “The prince of Persia”: He wasn't talking about an earthly man; he was talking about a demon spirit. I believe, dear friend, that we are not at war or at odds with some Ayatollah, *“We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers...against spiritual wickedness in high places.”* (Ephesians 6:12) And this, my friend, is a spiritual battle. We're not going to outwit those people; we're going have to out-pray those people. Believe in God. The battle is with the prince of Persia, who is not the Ayatollah, but a demoniacal spirit.

We not only are to pay for our government; we are to pray for our government—for kings and for all who are in authority—whether we voted for them or not. I don't know who is going to be elected President of the United States; but I want to tell you, whoever it is—whether it's Mr. Anderson, Mr. Carter, or Mr. Reagan, or someone else—he's going to have my prayers and my love and my support, for he will be my president, and it will be my duty to pray for that man, whoever he is. I want to tell you that Paul said this. Nero was the Caesar, and yet Paul said to pray for him and for all who are in authority.

### **III. We Are to Praise Our Government**

Now I want to say, thirdly, that it is our duty to praise our government when they do things that are praiseworthy. Turn to Romans chapter 13 for a moment, and look, if you will, in verse 7. Romans chapter 13 is about human government, and the Bible says, concerning human government, in Romans chapter 13, verse 7, “*Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear;*”—now, notice this last phrase—“*honour to whom honour.*” (Romans 13:7) Yes, it’s all right to honor one’s government. Yes, it’s all right to be patriotic. Don’t you let some world leader come along and tell you that no longer can we be red-blooded Americans. Don’t you let somebody come along and tell you that you cannot thrill when you see Old Glory go by. Don’t you let somebody come along and tell you that you cannot stand and sing with a quivering chin and a tear in your eye, “God bless America, land that I love.” You can give honor when honor is due. You can praise your country as well as pray for your country.

I was reading last night where the psalmist said in Psalm 137, verse 5, concerning his native land, “*If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.*” (Psalm 137:5) God puts a love for our families within our bosom. I love your children, but I love my children especially. I love all people on the face of the earth, but I love this my homeland especially. That’s normal. That’s natural. That is a God-given instinct. And patriotism, it may have gone out of vogue, but I believe, dear friend, that we ought to be good old red-blooded American patriots. And if that’s a crime, you’re looking at a criminal.

### **IV. We Are to Preach to Our Country**

Not only should we pay for our country; and not only should we pray for our country; and not only should we praise our country, and give honor when honor is due; but, dear friend, I want to tell you that we need to preach to our country; we need to prophesy to our country. There are some people who tell us, because of the separation of church and state, that we who are Christians are not supposed to say anything, that suddenly, because we are saved and we belong to some church, we’re to be mute, we’re to be silent, we’re to be a distant franchise, we’re to be made to shut up. Oh no, dear friend, the Founding Fathers never meant that, because we belong to some church, or because there’s a man of God or a woman of God, we cannot preach and prophesy.

You study the Bible, and you’ll find out that a part of rendering under Caesar that which belongs to Caesar and that which is due to Caesar is for us to speak from the Word of God forthrightly and clearly and plainly. Nathan preached to King David and warned him about his sins. Elijah was the one who troubled Israel and spoke to King

Ahab. (1 Kings 18:17) Eliezer spoke to King Jehoshaphat, (2 Chronicles 20:37) Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar, Moses to Pharaoh; and we need to speak to our government, whether it be local government or state government or federal government. They need to hear a “thus saith the Lord.”

Dear friends, if we are silent, God is going to hold us accountable. You think of the terrible sin of abortion in America today. I say *sin*, because it’s horrible, dear friend. That one thing alone is going to bring us down as a nation, if we don’t solve it. And many are sitting there saying, “Oh well, Brother Rogers, that’s just a little thing.” Do you think that the murder of the innocent babies is an innocent thing? I want to tell you that the raging waters of God’s wrath are furiously pounding against the dam of his mercy. You look at all of these little babies that were here today. Can you think of the crime of aborting those children, had it been done in the womb of their mother?

I want you to turn with me to a scripture—turn to Proverbs chapter 24 and verse 11 for a moment. We dare not be silent. Proverbs chapter 24, verse 11: *“If thou forbear”—* that is, “if you hold your peace”—*“to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?”* (Proverbs 24:11) Dear friend, I can’t be silent, because God knows that I know that there is a crime, a sin, going on in America. And we as Christians have never been so disenfranchised that we cannot speak. If we fail to deliver those who are ready for death, doth not God know it? He does, and we must speak.

Martin Niemler was a pastor in Germany during World War II. He was a brilliant Protestant scholar, a preacher of the Word of God. He was thrown in prison for his faith. Later on, Pastor Martin Niemler said this: “First [the Nazis] came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Socialist.” Then,” he said, “they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Trade Unionist. Then,” he said, “they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew. Then,” he said, “they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.”

I believe it’s time that God’s people spoke up. I believe it is time that God’s people opened the Word of God and the book of God, and as they have done from the foundation of this nation, say, “Thus saith the Lord God.” And a part of my duty as a citizen of this nation is to render unto Caesar the things that are due to Caesar: not only to pay for it, and pray for it, and to praise it; but to preach to it, and to prophesy to it. We need to be men and women of God. God give us some prophets in these last days.

## **V. We Are to Perform for Our Country**

Now I want to say next that we're to perform for it. Yes, we're to be a part of obeying of the laws and ordinances of our nation. Turn to 1 Peter chapter 2 for a moment. Peter tells us that if we're good Christians, we're going to be good citizens. First Peter chapter 2, beginning in verse 13: "*Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man*"—that is, human laws—"*for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.*" (1 Peter 2:13–15) That means, dear friend, that if we Christians want our testimony to be what it ought to be, we're going to keep human laws. Don't call yourself a good Christian if you're a lawbreaker at the same time.

Daniel Webster said, "Whatever makes men good Christians makes them good citizens at the same time." And we are to obey every ordinance of man. You say, "Well, I don't agree with that law. I think it's foolish not to hunt game out of season." You obey every ordinance of man. You say, "Well, I think the fifty-five-mile-an-hour speed limit is ridiculous; I've got a fuzz-buster." You've got a fuzzy brain. You obey every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, or else the way of our faith is going to be evil spoken of.

We are to perform for our government, and the Bible says that the civil magistrate is a minister of God. The policeman is a minister; he's God's servant, and it's about time we said a good word for our policeman. There may be some rare cases of dishonesty and brutality, but I'll tell you one thing: I'd hate to have a job where I spend a lot of time in routine work and a little bit of it in stark terror. These people who lay their lives on the line for us, and they're not paid that much for doing it: you think of the training; you think of the skills; you think of the devotion that it takes.

It's time that we started understanding that as Christians we're to be good citizens, and we're not to have a rebellious spirit. And the only law that we can ever circumvent or go against is when the law of man comes in direct confrontation to the law of God. Then we must obey God rather than man.

## **VI. We Are to Participate in Our Government**

Now, let me say, last of all, because time is getting away, we need to participate in our government. You need to vote. Now the Bible says you're to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and dear friend, in our government, our Caesar is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. If you say, "I'm so spiritual I'm just going to pray; I'm not going to vote," then, dear friend, you are sinning against God—you are sinning against God. You owe to your government the vote—you owe it. You must render what is due.



Just as in that day they owed certain things to their government, in this day you owe certain things to your government. And when you vote, don't you vote some party, don't you vote some person, don't you vote some policy; but you vote principle. You find out what's right from the Word of God, and you vote that principle. You tell that politician, "I'm standing on principle, and, mister, the principle will be here when you're dead and gone, or when you're voted out. If you live by this principle, I'll stand behind you; and I don't care what sort of a halo you wear: If you're not living by biblical principles, you'll not have my vote." It's not a matter of parties. It's not a matter of policies. It's not a matter of personality. It is a matter of divine principle.

Oh, if you could understand the importance of one vote. In 1645, Oliver Cromwell became the leader of England by one vote. In 1649, Charles the First was executed by one vote. In 1776, America chose the English language over German by one vote. In 1839, Marcus Morton was elected governor of Massachusetts by one vote. In 1845, Andrew Jackson was saved from impeachment by one vote. In 1876, Rutherford B. Hayes became the President of the United State by one vote. In 1923, Hitler became the Fhrer of the Nazi party by one vote.

*I'm only one, but I am one.  
I cannot do everything, but I can do something.  
And what I can do I ought to do.  
And what I ought to do, by the grace of God, I will do.*

—EDWARD EVERETT HALE (ADAPTATION)

Come Tuesday, you'd better get on your face before God, and you'd better be in that booth, and you'd better vote and render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's. Our government is a government by the people and for the people—and you're the people. And if you won't do it, you're not rendering unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's.

## Conclusion

Now, ladies and gentlemen, these are serious times, and it's time that those of us who are Christians begin to act like it, to stand up for America. I still say,

*God bless America,  
Land that I love.  
Stand beside her, and guide her  
Thru the night and with a light from above.*

—IRVING BERLIN

# The Separation of Church and State

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: August 31, 1994**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 22:15-22**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. We Are to Pay Taxes
- II. We Are to Pray for Our Government
- III. We Are to Give Respect and Honor to the Government
- IV. We Are to Speak Up and Give a Warning When a Warning Is Necessary
- V. We Are to Obey the Civil Laws of Our Land
- VI. We Are to Participate in the Election Process

Conclusion

## Introduction

**W**ould you take God's Word and find Matthew chapter 22 and look up here for a moment. I want to talk with you about "The Separation of Church and State." There's a great debate between church and state today, and there's a lot of confusion. And sometimes people try to cause confusion. In Jesus' day, they did. Verse 15: *"Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him"*—that is, entangle Jesus—"in his talk" (Matthew 22:15). I want to say right now that that's a very dangerous thing to do, to ever try to entangle Jesus. When anybody asked Jesus a straight question, He gave them a straight answer. But when anybody ever tried to entrap Jesus and ask Jesus a trick question, He generally answered the question with another question.

In verse 16, you'll find their question: *"And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men"* (Matthew 22:16). Now this is sheer flattery. They don't believe this. And later on Jesus is going to call them to their face hypocrites. Now a flatterer will say to your face what he will not say behind your back. And a hypocrite will say behind your back what he will not say to your face. And these were both. And so they're coming, first of all, with flattery, but their motive is very evil indeed. Here was their question—verse 17: *"Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?"* Now it literally means to pay taxes to Caesar. *"But*

*Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's. When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way"* (Matthew 22:17–22).

You'll not find a better statement on the proper approach to the separation of church and state, rightly understood, and in answer to these things, than the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now we're coming up on an election day. We're living in a nation that, in my estimation, is in a moral crisis. So therefore we need to ask this question: What are the rights and what are the responsibilities of a Christian with reference to the government? And we also need to ask this question: Where are we going to get the answer? Well, not from the politicians themselves, because many times—not always, but many times—they themselves have an axe to grind, and we cannot get a straight answer from some of them; not from the ungodly, because they do not know the humanists and the others. They do not have the wisdom. They do not have the insights. You're not going to get the answer to these questions even from the philosophies of well-meaning religionists. The answer has to come, in my estimation, right from the Word of God.

And I've learned something in preparing to preach and study of the Word of God: that, when I look at a passage of Scripture, I ask basically three questions. Question number one is: What did it mean then? In other words, study it in its background, its context. Study the words, what the words mean. What literally happened? What did it mean then? And then, bring what it meant then into the century in which I live. What does it mean now? Not that the actual meaning has changed, but the application changes. How does that apply to my life right now—or, at least, to the situation right now? But then, I ask the third question: What does it mean to me personally? What did it mean then? What does it mean in today's situation? And then, what does it mean to me personally?

Now we talk about the phrase *separation of church and state*. You may be amazed to learn that that's not found in the Constitution of the United States of America. Those words, "the separation of church and state," are not found in the Constitution. The framers of the Constitution were soaked in the Word of God. The First Amendment to the Constitution deals with the issue of the responsibilities of the church and the state in relationship to one another. Actually, this is what the First Amendment says: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Separation of church and state is not mentioned, per se. Many people think that's written somewhere in the Constitution, but it is not. Here's what the Constitution says: "Congress

shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

Now to the framers of the Constitution, they never felt that there should be a separation of God and government. As a matter of fact, they said, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are...endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights.” And these rights were not given by the government, and therefore the government cannot take them away. And so, as a result of that, here in America we’ve not tried to separate our government from God until recently. As a matter of fact, we put “In God we trust” on our money. Now it would be virtually impossible to pass a bill to do that today. The ACLU and others would raise such a hue and cry that you could not do that today. Congress convenes its sessions with prayer. It would be virtually impossible, I think, to get that started today, had it not already been done with the traditions that we have. We have now placed in our Pledge of Allegiance to the flag, this statement, “One Nation under God.” I’m certain that there are those who would move heaven and earth to keep that phrase from being put into the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag today. And, indeed, there are those today who want that removed. But, you see, those who framed our Constitution, again, knew the Word of God, were soaked in the Word of God, and the American Revolution was born out of a spiritual revival.

Abraham Lincoln said, “It is the duty of nations as well as men, to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God.” Now, notice he said, “nations as well as men”; that individuals should look to God, and also a nation should look to God. And while our founding fathers believed in the separation of church and state, rightly understood, they did not believe in the separation of God and government. What does the First Amendment say? The First Amendment says there should be no state-mandated or state-supported churches. That’s what our founding fathers came to this land to get away from: where you and I would have to be taxed to support somebody else’s church, or there would be some official denomination, whether is be Baptist, or Methodist, or Episcopalian, or whatever. That would be the worst thing that could happen to the state, and it would be the worst thing that could happen to the church. It would inhibit both. And so they said, “Congress shall make no law concerning the establishment of religion.” Ungodly people have always wanted to separate, however, God from government.

Now I want to give you your responsibilities and your rights to your government. What are your responsibilities, rightly understood, according the Word of God, when Jesus said that we are to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s? What do we owe to Caesar? When I say, “Caesar,” I’m using that as a symbol for government, because Jesus was using the term that way to speak of government of His day.

## I. We Are to Pay Taxes

Well, first of all, turn to Romans chapter 13 with me for a moment, if you will. And here's the first thing we're to do. And you won't like this, but we're to pay taxes—we're to pay taxes. Nobody likes to pay taxes. But common sense tells us that you can't have government without taxes. Romans 13, verse 1: *"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers."* And the word *"higher powers"* means, *"established authorities."* *"For there is no power"—*that is, no authority—*"but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God:"*—now, Paul is saying that God established human government—*"and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation."* He's not talking about damnation to hell. He's talking about judgment from the civil authority. *"For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he"*—that is, the magistrate, the civil authority—*"is the minister of God to thee for good."* Now God has His ministers in His pulpits, and then God has His ministers in the places of civil authority. *"But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he"*—the civil magistrate—*"is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil"* (Romans 13:1-4).

Now, notice this: that this minister is not to make you good. He is to minister wrath, if you do bad. We often hear people say, "You cannot legislate morals." That is, there is no law that can legislate morality. Well, there's a tad, a smidgen, of truth in that. There's not a law on earth that can make you good. There's no law that can make you love me. And so therefore there have to be laws to keep you from killing me, and me from killing you. Because we cannot legislate morality, therefore we have to legislate against immorality. Only God can make us good. The minister, the civil magistrate, is not here to make us good; but he is here to restrain evil. He says, *"If you do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil."* Now the civil magistrate is the minister of the wrath of God. The preacher of the gospel is the minister of the grace of God.

Now, notice in verse 5: *"Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For this cause pay ye tribute also:"*—that is, somebody has to pay the bills—*"for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour"* (Romans 13:5-7). Now the scripture here makes it very plain that we're to pay taxes. And no matter how holy you are, we have some people who think that, if there's an unholy government, they ought not to pay taxes to that government.

I want you to turn to Matthew chapter 17 with me for a moment—just turn to it and look in Matthew chapter 17. You’re going to find out here that the Lord Jesus paid His taxes. In Matthew chapter 17, look in verse 24: *“And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute?”* That is, doesn’t Jesus pay taxes? *“He saith, Yes.”* That is, Jesus pays taxes. *“And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?”* That is, who taxes who? We don’t tax the British. We tax the Americans. The people in Jesus’ time, they didn’t take tribute of strangers, but of their own people. *“Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free.”* That is, He’s saying that a king is not going to tax his own children, but he’s going to tax those who are not part of his family. *“Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee”* (Matthew 17:24–27). Jesus said, “Even though I am free, even though I am really, truly, the inheritor of heaven and earth, I am going to pay taxes.” And He did pay taxes. And you and I must pay taxes.

Now we ought to do all we can to hold the tax burden down. And someone has said that we work almost from January to June now to pay the taxes—we’re so deep in taxes. Taxes at all levels may exceed forty-two percent of all that we take in. A Frenchman said that France fell when the people of France got the idea that government was a cow to be milked rather than a watchdog to be fed. But don’t gripe too much about paying taxes. Friend, there are a lot of people who would love to come to America and be able to pay taxes here. We still have the greatest nation on the face of this earth. And most of the people of this world would trade places with the underprivileged in America just for the opportunity to be here and to pay taxes. Indeed, I’m not for higher taxes. But I’m saying that the Bible makes it very clear and plain that one of our responsibilities is to pay taxes.

## **II. We Are to Pray for Our Government**

Another responsibility that you and I have is to intercede and pray for our government. And if you criticize the government without praying for the government, in my estimation, you’re very wicked. Turn to 1 Timothy chapter 2 for a moment—1 Timothy chapter 2. Just turn to the right in your Bible, and you’ll come to 1 Timothy chapter 2. And I want you to see again what Paul told Timothy about how we are to pray for those in government. I read here verse 1. Paul said, *“I exhort therefore, that, first of all,”*—now he’s talking here, not in chronology, but in importance—*“supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and*

*peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour*" (1 Timothy 2:1–3). And so we're to pray. We're to pray for kings even if they are wicked and ungodly—for rulers, presidents, governors, mayors, whomever—council people—whether they are right with God or whether they are not. As I told you a few Sundays ago, when Paul wrote this, Nero was the Emperor. He was the man who lived in the very depth of depravity. But remember this: When you pray, God moves. Proverbs chapter 21, verse 1, says, *"The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will"* (Proverbs 21:1).

So when we move God in prayer, God moves the heart of the king. And God can use him even when he doesn't know he's being used of God. And the greatest responsibility for America, therefore, does not rest upon the White House, or the Pentagon, but the church house and the people who know how to pray. And so we are to pay taxes and we are to pray for our government.

Joyce and I try to pray for America and for our government on Sunday mornings. Now we pray around the world. On Mondays, we pray Central America. On Tuesdays, we pray for South America. On Wednesdays, we pray for Africa. On Thursdays, we pray for Europe. On Fridays, we pray for the Middle East. On Saturdays, we pray for the Far East. On Sundays, we pray for America. And I pray on Sunday mornings for the pastors in this city. We pray for our children and preacher boys who have gone out from this church to minister. We pray for the government of America. We make that the time that we pray for this nation. God has commanded that we pray for kings and those who are in authority. And, very frankly, it's easier to criticize than it is to pray, isn't it? Really. It's easier to make those smart remarks and those critical remarks than it is to pray. But if you criticize without praying, in my estimation, you're very, very sinful.

### **III. We Are to Give Respect and Honor to the Government**

Now, here's a third thing you're to do. You are to give respect and honor to the government. Now that may chaff a little bit, but the Bible says, in Romans chapter 13, that you're to give *"honour to whom honour"* is due (Romans 13:7). Let me say a word about patriotism. Every so often when we talk about America, and say, "God bless America," and when I preach about America, there will always be some super-spiritual type person that is just oozing with pioussity, who says, "Oh, we ought not to love America; we ought to love all the peoples of the world. And we can't just kind of drape the cross in the flag and think that we as Americans are God's special people." That's not the point at all. The point is, just as I love my own family and have responsibility to them above other families, and I love this church and have a responsibility to it above other churches, I love this nation and have a

responsibility to it above other nations. Patriotism is normal. It is natural. It is it is commanded in the Bible. Think of what the Psalmist said, in Psalm 137, verse 5, concerning his people. He said, *“If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning”* (Psalm 137:5). Someone has well said,

*Breathes there the man with soul so dead,  
Who never to himself hath said,  
This is my own, my native land?*

—SIR WALTER SCOTT

We need some old fashioned, red-blooded, Christian, American patriotism.

#### **IV. We Are to Speak Up and Give a Warning When a Warning Is Necessary**

Now, here’s something else we need to do. I’m saying we need to pay taxes. We need to pray. We need to be patriotic and give honor where we can and where when it is proper. We’re not to honor wickedness, of course; but we can still love and honor our country, and honor those who do the right things when they do. Another thing that you and I need to learn to do: we need to learn to speak up and give a warning when a warning is necessary.

Now I want to be known not as a political preacher. I don’t want to be known as a political preacher. I don’t want to be known as a crusader against liquor, gambling, or pornography. I want to be known primarily as a preacher of the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And you will find, if you’ve been here in this church very long—and I’ve been here about twenty-two years now—that my style is to study the Word of God, generally in some series, to open the Bible and preach it as it comes, just like we’re doing, coming right through the Book of Judges, or whatever. I believe that’s the way on a long haul to build a solid people and a solid church. You could come crusading for this cause or that cause, or come with some sensational topic here or there; but, by and large, great churches are built squarely and solidly upon Bible preaching: line upon line and verse upon verse.

But we as God’s people need to speak to the government and to our leaders. We dare not be silent. We need to sound the warning. Now that’s not our main cause. Our main cause is preaching the gospel. But God’s people dare not be silent. It’s Satan’s strategy to keep good people silent in evil times. And if you’ll study the prophets of God’s Word, Nathan spoke to King David, Elijah spoke to Ahab, Eleazar to Jehoshaphat, Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar, and Moses to Pharaoh. We said several weeks ago we need to tell every governmental official, whoever he is, nothing is politically right that is morally wrong—*nothing is* politically right *that is* morally wrong. Therefore we will talk about abortion.



We'll talk about gambling. We'll talk about these other things that people may not like. We'll talk about the liquor business. We'll do it. If they don't like it, we're not here to win a popularity contest. We still need to say what God's Word says on these issues.

It's a very interesting thing, if a preacher like myself stands up and preaches about, let's take the subject of abortion, there are those, and plenty of them—you'd have to read my mailbag to know what I'm talking about—they'll say, "Why don't you stay out of politics?" But if you ask a politician what he thinks about abortion, he'll say, "Well, that's a church matter." You see what they do? Now if you talk about it, they say, "Stay out of politics." When you ask them to talk about it, they say, "That's a church matter." It doesn't matter whether it's political or a church matter, it's wrong to kill babies. It's wrong to do it. It's absolutely, totally wrong. And we need to speak up, and without stutter or stammer.

## **V. We Are to Obey the Civil Laws of Our Land**

Now, here's something else that we need to do for our country, and what God demands of us as Christian citizens. We need to obey the civil laws of our land. Turn, if you would, to 1 Peter chapter 2, and see what the Word of God has to say about that. First Peter chapter 2—look in verse 13: *"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God"* (1 Peter 2:13-16).

Now, in plain English, that means that we're to be good citizens; we're to be law-abiding people. Daniel Webster said that whatever makes a man a good Christian makes him a good citizen—and that is true. And, therefore, when the policeman tells you to stop, you stop. When the policeman tells you to turn right, you turn right. He's the minister of God.

And, by the way, it's about time we said a good word for our policeman. We hear so much about police brutality, and we hear so much about dishonesty: the fact is that only about one percent of the police are a discredit to the uniform. And they live lives that are a mixture of routine and stark terror. And I take my hats off to them. I think they ought to be paid more. I'm grateful for them. I'm grateful for the policemen who are members of this church. And their acts of heroism so many times go unnoticed, and all they get is criticism. And I'm grateful for someone who will stick out his neck for me and help protect me. And if you don't like policemen, the next time you get in trouble, why don't you call one of these?

## **VI. We Are to Participate in the Election Process**

Here's something else that we're to do. We are to participate in the election process. Now, don't let anybody tell you that you can't participate, that you can't get a candidate, and be for a candidate. You know, it's an amazing thing: if you're a Christian, and you hold Christian values, they try to say, "Well, you ought not to say anything." You say, "Well, why shouldn't I say anything?" "Well, because you're a Christian. Well, don't you understand the separation of church and state?" Well, friend, when you got saved, you didn't get disenfranchised. When you got saved, it just simply means that you can exercise your liberty and your rights as a Christian from a new point of reference now. You have the Word of God, and that ought to help you as you vote and as you select a candidate.

You see, let's talk again about the Constitution. The Constitution, a very wonderful instrument, says, for example, the government cannot break into your house—illegal search and seizure. If you're at home tonight, and there's a knock at the door, and a policeman comes and he says, "Open up your house. We believe you're harboring a criminal. We believe you've got drugs in here. We believe *ta da ta da*. We're going through this house, and we're going to look," and you say, "No, you're not. You're not coming in this house. Not without a search warrant, you're not coming into this house. The Constitution says you cannot break into this house. You can't do that." And that's right. The government has not a right, lest they have a compelling interest, to just come into my house. They cannot just break in arbitrarily and come into my house.

Now, does that mean, because the government cannot break into my house, does that mean I can't go out of doors? Now, think with me. Because they cannot come and break into my house, does that mean I can't go out of doors? Of course not! Now because the government cannot establish a religion, does that mean that religious people therefore can't talk or can't exercise their faith as it pertains to government? That is the analogy. Do you get the analogy that I'm trying to make? The government has to keep its nose out of the church; but that doesn't mean that the church cannot go out into society. They don't have the right to come and meddle here. They can make no law concerning the establishment of religion. But that does not mean that you and I are to be silent. As a matter of fact, Jesus said we are to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's (Matthew 22:21; Mark 12:17; Luke 20:25). And what is our Caesar? Our Caesar is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. And if you and I don't participate, we have disobeyed our Lord.

Someone has well said, "The scandal of our time is the bad citizenship of good people." It's totally inconceivable that God would have ordained human government and then told His people to stay out of it. If the godly and the righteous stay out, then who does that leave to make the laws and run the nation?

I've already voted, because on Election Day I will not be here. I have an out-of-town engagement, so I've already gone down and voted. And how did we vote? Joyce and I did not vote for parties, or persons, or politics, or policies even; we voted for principle. And we had to do some study. You need to be informed. Now those of us who believe the Bible, we're characterized as being the Christian Right. You'll hear that a lot: the Christian Right. The issue is not right or left; the issue is right or wrong.

Now you need to learn that it's not some ideology. It's just simply, what is truth? Is there a standard of truth? We spoke this morning about the time of the days of the judges. And, in Judges 17, the Bible says, *"Every man did that which was right in his own eyes"* (Judges 17:6). We need to find out, is there a basis of truth? Now we as Bible-believing Christians believe there is a God. We believe that God has spoken. We believe He has given us His Word, and therefore His Word is the standard and the measure of our practice. And, therefore, we vote accordingly.

Now there are people who don't like that. They somehow say, because we're Christians, we have no right to exercise our rights. Well, that's their problem, not yours. And you can't make yourself sick to make them well. You just simply go ahead and do what you need to do. And I want to say that you are wrong, in my estimation, if you do not vote. You're to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's. Our Caesar—I say it again—is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people.

One vote—one vote—may make the difference. In 1645, Oliver Cromwell gained control over England by one vote. In 1649, Charles I of England was executed because of one vote. In 1776, one vote—one vote—gave America the English language rather than the German language as our native language. You ought to be glad for that, because none of us speak German. One vote. In 1839, Marcus Morton was elected governor of Massachusetts by one vote. In 1845, one vote saved President Andrew Jackson from impeachment. In 1876, one vote gave Rutherford B. Hayes the presidency of the United States. In 1923, one vote gave Adolf Hitler the leadership of the Nazi party—one vote! I'm only one, but I am one. I can't do everything, but I can do something. And what I can do I ought to do; and, that, by the grace of God, I will do.

## **Conclusion**

Separation of church and state: if you mean we're not going to have a state-mandated religion, yes. If you mean that we're not going to have a state-supported church, yes. But if you mean the separation of God and government, I tell you that is a notion that our founding Fathers never even began to think of. They believed that this nation is a nation

based on a Judeo-Christian ethic. And anybody who will read the history before the revisionist historians get hold of it will see that that is true.

# Church and State

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: July 3, 1983**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 22:15–22**

## Outline

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II. We Must Pray for Our Government

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Conclusion

## Introduction

There's so much confusion concerning this matter and the competition sometimes—the confrontation sometimes—between Christ and Caesar. Turn, if you will please, in God's Word, to Matthew 22, and I want us to read in verse 15. If you did not bring a Bible with you, there, in the pew rack before you, most likely, is a Bible. Would you take it out and follow along with us in the Scripture? Begin now in verse 15: *"Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk"*—now friend, I want to tell you, when you take on the Lord Jesus to confuse Him, you're in difficulty—*"And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: [but] thou regardest not the person"*—*"for thou regardest not the person"*—*"of men"*—now, thus far, this is all just sheer hypocrisy; they are flattering Him. And, you know what a flatterer is? A flatterer is someone who says to your face what he'll not say behind your back, and a hypocrite is somebody who says behind your back what he'll not say to your face. These people were both. So, they said—*"Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Shew me the tribute money"*—that is, *"Show me the tax money"*—*"And they brought unto him a penny."*

*And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things [which] are God's. When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way" (Matthew 22:15–22).*

Tonight, I want to speak to you about the rights and the responsibilities of the Christian concerning his government. And, where are we going to get the answer? Well, we're certainly not going to get the answer from some politician who has an ax to grind. We're certainly not going to get the answer from the ungodly and those who hate God, and Christ, and the Church, nor are we going to get the answer from the philosophies of some well-meaning but softheaded religionist. The answer must come from the Word of God. And indeed, it has.

What did the Framers of the Constitution mean when they wrote the Constitution concerning the relationship of Church and State? And what, indeed, did the First Amendment mean when it was later added? I want to remind you that the Framers of the Constitution of the United States of America were soaked in the Word of God, and those who added the First Amendment added that First Amendment in the light of Holy Scripture. Now, here's what the First Amendment to the Constitution says that is so often quoted in the great debate between Church and State—it says this, and I quote: "Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof"—a marvelous amendment. This does not mean the separation of God from government. I hope that you understand that clearly and plainly, and I trust that, by the strength that God will give me, that I will be able to show you that not in their wildest imaginations did the Framers of the Constitution believe that this nation would be a nation without godly influence.

It was founded upon godly principles. When the colonists came to these shores, they came because of their Christian faith. When the Pilgrims landed in 1620, they came to these shores seeking religious liberty. The Mayflower Compact begins with these words: "In the name of God, amen." In that Mayflower Compact, they wrote that the express purpose was—and I quote: "for the glory of God and the advancement of the Christian faith."

The American government is rooted in belief in God. We're celebrating our 207<sup>th</sup> birthday. It was engendered by a statement called "The Declaration of Independence." That Declaration of Independence has a Preamble; I trust that you're familiar with it. In that Preamble, this glorious statement is given: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are...endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights." Now, notice what they said. They said, "We'll not quibble about this. We'll not argue about this. We will not debate this. This is self-evident." What? First of all, they had a message about God: "There is a God.

He is a Creator.” Secondly, they had a message about man: “Man did not evolve. He did not come out of the ooze and the slime of some primordial soup, but man was created by a God.” And thirdly, they said, “We’re not going to debate about this. There are certain rights that man has. The government does not give those rights. The government may only protect those rights. They are God-given rights of life, and liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” And, when they said, “We hold this to be self-evident,” they meant this: that there was no sliding scale of morality, no relativism, no situational ethics. They said, “There is a fixed morality. There are definite rights and definite wrongs.” They believed that. That is the warp, the woof, the matrix out of which our nation was born. That’s what we’re celebrating tomorrow on the Fourth of July.

And, the Bill of Rights was never meant to forbid prayer in public schools; it only meant—and should mean—that there should be no state-mandated prayer and no one should be coerced to pray. And, we would fight for that with every ounce, and inch, and nerve, and fiber in our body. But, any good, red-blooded American believes, because of the liberty that God has given him and His law—that He is God—he has a right to pray any time, any place with any body, and the government is not to stand in the way. And, the government is not to prohibit the free exercise of our faith.

The great leaders of our nation, for the most part, have been men of faith. General George Washington was a devout man who went aside at Valley Forge, and knelt in the snow, and prayed God’s blessing upon that little ragtag continental army, who was fighting for the freedoms that we enjoy. A visitor going to Washington at the Continental Congress asked, “Which one is George Washington?” Someone said, “You can recognize George Washington because General Washington will be the tall man that gets on his knees when Congress starts to pray.” President-elect Abraham Lincoln said this after his election: “I leave now not knowing when or whether ever I shall return with a task before me greater than that which rested upon the shoulders of Washington. Without the assistance of the Divine Being who attended him, I cannot succeed. With that assurance, I cannot fail.” And, even Thomas Jefferson, whom we would not call a “Bible-believing Christian”—even the great Thomas Jefferson said that “the God who gave us life gave us liberty at the same time.”

And, we see in the songs that we sing the heritage of our nation—these songs that we, the people, have adopted...something of our spiritual heritage. For example, “The Star-Spangled Banner” that we love says this:

Blest with vict'ry and peace, may the Heav'n rescued land  
Praise the Power that hath made and preserved us a nation!  
Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,  
And this be our motto: "In God is our trust" (Francis Scott Key).

And, as Jim has already pointed out in the marvelous national hymn that we've sung, that last stanza:

Our fathers' God, to Thee,  
Author of liberty,  
To Thee we sing.  
Long may our land be bright,  
With freedom's holy light,  
Protect us by Thy [light],  
Great God our King (Samuel Francis Smith).

Now, does that sound, ladies and gentlemen, like the Framers of our Constitution and our forefathers had in their mind the separation of God and government? They did not. It is for this reason that on our money we have printed these words: "In God We Trust." It is for this reason that the Congress of our nation begins its sessions with prayers. It is for this reason that we stand and salute Old Glory and say, "One nation under God." And, don't you let the humanists, and don't you let the materialists, and don't you let the ACLU or any body else take away the heritage that is ours as Americans. You can thank God for this nation, and you can thank God for the way that she was founded. No other nation ever had such a beginning as this nation. And so, the First Amendment meant that there shall be no state-mandated, no state-supported churches. I do not want Uncle Sam to support this church. I wouldn't take his money if he would give it. Friend, it would be the worst thing that could happen to the Church and to the State. But, I want Uncle Sam to stay out of the way when I stand in this pulpit to preach, and I want Uncle Sam to be quiet and to be silent when we assay to spread the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I want Uncle Sam to be true to our Constitution, "make no law respecting the establishment of a religion, nor no law prohibiting the free exercise thereby."

Now, the ungodly have always wanted to separate not only Church and State, but God from government. The Bible prophesies this. Turn, if you will, to Psalm, the second chapter, verses 1-4: "*Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves*"—and the idea here is obstinacy—"*The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed*"—that is, "against His Christ"—"*saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the LORD shall have them*



*in derision*” (Psalm 2:1–4). And, America now, in these last days, is becoming the laughing stock of the nations because we’ve tried to break away from Almighty God, who has made us the nation that we are. And, the scream of the once great American eagle has become the twitter of a frightened sparrow, because God in heaven is laughing at our futile efforts to keep this republic going that was born in the heart and the bosom of God-fearing, God-believing people.

Now, what is the duty—what is the duty—of a Christian to his state? The Lord Jesus, when asked that question, “Is it right to pay tribute to Caesar?” said clearly and plainly, without stutter, stammer, or equivocation, that we are to “*render...unto Caesar [that] which [is] Caesar’s; and unto God [that which is] God’s*” (Matthew 22:21). Now, what do we owe to Caesar? Let me tell you what we’re to do as God-fearing Americans.

## **I. We Must Pay Taxes**

And, I hate to start with this one, but I’m going to do it: we must pay taxes. That’s biblical. Turn, if you will, to Romans 13, and I want you to begin reading in verses 6–7. In that classic passage on the relationship of Church and State, our Lord makes it clear through the Apostle Paul that it is the Christian’s privilege and duty to pay taxes. In Romans 13:6, this is what Paul says: he says, “*For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they*”—that is, “the civil leaders”—“*they are God’s ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom*” (Romans 13:6–7). Now, what is the difference between tribute and custom? Tribute today is what we would call “income tax.” Custom is what we would call “sales tax.” They had it in that day; we have it in this day. Jesus said, “You are to pay tribute,” and Paul reaffirmed it: “*tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom [is due]*” (Romans 13:7). And, you will remember, when time came for Jesus to pay His taxes, Jesus had Peter to put his hook in the water—brought forth a fish. In that fish’s mouth was a coin; and Jesus took that coin, and Jesus paid His taxes.

Now, that doesn’t mean that we are to be in favor of a government that abuses the tax system. If our government abuses the tax system, then our government is going to fail. But, everybody knows it takes money to run government. Today, the last report that I had is this—and it may be worse than this now—but the last report is this: that it takes us from January to May to pay our taxes. That is, we work that long for the government before we start working for ourselves. And, if you put all taxes together, they are about 42 percent of the average income. And, I believe that no government can long last when half the people get the idea they don’t have to work because the other half will work for them, and the other half gets the idea it does no good to work because they cannot keep the reward of

their labor. A Frenchman once said that “France fell when the French began to think of the government as a cow to be milked rather than a watchdog to be fed.” Our government is not a cow to be milked; it is a watchdog to be fed. And, the governmental officials, the Bible says, are ministers of God, and they must be fed (Romans 13:6–7). Just as you pay me as a minister, we must pay these others who are God’s ministers.

## **II. We Must Pray for Our Government**

But, not only are we to pay our taxes without griping, and mumbling, and complaining about it—there are a lot of people who would like to live in America so they could pay the taxes that we pay—but I’ll tell you something else: we are to pray for our government. Turn to 1 Timothy 2 for a moment—1 Timothy 2:1: *“I exhort therefore, that, first of all”*—that is, before you go down to City Hall to complain; that is, before you write letters; that is, before you organize some counter-demonstration; that is, before you even vote—*“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour”* (1 Timothy 2:1–3). We sin against our governmental leaders if we elect them and then fail to pray for them.

You say, “Well, should I pray for them if I don’t agree with the government?” You’d better pray for them all the more. You say, “Shall I pray for them if they’re wicked?” Yes. When this was written, Nero was king; Nero was emperor. And, Paul says, “Pray for Nero.” Why? Let me give you a wonderful scripture that you might jot in your margin right there. It’s Proverbs 21:1: *“The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD, [and] as...rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.”* Did you know that God can move in the heart of a wicked king? God can rule in the heart of a wicked governor or leader of any sort. *“The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD, [and] as...rivers of water, he turneth it whithersoever he will”* (Proverbs 21:1). The greatest responsibility in America does not lie in Washington, nor in Congress, nor in the Pentagon, nor in City Hall. The greatest responsibility lies upon us, as we get upon our faces and pray and pray and pray. God can change a ruler, and God can remove a king. The Bible says, “God setteth up kings, and He removeth them” (Daniel 2:21). We need to pray.

## **III. We Must Give to Those Who Are in Places of Responsibility Their Proper Respect and Honor**

I’ll tell you what else we’re to do: not only should we pay for our government, and not only should we pray for our government; we are to give to those who are in places of responsibility their proper respect and their proper honor. It was not at all wrong for you

to stand and give a standing ovation to our mayor; it is fitting that you should do so. Turn again to Romans 13; listen to what God's Word says in verse 7: "*Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour*" (Romans 13:7). We are to give that honor; we are to give that proper respect. And I, for one, enjoy giving honor to those who lead us. I, for one, enjoy pledging allegiance to the flag. I, for one, enjoy patriotism.

There are those who tell us we're not to wrap the Bible in an American flag. I would agree with them if they mean that somehow we're to confuse our allegiance to the kingdom of heaven and the United States of America. Indeed, we cannot, we must not, we will not, we dare not do that. But, I'll tell you something else: as you read the Bible, you're going to find out that the Bible teaches patriotism and the Bible teaches love for one's fatherland, just as the Bible teaches love for one's family. For example, the psalmist said in the Book of Psalms, "*If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning*" (Psalm 137:5). In those days, they loved Jerusalem. In these days, I love my nation. And, I'm glad to be a red-blooded Christian who can stand up for Old Glory, and I still enjoy singing, "God bless America, / Land that I love" (Irving Berlin). And, the Bible says we're to give fear to whom fear is due, and we are to give honor to whom honor is due (Romans 13:7). And, let us honor the great things that have made our nation the nation that it is.

#### **IV. We Must Speak Up and Sound a Warning When Our Caesar Is Wrong**

I'll tell you a fourth thing that we, as Christians, owe to our Caesar: we need to speak up and sound a warning when our Caesar is wrong. I'm not talking about blind allegiance. I'm not talking about "my country, right or wrong, unless I have the last part of it." When it's right, I help to keep it right, and when it's wrong, I help to make it right. We need to speak to our country; we need to address our country. God's people dare not be silent. It is Satan's strategy to keep good men silent in evil times.

Now, I know there are those who would tell me that I can stay in my little prison with stained glass windows and preach to you all I want, but I should not speak on what they call "political issues"—I should not speak on what political, moral issues have now become political issues. But, they're wrong—dead wrong! And, you're going to find out, in the Bible, God's prophets and God's people have always spoken not only about the government, but sometimes directly to the government. Nathan spoke to King David, and Nathan pointed his bony finger in the face of King David and said, "*Thou art the man*" (2 Samuel 12:7). Elijah (that we spoke about this morning) preached to Ahab, and he said, "I'm not the one who's troubling Israel. It's you and your house."

Daniel preached to Nebuchadnezzar... There are some who would tell us, “Oh yes, that David... Nathan spoke to David because that was a theocracy.” There are some who would tell us, “Oh yes, it was all right for Elijah to speak to Ahab because that was a theocracy.” Well, friend, I want to tell you, it wasn’t a theocracy when Daniel preached to Nebuchadnezzar. That was a pagan government, but it didn’t shut Daniel up. It wasn’t a theocracy when Moses preached to Pharaoh. And, we’re not to be quiet; we’re not to be silent. We’re to speak up.

And, I know there are some people who cringe when I mentioned this matter of abortion, but I cannot get it out of my heart. I want you to turn to Proverbs 24 with me for a moment, and I want you to look in verses 11–12. If you’d not yet marked it in your Bible, perhaps you should. God’s Word says, *“If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth he not know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?”* (Proverbs 24:11–12). That is, God says if we sit around and if we’re silent while this holocaust is going on, doesn’t God know it? Doesn’t God know it? And, this tongue is not going to be silent about this thing till it’s silent in death. We’re putting those little babies to death. We need to speak to our Caesar. We need to point the finger at our Caesar, and we need to say, “It is wrong!” People say, “Well, that’s what the Right says, and here’s what the Left says.” Friend, *it’s not Right or Left; it’s right or wrong!* It’s wrong to kill babies—it’s wrong; it’s wrong; it’s wrong; it’s wrong; it is wrong. And, all your sophisticated, silly arguments will not make it right. God in heaven knows—God in heaven knows.

We have a right and a responsibility to speak to our Caesar. And friend, if we don’t speak—and speak when we can, and speak when we ought, and speak when we should—we may not have the ability to speak one day. Martin Niemöller was a Protestant pastor in Germany when the Nazis were taking over an inch at a time. Niemöller said that “when they came for the communists, I didn’t speak up, for I wasn’t a communist.” And then, he said, “They came for the Jews, and I didn’t speak up, because I wasn’t a Jew.” Then, he said, “They came for the Catholics, and I didn’t speak up, because I wasn’t a Catholic.” And then, he said, “They came for the trade unionists, and I didn’t speak up, because I wasn’t in the trade union.” And then, he said, “They came for me, and by that time there was nobody left to speak up for any body.” We must speak to our government. There’s a time, dear friend, when we must cry and forbear not and let us voices be heard.

## V. We Must Obey the Laws of Our Government

I'll tell you what else we need to do: we need to obey the laws of our government. Turn to 1 Peter 2—1 Peter 2—and look with me in verse 13: *“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, [for] unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well”* (1 Peter 2:13–14). We are to obey the laws of our land. It was Daniel Webster that said, “Whatever makes a man a good Christian makes him a good citizen at the same time.”

The Apostle Paul taught that the policeman, for example, is a minister of God. Go back to Romans 13. We're talking now about obeying the laws of our land. Romans 13, beginning in verse 1—look at it: *“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers”*—that means “governmental authorities”—*“For there is no power”*—that is, “no authority”—*“but of God”*—that is, “that God allows.” And, even when Jesus was standing before Pilate, Jesus said to Pilate, “You don't have any power except that which is given to you” (John 19:11). Jesus realized that even Pilate received his authority from God—*“there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God”*—now, listen to this—*“Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou [not] then...be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same. For he”*—now listen, the minister...excuse me...the magistrate and the policeman—*“he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not”*—now, what's that next word?—*“he beareth not the sword in vain: for he”*—the civil magistrate is what?—*“[a] minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil”* (Romans 13:1–4).

There are those who don't think this young man ought to be put to death in Mississippi for the brutalization, the sodomizing, the torture, the death of that little girl down there. If he is guilty, if he's been shown to be guilty and proven to be guilty, I want to say I clearly and plainly believe that capital punishment is taught in the Word of God—no *ifs*, *ands*, and *buts* about it. The Bible says, *“[He that] sheddeth man's blood, by [him] shall his blood be shed”*—*“[for] by man shall his blood be shed”* (Genesis 9:6). And what God, through Paul, says in Romans about the civil magistrate is not Old Testament; it is New Testament.

All the people say, “Well, Brother Rogers, we are to turn the other cheek, and we are to render good for evil.” True, surely, right. In our relationships one to another, we're not to take the law in our hands. Back up to Romans 12:19: *“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves”*—that is, don't take revenge yourself; don't become a vigilante—*“but rather give place unto wrath”*—that is, just back up; get out of it if you can—*“for it is written, Vengeance is mine”*—“I'll never do anything about it.” Is that what God says?—*“Vengeance is mine; I will”*—“I will; I will”—*“repay, saith the Lord. Therefore”*—just leave it to God—*“if thine*

*enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire [upon] his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good”* (Romans 12:19–21). In my personal relationships, I am not to take revenge—I dare not; I must not. If I try to get revenge, I am stealing from God just as surely as if I put my hand in the offering plate and took some money out. *“Vengeance is mine”* (Romans 12:19). Don’t steal it. God will do a better job than you’ll do.

How does God do it? Now, go to the next chapter. You’re in chapter 12; now go to the next chapter. Look at it—verse 4: *“For he”—the civil magistrate—“is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid...he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil”* (Romans 13:4). Do you see it? God is not saying that people who commit murder are not to be judged. God is not saying that it’s unchristian to execute a murderer. God is saying, “Don’t you do it. I’ll do it, and I’ll do it through My government officials. He is my minister to execute wrath.” There’s no competition between those ideas. It’s a beautiful thing that God has clearly spelled out in His Word. I don’t mean to say, of course, that an execution is a beautiful thing; it’s a horrible thing. But, if we had more sure and swift justice in this land for white and black, rich and poor, we’d see, perhaps, a little more peaceability upon our streets. We need to obey and respect the civil laws of our land.

## **VI. We Must Participate in the Election Process**

I’ll tell you what else we need to do—if you’re taking notes, this is the sixth thing that we owe to our Caesar—not only do we need to obey the laws of our land, but we, ladies and gentlemen, need to participate in the election process.

Now, when you study a passage of Scripture, I’ve told you before and I’ll tell you again, that for you to understand that passage of Scripture, you must ask three questions: What did it mean then? What does it mean now? And, what does it mean to me personally? Now then, it meant to render to Caesar. Well, we don’t have Caesar today. Caesar’s dead—he’s gone; he’s buried. So, I must ask myself, “What does it mean now?” It meant in that day that they were to render to their government the thing that was due to their government. It means today that I am to render to my government the thing that is due to my government. What is my Caesar today? My Caesar today is a constitutional government: “a government for the people, by the people, and of the people.” That is my government today. And friend, if I do not participate in that government—“a government of the people, by the people, and for the people”—I have disobeyed Jesus, who said I am to “render to my Caesar the things that are due to my Caesar” (Matthew 22:21). And, my Caesar, a constitutional government,

says that I must participate in that government, because it is “a government of the people, by the people, and for the people.” That means, of course, that I should register and vote.

The scandal of our time is the bad citizenship of good people. It is inconceivable to me that God would have ordained human government—and He did—and then told His people to stay out of it. People say, “Now, don’t get mixed up in politics. Don’t get mixed up in all of that. You just go off over here, and live for Jesus, and leave the rest of it alone.” Well, if you do, who does that leave to run the government? If you take all the good people out of it, you take all of the godly people out of it, you take all of the praying people out of it, take the people with standards, and morals, and belief, and faith—take them out of it—and who does that leave? It’s inconceivable that God would have ordained government and then told His people to stay out of it. No, God’s people need to vote because that is rendering to our Caesar the thing that belongs to our Caesar.

And, when we vote... Let me tell you how to vote. People say, “Oh, don’t tell people how to vote.” Well, I’m going to tell you how to vote. Are you ready? Don’t you vote for a party. Don’t you vote for a person. And, don’t you vote for a policy, and don’t you vote for politics. You vote for principle—that’s how to vote. You find out what the principle is, and you stand by it. And, I’ve told you before, *it’s not a matter of the Right or the Left; it’s a matter of right and wrong.*

And, don’t you think that your vote doesn’t matter. I’ve studied some about the history of voting. Let me tell you the difference that one vote can make. One vote in 1645 gave Oliver Cromwell the control of England. One vote in 1649 caused Charles I of England to be executed. One vote in 1776 gave America the English language rather than the German language. How many of you can speak German? One vote in 1839 elected Marcus Morton Governor of Massachusetts. One vote in 1845 saved President Andrew Jackson from impeachment. In 1923—listen to this—one vote gave Adolph Hitler the leadership of the Nazi Party—one vote! That’s the reason I said this morning, “I’m only one, but I am one. I can’t do everything, but I can do something. And, what I can do I ought to do. And, what I can do and ought to do by God’s grace I will do.” I believe you’re wrong—let me put it even stronger—I believe you’re sinful if you haven’t registered to vote and you could and should. Now, we’re going to set up some booths around here this summer and help you to register...to get registered to vote. It is your Christian privilege, your Christian responsibility, your Christian duty to vote. We are to render to our Caesar the things that are due to our Caesar.

### A. **There Must Be No Rival**

Now, Jesus said, “Render...unto Caesar the things [that] are Caesar’s”—and then, He said— “[render] unto God the things that are God’s” (Matthew 22:21). Very quickly, let me show you what belongs to God. Turn to 1 Timothy 1; look in verse 17. See if you don’t love this verse: “Now unto the King eternal”—do you like that?—“the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Timothy 1:17). Render unto Him the things that are His. What does this verse tell us? It tells us that for Him there can be no rival: He is the King eternal; He is the King immortal; He is the King invisible. Friend, you didn’t vote Him in, and you’re going to vote Him out. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. I want to tell you something: I am going to respect and obey the laws of my land until the laws of my land bring me in direct confrontation with the laws of my God. And then, I’m going with the laws of my God, and I hope you will too. Is there a place for civil disobedience? Absolutely, beyond the shadow of any doubt. When the laws of man so directly, so overtly, so openly contradict the laws of our God and His Christ, then we must say, “Choose You.” What do you think? Should we obey God or man? We’re going to obey God. These early Christians, who were taught to render unto Caesar the things that were Caesar’s, did not render unto Caesar the things that were God’s. And, they told these early Christians, “Say these words: ‘Caesar Kurios’”—“Caesar is Lord.” They said, “No, we’ll pray tribute. We’ll pay taxes. We will obey your laws, but we’ll not worship that man. We will not do it. We will not say, ‘Caesar is Lord.’ There’s one King immortal, invisible, eternal—our God and our King. And, we’re not going to bow the knee to Caesar.” And, they put them to their death—no rights.

### B. **There Must Be No Rebuttal**

Secondly, no rebuttal: “the only wise God” (1 Timothy 1:17). His word is final. That’s the reason that America must pray and say, “God, help us.” You see, dear friend, God doesn’t need America; America needs God.

Our fathers’ God to Thee,  
Author of liberty,  
To Thee we sing (Samuel Francis Smith).

He’s the One who must give us life. He’s the One who must give us wisdom. Our problems are beyond us. We must pray concerning America, “God, stand beside her and guide her through the night with the light from above, for You are the only wise God, smarter than all the wiseacres in the Pentagon put together.”



### C. **There Must Be No Refusal**

There must be, dear friend, no rival, no rebuttal, and no refusal, because the Bible says, “[*To Him*] *be honour and glory for ever and ever*” (1 Timothy 1:17). When you get right down to it, dear friend, it’s not God and country; it’s not God and anything—it’s God, just God.

*“Render...unto Caesar the things [that] are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s”* (Matthew 22:21).

### **Conclusion**

Let’s pray. Father, we’re grateful for the way our nation was founded. Lord, we’re grateful for Your mercies in the past. And I, for one, dear Lord, am grateful for Your patience with us as a nation. And Lord, we deserve judgment, and those of us in this room deserve judgment, not perhaps for the things that we’ve done, but for the things that we’ve failed to do. Lord, we’ve not prayed, we’ve not spoken, we’ve not witnessed as we should, and we stand guilty tonight. And Lord, as pastor and people, as a congregation and as individuals, we bow our heads and we pray, O God, one more time, bless this country. God, as we turn from evil, you know, Lord, that there are things beyond our control. There are things that happen in the courtrooms—things that happen in City Hall and in the halls of Congress over which we have no immediate control except prayer. So Lord, we pray. And then, Lord, help us as we go back to our neighborhoods, to our offices, to our family, to let the love, and the beauty, and the gentleness of Jesus be lived out in our hearts and in our lives. For we pray in His wonderful, wonderful name. Amen.

# One Nation Under God

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** July 7, 2002

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 22:15–22

*“And he saith unto them. Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar’s. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s.”*

MATTHEW 22:20–21

## Outline

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## Introduction

Well, I told you grace was wonderful, and if you have it in your heart, you know what we’re talking about. Take God’s precious Word and find Matthew chapter 22. And, when you’ve found it, look up here, and let me share with you what was recently in our paper. It says, “‘Single Dad’s Lawsuit Took Aim at Pledge.’ Los Angeles—He’s a suburban, single dad with degrees in medicine and the law who for the past few years has devoted his life to the cause advancing the separation of church and state. Michael Newdow, 49, also is an atheist. He did not like it when he heard that his daughter was being asked to recite the Pledge of Allegiance every morning at a public elementary school near Sacramento because it includes the phrase ‘under God.’ So he filed a lawsuit, taking the case to court on his own.” And, he goes on to say—he was interviewed on NBC’s *Today Show*—and he said, “We’re not supposed to have religion infused into our society by government.”

Now tonight, we’re going to talk a little bit about church and state, and I want to read,

first of all, from the Word of God. Matthew chapter 22, beginning in verse 15: *“Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk”—*now friend, every time the Pharisees tried to trap the Lord Jesus, or entangle the Lord Jesus, it blew up and backfired on them—*“And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth”—*of course, they were lying when they said that. He did this, but they didn’t believe it—*“neither carest thou for any man; for thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute”—*that is, to pay taxes—*“unto Caesar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Shew me the tribute money”—*that is, the tax money—*“And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar’s. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s. When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way.”* (Matthew 22:15–22)

Now, let’s talk a little bit about “One Nation Under God,” and let’s talk a little bit about church and state. It may surprise you to know that the phrase “separation of church and state” is not found in the Constitution of the United States of America. Did you know that? You can’t find it. Read it from beginning to end. The very phrase is not there. As a matter of fact, you won’t find the “church” anywhere in this document. But, we do have the First Amendment, and in the First Amendment of our Constitution, and through all of the Constitution, no restriction—listen to me—no restriction, none whatsoever—was placed on the church. All the limitations in the Constitution are placed upon the government. So, you say, “Well, what about the phrase ‘separation of church and state’?” Well, that came some eleven years after the Constitution was adopted and ratified. It came from Thomas Jefferson, who, in some correspondence, used that phrase “a wall of separation between church and state.” And, even when Thomas Jefferson used that phrase, he was not using that phrase to say that the church should stay out of government but that the government should stay out of the church.

However, in the past fifty years or so, the ACLU and other liberal and secular humanist organizations have tried to reverse the meaning of the Constitution—actually, to turn it upside down, to turn it on its head. And, if they had their way, they would like for all moral values, all religious symbols, in our public life to be removed from our public life, and they want to do that in the name of the First Amendment. The irony of all of that is that the First Amendment was written to keep people like that from doing just that very same thing. The Declaration of Independence, which is the intention of our Founding Fathers to found this nation, clearly recognizes God. And, it was adopted by the Continental Congress, and the members of the Continental Congress, of course,

were elected by the people of the respective states; and so, therefore, this Declaration of Independence represents the consensus of the people at that time.

And, always in this Declaration of Independence, from that time to this, we find these references to God. I'll mention these. The Declaration of Independence speaks of the laws of nature and nature's God: "the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them..." Another quotation: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal." Again, another statement in the Declaration: "They are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights." And then, the Declaration closes with "a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence."

Our Founding Fathers did not believe in the separation of God from government. Do you know what the first act of Congress was? Would you like to know? The first act of Congress was the printing of twenty thousand Bibles for the Indians. That was the first act of Congress. A Frenchman, some fifty years after the Constitution was written, came to the United States of America to find out what made America the great nation that she is and was, the republic that God gave us. This Frenchman, Alexis de Tocqueville, came in 1831. De Tocqueville came and went up and down the breadth, the highways and the hedges, of America, interviewed people, studied, read the documents, found something of the life of America, and this is what De Tocqueville said: "Religion in America takes no direct part in the government of society, but it must be regarded as the first of their political institutions...I am certain that they hold it to be indispensable to the maintenance of republican institutions"—now, when he says, "republican institutions," he didn't mean a party like the Republican Party; he meant a government by law—"This opinion is not peculiar to a class of citizens or to a party, but it belongs to the whole nation and to every rank of society." I'm telling you, when this nation was born, it was born in the midst of religious revival. And, if you were to study the state constitutions of that time, all of them—all of them—recognized Almighty God, and today every state constitution recognizes Almighty God.

Let me give you an example of some of them. North Carolina: "We, the people of the State of North Carolina, grateful to Almighty God, the Sovereign Ruler of Nations..." Well, let's talk about New Jersey: "We, the people of the State of New Jersey, grateful to Almighty God for the civil and religious liberty which He hath so long permitted us to enjoy, and looking to Him for a blessing upon our endeavors..." Or, let's think a little bit about Rhode Island: "We, the people of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, grateful to Almighty God..." What about New York? "We The People of the State of New York, grateful to Almighty God for our Freedom, in order to secure its blessings, DO ESTABLISH THIS CONSTITUTION." And, on we could go through all of the state constitutions. They all recognize Almighty God.

Samuel Adams, who was the father of the American Revolution and a signer of the

Declaration of Independence, wrote, “The right to freedom being the gift of God Almighty.” Listen to that: “The right to freedom being the gift of God Almighty.” “The rights of colonists as Christians...may be best understood by reading and carefully studying the institutes of the great Lawgiver”—he’s talking there about Moses—“which are to be found clearly written and promulgated in the New Testament.” And so, he’s saying that we have the great Lawgiver, God Himself, through His prophets, and our Constitution was written on the basis of Judeo-Christian law.

Now, the most burning question today that we face as Americans is, really, is this one nation under God, or is this a secular nation without any fixed, moral absolutes that functions independent of any god other than human reason? If you want to frustrate a politician, let him spout a while about values and then ask him, “Whose values?” And then, he’s either going to have to say, “Well, my values,” or “your values,” or “God’s values.” You see, we make values relative if we do not have a fixed standard, and we have that fixed standard in the Constitution, that is rooted in the very Word of God.

Now, I want to remind you that the phrase “separation of church and state” is not in the Constitution at all. It can’t be found there in the Constitution. It was written, as we said, by Thomas Jefferson eleven years after the Constitution was written. Now, he was not even one of the Founding Fathers. As a matter of fact, he was out of the country when the Constitution was being debated. Now, Jefferson could not be called a Bible-believing Christian, but even Jefferson said this—and I want you to listen to what Jefferson wrote, and I’m quoting: “God, who gave us life, gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are the gift of God? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that His justice cannot sleep forever. Commerce between master and slave is despotism”—he’s talking here about something that must be done about slavery—“Nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate than these people are to be free.” Jefferson here was talking about freedom in America, and he said that the freedom that we must have in America comes from God. The God who gave us life is the God who gave us liberty.

Well, what did the First Amendment mean, therefore, when it says that “Congress shall make no law respecting [the] establishment of religion”? It meant that we will have no national church. Our national church will not be an Episcopal church, it will not be a Baptist church, it will not be a Methodist church. But, our Constitution is not hostile to religion, and our Constitution is not hostile to the Christian faith. John Adams said a very marvelous thing. He said, “Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other”—our Constitution. Listen to this; it’s a great statement: “Our Constitution was made only for a moral and a religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.” If you have a democracy that results in a republic, that’s made up by laws, people who do not have a

moral base, then wicked people are going to elect wicked people, and they're going to enact wicked laws.

So, what are the responsibilities—the rights and the responsibilities—of those of us who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and citizens of this great country? Where are we going to get the answers? Well, we're not going to get the answers from politicians who often have an ax to grind. Where are we going to get the answers? We're not going to get the answers from the secular humanists, and the ungodly, and the ACLU, and from Planned Parenthood. Where are we going to get the answers? We're not going to get the answers from the philosophies of well-meaning religionists. The answers come from the Word of God, and I've just read to you from Matthew chapter 22 what Jesus said, which is the wisdom of the ages concerning a Christian in this society, really, or in any other society.

Now, Jesus said we're to *"render...unto Caesar the things [that] are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's."* (Matthew 22:21) When you want to understand the Bible, you ask yourself three questions. You are to, first of all, look at when it was written, and you ask yourself, "What did it mean then?" Then you ask yourself the second question: What does that mean today?—that is, how does it apply today? The meaning doesn't change, but the application changes. Caesar is not our czar, is not our ruler. We live in a democracy. So, what does it mean, "Render unto Caesar"? What does that mean to an American today? What did it mean then? What does it mean to us today? And then, we ask the third question, and here's really where the rubber meets the road: What does that mean to me personally? Now, if you want the Bible to burst aflame, you ask yourself these three questions: What did it mean then? How does it apply today? And, how does it apply to me personally?

Now, let's ask about separation of church and state. Rightly understood, none of us would argue with the separation of church of state. Rightly understood, none of us would argue with the phrase "Congress shall make no law respecting [the] establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Our Founding Fathers did not mean for a moment the separation of God and government. And, that's seen in the history of our country. Look on the money in your billfold, and you'll find printed this phrase: "In God we trust." Now, if the ACLU had their way, and People for the American Way and others, they would want to take that off of our coinage. You would find in this country a Congress that opens with prayer. Isn't it strange that these congressional leaders can pray but our boys and girls in school can't? Is that not strange? Is it not strange that you can go and visit the Supreme Court, as I have—the building of the Supreme Court in Washington, DC—and see there displayed on the walls the Ten Commandments, and yet we cannot have the Ten Commandments on our classroom walls? Is that not strange indeed? And, up until this time, there's been no quibble about

saluting our flag since this phrase was added: “One nation under God.” We’ve never quibbled about that before. But, now we have revisionists who would like to change everything.

I want to remind you, friend, that America was founded as a country that had spiritual and moral values rooted in the Judeo-Christian ethic. Abraham Lincoln said—listen to what Abraham Lincoln said: “I believe that it is the duty of nations as well as men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God.” Now, listen to that statement: “It is the duty”—not merely the privilege, but the duty—“of nations as well as men to own”—or, “recognize”—“their dependence upon the overruling power of God.”

Now, our Constitution, the Constitution of the United States of America, is opposed to state-mandated or state-supported churches, and I’ll be in the beginning of that fight. I do not want any state church, be it Baptist or any other thing. It would be the worst thing that could happen to the Church, and the worst thing that could happen to the state. What the framers of our Constitution believed in, and rightly so, was a free church in a free state. But, ungodly people have always wanted to separate God from government. Put in your margin “Psalm chapter 2”—beginning in verse 1: *“Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed”*—that is, against the Lord and His Messiah, His Christ—*“saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the LORD shall have them in derision.”* (Psalms 2:1–4)

And, God laughs at the Ninth Circuit Court in San Francisco, and all of these—this little atheist man who does not want to recognize God in government—who say, “Let’s cast their cords aside. We don’t want God in our ruling.” We have bought into that today, and we have tried to kick God out of our schools and out of our halls of legislation. And, what has been the result? We, today, have a nation that is baptized with salty tears, and we have become, in many ways, the laughingstock of other nations. And, the scream of the American eagle has become the twitter of a frightened sparrow. And, we felt that we could get along without God.

Now tonight, I want to talk to you about two basic things: number one, our duty to human government; and number two: our duty to holy God. And, I want us to see what the Bible teaches that we’re to do as Christians.

## **I. Our Duty to Human Government**

What is our duty, and our privilege, and our responsibility to human government?

### **A. We Are to Participate in Our Government**

Number one: We are to participate in our government. Now, if you don’t participate in

your government, may God have mercy upon you! You are disobeying the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said we're to "render...unto Caesar the things [that] are Caesar's." (Matthew 22:21) What is our Caesar? Our Caesar is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. Now, if you do not participate, you are not giving to your Caesar what is due because you are not participating in a government that is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. A wise man has said that "the scandal of our time is the bad citizenship of good people." It is inconceivable that God ordained human government and then told His people to stay out of it.

Now, if that is true, who does that leave to make the laws and to run the nation? Now, we are going to participate, and our focus is not going to be upon parties, not upon persons, not upon politics, but principles. We are to be informed. I've heard it until I'm sick of hearing it—about the "Christian Right." Now friend, it's as if we're choosing between right or left. No, we don't choose between right or left; we choose between right or wrong. And, we just simply want to say what is right, and nothing is politically right that is morally wrong. And so, we do not separate ourselves from government any more than we separate God from government.

Now, the people of this church need to be registered to vote. We're going to help you to register to vote. And, if you're not registered to vote, I'll guarantee you one thing: you are not going to vote. You say, "Well, my vote won't make a difference." In 1645, one vote gave Oliver Cromwell control of all of England. In 1649, one vote caused Charles I of England to be executed. In 1776—listen to this—one vote gave America the English language rather than German. How many of you speak German? All right, listen. In 1839, one vote elected Marcus Morton Governor of Massachusetts. In 1845, one vote saved President Andrew Jackson from impeachment. In 1876, one vote gave Rutherford B. Hayes the presidency of the United States. In 1923, one vote made Adolf Hitler the leader of the Nazi Party—one vote. I'm only one, but I am one. I can't do everything, but I can do something. And, *what I can do and ought to do, that, by the grace of God, I will do.* Your one vote makes a difference. Think how narrow that vote was in Florida in this last election.

Now, don't let people make you believe because you're a Bible-believing Christian that somehow you are disenfranchised. You are not! You know, some people think that we need to stay inside our church houses, sort of stain-glassed prisons, and not come outside.

† Let me see if I can illustrate this. There is a law in our Constitution that keeps the government out of our homes. The government cannot burst into your home and break down the door and come in, or force their way in—what we call "illegal search and seizure." Why? Because a man's castle is his home, and that's a part of our American way of life. But, because the government cannot kick down my door and come into my



home, does that mean, contrariwise, that I cannot go outside? Of course not! Now, this is what the First Amendment means. It means that the government is to stay out of the church. It does not mean that the church cannot go out into society. That doesn't mean that at all.†

People say, "Well, what about prayer in public schools?" Listen. Why is it that people believe in freedom for everybody but Christians? Prayer is free speech. I believe that a red-blooded, free American can pray vocally anywhere, anytime, under the rules of decorum. You know, people say, "Well, it might offend somebody." Well, friend, our children are offended every day by the things that are taught, the immoral sex education, the blasphemy, the blatant rock music with its sexual innuendoes and all of this. They're offended every day. And, by the way, there's nothing in the Constitution that keeps a person from being offended. If it offends people that we pray, so be it. The great danger is not that Christians pray. Friend, people say, "Well, if Christians pray, then you're going to have to let the Islamists pray. You're going to have to let the Buddhists pray. You're going to let these others pray." I don't care if they pray. God can sort out the prayers. The great danger—the great danger—is not that the pagans pray; the great danger is that God's people don't.

Now, they say, "Well, we want to be neutral in our schools." Well, how can you be neutral about religion? You can't be neutral about religion. That's like saying, "Well, we're going to be neutral about food so nobody will eat. We're going to be neutral about air so nobody will breathe." No, there are some things you cannot be neutral about. Our faith is our bread. Our faith is our breath.

Now, this church cannot be identified with any political party, nor should we ever be. We need to be free from all political parties in that sense, so we can tell them all to repent and get right with God. The church must never attempt to use the power of the government for spiritual goals. The government is here to protect us, but it cannot improve us morally or spiritually. The government is here to restrain evil. God is here to make us good. The government must be free to do what it alone can do so the Church may be free to do what she alone can do. And, *whenever church and state marry each other, the church is always the loser. And, if you marry a politician, you'll be a widow in about four years.*

What is the church here for? The church is here to minister God's grace. The government is here to minister God's justice. The church is to expose evil. The state is to restrain evil. The church is to carry out the Great Commission. The state is to preserve peace so it is possible for us to carry out the Great Commission in liberty and peace. The government is national. The church is international. It is worldwide. It is rooted in the Kingdom of God.

So, what are we to do? We are to participate in our government. And, don't let

anybody try to disenfranchise you or me because we're Christians. You know, every now and then people get upset because I, as a preacher, talk about politics and I, as a preacher, talk about government. Why not? I'm an American. I pay taxes. I have every right. You have every right to speak out. This is our country. We're not disenfranchised. We are to participate in our government.

## **B. We Are to Pay for Our Government**

And, you won't like the next one, but we're to pay for our government. We're to pay for it. We're to pay taxes. Did you know that it's biblical to pay taxes? That's what they asked Jesus about: "Is it right to give taxes to Caesar or not?" Yes, we're to pay taxes. Romans chapter 13, verses 6 and 7: "*For this cause pay ye tribute also*"—the word *tribute* doesn't mean you're a nice fellow, but it means "to pay taxes"—"*for they are God's ministers*"—he's talking about the governmental officials—"*attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.*" (Romans 13:6–7) Tribute would be like income tax. Custom would be like sales tax. We're having a big debate about that in Tennessee right now today.

Again, in Matthew chapter 17, beginning in verse 24, talking about Jesus and His disciples: "*When they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute?*"—"Doesn't Jesus pay taxes?"—"He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, *What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers? Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free. Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.*" (Matthew 17:24–27) It's an unusual way of paying taxes. I can't even catch a fish, much less one with a coin in its mouth. But, the point of this whole thing is here that Jesus paid taxes. He said, "Peter, use that coin"—it must have been a very valuable coin—"use that coin to pay taxes for you and for me." Jesus paid taxes.

Now, of course, we all love to stand up against over-taxation. Somebody has said that "a nation is on its last legs when half the people get the idea they don't have to work and the other half to get the idea it does no good to work because people take everything that they work for." A Frenchman said that "France fell when the people began to think of the government as a cow to be milked rather than a watchdog to be fed."

Our Founding Fathers were so wise. They said that government is to provide for the common defense and promote the general welfare. They did not say that the

government is here to provide for the general welfare. The government is here to provide for the common defense. You and I can't raise an army. We can't go around as a bunch of vigilantes, taking vengeance on people. We need a common defense. That's what government is for. We are to promote the general welfare. Give us a free country where people can earn a living but not put everybody on a welfare state, for the Bible says, "*If [a man will] not work, neither should he eat.*" (2 Thessalonians 3:10) We're to pay taxes. And yes, we'll grumble. Yes, we'll gripe. Yes, we'll try to keep taxes as low as we can. But, I'll tell you, people are still standing in line trying to get into America, the greatest nation on the face of this earth.

### **C. We Are to Pray for Our Country**

I'll tell you the third thing we're to do: not only are we to participate and to pay, but we're to pray. We are to pray for our country. First Timothy chapter 2, verses 1 through 3: "*I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.*" (1 Timothy 2:1–3)

Do you pray for your government? Let me tell you something—if this makes you mad, you come up to me and apologize after the service and I'll forgive you: if you don't pray and you don't vote, you lose your right to complain. Don't you complain. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, a person that does not vote and a person that does not pray. We are to participate, and we are to pray. We're to pray for our rulers even if they're wicked. When this was written, Nero was the Emperor. A more wicked person would be hard to find. But, you still pray for them. If they're wicked, pray all the more. Proverbs 21, verse 1: "*The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.*" (Proverbs 21:1)

We've often heard it said that wicked rulers are God's reward for wicked people. And, I remember reading in the Bible about God's ancient people who wanted something that was not best for them. The Bible said God gave them the desire of their heart and sent leanness into their souls. (Psalms 106:15) I sometimes think that we as America are suffering greatly because of the desire of our heart for wicked rulers. The greatest responsibility for America is not in the White House nor in the State House but in the church house, and your house and my house while we pray. Joyce and I make it a habit to pray every Lord's Day for America and for our leaders. And, we pray for our president. We pray for our governor. We pray for our senators. We pray for our representatives. We pray for our mayors. We even pray for the Lakeland mayor where we live. We pray for the Germantown mayor, and the Bartlett mayor, and the mayor of this city, Memphis. And, we pray because the Bible says we're to pray for these people.

That doesn't mean that we agree with their politics always.

¶ A man said to a politician, "I'm praying for you," and he said, "Well, that's right." The politician said, "You're to pray for all who are in authority." (1 Timothy 2:1–2) He said, "Well, that's not why I'm praying. It's the other command that I'm following: 'Pray for them that persecute you.'" (Matthew 5:44) But, we're to pray.¶

Now, are you praying for this nation? America needs prayer.

#### **D. We Are to Speak to Our Government**

Now, not only are we, friend, to pay, and to pray, and to participate, but we're to preach. We're to speak to our nation. We're to speak to our government. God has called us to be salt and light. Jesus said, "You don't light a candle and put it under a bushel." (Matthew 5:15; Mark 4:21; Luke 11:33) We're salt. (Matthew 5:13) Salt penetrates, and salt irritates, and salt cleanses, and salt heals. And, God's people dare not be silent. We need to know what the issues are, and we need to speak.

Study the Bible, and find out what the men of old did. Nathan was a prophet of God, and he spoke to King David and told him where he was wrong. Elijah was a prophet of God, and he spoke to King Ahab and told him where he was wrong. Eliezer was a prophet of God, and he spoke to King Jehoshaphat and told him where he was wrong. Daniel was a man of God, and he preached and spoke and prophesied to King Nebuchadnezzar. Moses was a man of God, and he spoke to Pharaoh and warned Pharaoh. And, we need to speak. We need to speak about abortion in America. We need to speak about the murder of the innocent. We've heard about abortion so long that now, when we hear about it, we just kind of give a sympathetic smile and hope that the pastor will move on to something a little more edifying.

I testified, when I was President of the Southern Baptist Convention, to a Senate hearing chaired by Senator Orrin Hatch, and I gave Orrin Hatch this passage of Scripture—Proverbs 24, verses 11 and 12: *"If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth he not know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?"* (Proverbs 24:11–12) Yes, we're to speak, and we will not, dare not, cannot, must not be silent in these days. Good people need to speak up. You need to speak to your neighbors, your friends, for our government.

#### **E. We Are to Show Patriotism for Our Country**

The next thing that we owe to our government is patriotism—not only preaching, but patriotism. I am a patriot. I love this nation. Patriotism is not wrong. *Patriotism*, the love of a country, just means, "love of your fatherland." I expect my children to love me in my

family. I expect family loyalty. And, we can expect national loyalty. Patriotism is a virtue taught in the Bible. The psalmist said in Psalm 137, verse 5: *“If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand lose her cunning”* (Psalms 137:5)—“If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my hand be palsied.” Yes, the Bible teaches patriotism. Sir Walter Scott wrote a note of true Christian patriotism when he wrote this:

*Breathes there the man with soul so dead,  
Who never to himself hath said,  
This is my own, my native land!*

—SIR WALTER SCOTT

A good, red-blooded Christian American will stand up for Old Glory, and he will sing with all of his heart “God Bless America.” If we don’t love America, who is going to love America? America is a God-blessed, God-founded nation. No nation ever had such a Christian beginning as America—none! And, God has blessed us these two hundred plus years. And, may God’s grace continue to shine upon America!

## **II. Our Duty to Holy God**

Now, that’s our duty to human government. What is our duty to Holy God?

### **A. There Can Be No Rival**

Again, 1 Timothy chapter 1, verse 17—here it is: *“Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.”* (1 Timothy 1:17) Now, some people say America doesn’t have a king, but our Founding Fathers believed that we did: “Protect us by thy might, great God our king.” We didn’t vote Him in, and we won’t vote Him out. He is the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, and therefore, there can be no rival. The early Christians, while they believed in rendering to Caesar the things that were Caesar’s and unto God the things that were God’s, they refused to render unto Caesar the things that are God’s. They refuse to say that Caesar is Lord: “Kurios Caesar.” They would not say that. They could have saved their lives if they’d only offered a pinch of incense to Caesar, but they would not do that. They would not say, “Caesar is Lord.” Our duty to Holy God is that He can have no rival.

### **B. There Can Be No Rebuttal**

And then, there can be no rebuttal. He is the only wise God. What does that mean? It means His Word is final. When I have to figure out what is right or wrong, I go to the Word of God, and God’s Word is final. And, He’s the One who wants to guide America. That’s the reason we sing, “Stand beside her and guide her through the night with the light from above.”

### C. There Can Be No Refusal

There can be no rival. There can be no rebuttal. And, there can be no refusal. “To Him be honor and glory,” (Revelation 5:13) the Scripture says. Now remember, we must “obey God rather than men.” (Acts 5:29) There may come a time when you and I must be civilly disobedient. We cannot always obey the government. The midwives, when the little babies were being killed in the time of wicked Pharaoh and in the times of Herod, would hide the little babies, (Exodus 1:17) and well they might. There may be a time when they will say to me, “Adrian, you cannot preach the Word of God.” I’m going to preach it anyway.

I’ve had the privilege of meeting with the past presidents of the United States, meeting with Jimmy Carter, and meeting with Ronald Reagan. I’ve had the privilege of meeting with both George Bushes, and I’ve had the privilege of meeting with William Clinton—one time. I was never asked back. And, I told him we’re not going to ordain homosexuals, we’re not going to lower the standard of God’s Word, and you’re not going to take away our tax exemption either. That was the last time I was invited. And, I wouldn’t have come that time if it had been any kind of an endorsement. And, I don’t say that boastfully, but there comes a time when we must say, as God’s people, “We will obey God rather than man. We’re going to do what’s right.” You know, they may come and confiscate our property one day. They may come and put us in jail one day. One day, we may face the firing squad. If we do, hallelujah! Hallelujah! There is a God. And, there is our duty to human government. And there is our duty to Holy God.

### Conclusion

I believe in good government, but government is not the answer. *All government can do, apart from God, is to make the world a better place to go to hell from.* What we need to do is to preach the glorious gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now, some people say, “Well, it’s worldly if you get involved.” No, a wise man once said, “To try to improve society is not worldliness, but love; to wash your hands of society is not love, but worldliness.” Yes, we will try to improve society, but above all, we’re going to preach the Lord Jesus Christ. And, as long as there’s breath in these lungs, I’m going to say, “May America ever be one nation under God!”<sup>¶</sup>

# Is Jesus God?

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** November 2, 1986

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 22:41–46

*“While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David.”*

MATTHEW 22:41–42

## Outline

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Conclusion

## Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles tonight and turn to Matthew chapter 22. I will begin reading in just a moment in verse 41. The title of our message tonight is “Is Jesus God?” Matthew chapter 22, verse 41: *“While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ?”*—and by the way, no greater question could be asked with more solemn ramifications than one question: *“What think ye of Christ?”* (Matthew 22:42)—*“whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.”* (Matthew 22:41–46)

It has wisely been said that “great minds discuss ideals. Average minds discuss events. Small minds discuss people.” This, however, is not true when it comes to the person of Jesus Christ. When you discuss Jesus Christ, you can discuss nothing

greater. Now, the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is God in human flesh. Somebody wrote these words, and they sound very noble:

*If Jesus Christ is a man  
And only a man, I say  
That of all mankind I will cleave to Him,  
And to Him will cleave always.  
If Jesus Christ is a God,  
And the only God, I swear  
I will follow Him through heaven and hell,  
The earth, the sea, and the air.*  
—RICHARD WATSON GILDER

Those are beautiful words, but I don't agree with them at all. If Jesus Christ is a man, and only a man, I'm not going to cleave to Him. If Jesus Christ is a man, and only a man, I'm going to reject Him as a fake, a fraud, and an impostor. Jesus Christ is more than a man. He is God, a very God.

It's very important that you understand what I have to say because it is the story, the cornerstone, of Christianity. And, I want to give you four lines of evidence for the deity of Jesus Christ. I want you to jot these down. I want you to get the Scripture, and I want you to see clearly and plainly that Jesus Christ is the Son of God with power and God in human flesh. Here are the four lines of argument—here are four evidences—for the absolute deity of Jesus Christ.

## **I. The Attributes Jesus Possesses**

Number one: I know that Jesus Christ is God by the attributes that describe Him in the Word of God. The attributes of the Father are found in the Lord Jesus. Now, for a moment, I want you to lick your fingers, and we're going to take our Bible and do a Bible study. And, I'm going to compare with you the Jehovah of the Old Testament with the Jesus of the New Testament, and I'm going to show you that the Jehovah of the Old Testament and the Jesus of the New Testament are, in essence, the same—Jehovah in the Old Testament and Jesus in the New Testament.

One time I was in my yard, and a man with a briefcase came up and he began to talk to me about religion. I already suspected what organization he belonged to. But, I was out there in my grubby clothes, working in the yard, and he began to talk about religion and world events. And, I said, "Well, before we talk, I'd like to know what organization you belong to. What denomination, what background, are you?" He said, "Well, that doesn't make any particular difference. Let's just talk about religion." I said, "Well, no, it makes a difference to me. I'd really like to know." He said, "Well, no, I'd rather not." I said, "Are you ashamed of what you represent? Tell me, who are you?"



What is your background?" He said, "Well, I'm a Jehovah's Witness. Does that make difference?" I said, "No, so am I." He said, "You are?" I said, "Yes, I am." He looked me up and down, and he said, "Well, I've never seen you over at the Kingdom Hall." I said, "Oh, I don't go to the Kingdom Hall. I go to the Baptist church." He said, "You do?" I said, "Yes." And, he said, "And you're Jehovah's Witness?" And, I said, "Yes, I love to talk about Jehovah and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And, I believe that Jehovah and Jesus are one, and Jesus said, '*Ye shall be witnesses unto me.*' (Acts 1:8); so that makes me a Jehovah's Witness." He said, "I don't think I understand you." I said, "Let me show you something," and I began to show him what I want to show you—how God equates the Jehovah of the Old Testament with Jesus in the New Testament.

Now, the name Jehovah is the name for the Almighty. It is used in the Old Testament over seven thousand times. Now, if you have a King James Version of the Scripture, the way *Jehovah* is translated is "*LORD*." Pious Jews never spoke this name in audible terms. When they were reading the Scripture, when they came to the name, they would close their eyes and bow their head in worship. The congregation would do the same thing if they were reading the Scripture and just came to the name *Jehovah*. When a scribe was copying the Holy Scripture—remember, they didn't have printing presses, but they would copy it—when he would come to the name *Jehovah*, he would get a brand-new pen just to write that name. *Jehovah*—that is, translated "*LORD*"—this is the name that God used for Himself when He was dealing with His people—His personal name. When God created everything, He used the name Elohim, but when He's the God of redemption and the God of compassion, He uses the name Jehovah.

Now, I want you to just take your Bible, therefore, and let's see something very interesting. Turn with me to Isaiah for a moment, in the Old Testament. And, by the way, this will be like a children's Bible drill; and so, we're going to have to work at it a little bit. Isaiah chapter 40 and verse 3—and I want you to see that the Bible describes the Lord in this way—Isaiah chapter 40, verse 3: "*The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD*"—now, remember the word "*LORD*" here is *Jehovah*—"*Prepare ye the way of the LORD*"—or "*Jehovah*"—"*make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*" (Isaiah 40:3)

Now, that's a very interesting passage of Scripture, but now let's turn to the New Testament and see how that is applied. Turn with me, please, to Matthew chapter 3, verse 3, and you're going to find out that these were the words of John the Baptist. Well, as a matter of fact, let's begin in verse 1: "*In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.*" (Matthew 3:1–3)

Now, who was John the Baptist talking about? Well, go down to verse 11. John said, *“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.”* (Matthew 3:11–13) All right, who was the Lord whose way is being prepared? Who was that Jehovah that Isaiah was talking about and that John preached? It was none other but the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, go to Isaiah chapter 44, and look with me in verse 6—Isaiah 44, verse 6: *“Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts”*—literally, “the Jehovah of hosts.” Now, I want you to see what Jehovah says of Himself. Jehovah says—*“I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.”* (Isaiah 44:6) Now, Jehovah calls Himself “the first” and “the last.” Now, turn with me to the book of Revelation and see what the Bible has to say about the Lord Jesus. Look with me in Revelation chapter 1 and verse 17. John saw Jesus, and he said, *“And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.”* (Revelation 1:17–18) In the Old Testament, Jehovah is the first and the last. In the New Testament, Jesus is the first and the last.

Turn with me to Isaiah chapter 43, if you will now—Isaiah chapter 43 and verse 11. Some of you are going to get tired of this, but others will stay up. Isaiah chapter 43, verse 11: God says, *“I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour.”* (Isaiah 43:11) There’s no Savior other than Jehovah. Look at it again: *“I, even I, am the LORD”*—that is, “I am Jehovah”—*“and beside me there is no saviour.”* (Isaiah 43:11)

Now, turn to Titus, if you will, with me, in the New Testament, and see what the New Testament had to say about this. Right after the book of Second Timothy, in Titus chapter 2 and verse 13—listen to it: *“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”* (Titus 2:13) Now, Jehovah says, *“Beside me there is no saviour,”* (Isaiah 43:11) but here in the New Testament, Jesus Christ is called *“the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”* (Titus 2:13) It’s very clear that Jehovah is Savior and Jesus is Savior. And, actually, the name Jesus—do you know what it means? It literally means “Jehovah saves.” That’s what the name Jesus means. Jesus and Jehovah are the same.

Look with me, if you will, in Psalm 24 for a moment, here in the Old Testament. And, in Psalm 24, you’re going to find out that Jehovah is called “the Lord of glory.” Psalm 24 and verse 10: *“Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory.”*

(Psalms 24:10) But now, turn with me, please, to 1 Corinthians chapter 2 and verse 8, and we're going to find out that while Jehovah is called "the King of glory" in the Old Testament, Jesus is called "the Lord of glory" in the New Testament. Paul said, concerning our Lord, "*Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*" (1 Corinthians 2:8) Psalm 24 calls Jehovah "the Lord of glory." (Psalms 24:10) The Apostle Paul calls Jesus "the Lord of glory." (1 Corinthians 2:8) In Psalm 23 and verse 1, the Bible says, "*The LORD is my shepherd.*" (Psalms 23:1) It literally says, "Jehovah is my shepherd." In John chapter 10 and verse 11, Jesus said, "*I am the good shepherd.*" (John 10:11) What I'm trying to say to you...and I could go on and on and on; as a matter of fact, take all of my preaching time comparing the Jehovah of the Old Testament with the Jesus of the New Testament. Now, I'm telling you, friend, I'm just giving you that bit of Jesus, and I'm showing you that the attributes of Jesus are the attributes of God Himself.

Now, turn with me, for example, to John chapter 1, and let's look for a moment—the Gospel of John—and we'll stop comparing Jesus with Jehovah verse by verse, but we'll do something else. John chapter 1, and I want to begin reading in verse 1 and see how the Bible describes the Lord Jesus: "*In the beginning was the Word*"—"the Logos"—"and"—"the [Logos]"—"the Word"—"*was with God, and the [Logos] was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men.*" (John 1:1–4) Now, what does this tell us?

#### **A. The Pre-existence of Jesus**

This tells us that the Word, the *Logos*, Jesus—and by the way, there's no doubt about the fact that the Word here is the Lord Jesus, and anybody can read and see very clearly and very plainly that "the Word" refers to Jesus—now, that Word was in the beginning with God and that Word was God. (John 1:1) That speaks of the pre-existence of Jesus. That means there never was a time when Jesus was not. Jesus was not a created being. When Jesus Christ was born, He was older than His mother and as old as His father. He was born of the flesh, but before He was ever born of the flesh, He existed eternally with God the Father. The pre-existence of Jesus is clearly taught.

#### **B. The Absolute Holiness of Jesus**

The absolute holiness of Jesus is clearly taught. Would you turn with me to John chapter 8 and look in verse 46? John chapter 8 and verse 46. They were questioning Jesus. They were drilling Jesus. They were criticizing and critiquing Jesus. And, Jesus looked at them, and this is what He said: "*Which of you convinceth me of sin?*" (John 8:46) Can you imagine that? Can you imagine anybody on this earth having the audacity and the nerve to say, "Is there anybody here who can convict me of sin?" I

wouldn't even challenge my friends that way, much less my enemies. But, Jesus did because Jesus is holy. You see, in Hosea chapter 11 and verse 9, Jehovah is called "*the Holy One in the midst of thee.*" (Hosea 11:9) But, in Acts chapter 3 and verse 14, Jesus is called "*the Holy One.*" (Acts 3:14) Jesus was absolutely sinless.

Now, what I'm trying to say is that Jesus was pre-existent. There never was a time when He has not been; therefore, He is God. I'm saying that Jesus alone is absolutely holy; and, therefore, He is God. Do you know one of the remarkable things about the life of Jesus, when you read the life of Jesus? Never one time do you ever see Him praying for forgiveness—not one time. Now, if Jesus is not absolutely sinless and absolutely holy, He's an absolute egotist. No, but He never ever prays for forgiveness, for He never ever needed to be forgiven. That's the first line of evidence I want to give you: the attributes of Jesus show us clearly that He is God.

## **II. The Adoration Jesus Receives**

Now, the second line of evidence I want to give you to show you that Jesus Christ is God, a very God, is not only the attributes that He possesses, but the adoration that He receives. It can be shown in the Bible that His followers not only adored Him, but they worshipped Him. Now, pay close attention. If Jesus is not God and Jesus allows people to worship Him, Jesus is guilty of aiding and abetting the worse sin in the catalogue of sins, which is idolatry. For the Bible says, "*Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only.*" (Matthew 4:10; Luke 4:8) Now, if Jesus is not God, He has no right to be worshipped.

Was Jesus worshipped? Look with me, please, in Luke chapter 4 and verse 8. Luke chapter 4 and verse 8: "*And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.*" (Luke 4:8) No one is to be worshipped except Almighty God. Jesus Himself said that.

Now, remember that Jesus said that, but now turn with me to Revelation chapter 22 and verse 8. Revelation chapter 22 and verse 8: "*And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things*"—there was a glorious angel that revealed some things to John. John was so impressed that he, in a moment of weakness and confusion, fell down to worship that angel—"*Then saith he unto me*"—this is what the angel said to John—"*See thou do it not*"—that is, "Don't worship me"—"*for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.*" (Revelation 22:8A 9)

Now, not only did Jesus say that God alone was to be worshipped, but now the angel says that God alone is to be worshipped. Keep that in mind now, and continue to

read with me. Turn to Matthew chapter 28 and verse 9. Matthew chapter 28 and verse 9: *“And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and”*—did what?—*“worshipped him.”* (Matthew 28:9) Do you see that? Do you see that? His disciples, at the climax of His ministry, understanding who He is, they fall down and worship Him, the same One who had said, *“Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only.”* (Matthew 4:10; Luke 4:8) The angel said, “Worship God. Worship God. Don’t worship me. Worship God.” And yet, Jesus allowed people to worship Him.

Turn to John chapter 20 with me for a moment. Thomas has been a doubter, and finally Thomas realized who Jesus Christ was. And, Thomas was so overcome realizing who Jesus Christ is eternally, he did something remarkable, and I want you to see it. In John chapter 20, well, let’s begin reading in verse 27: *“Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My LORD and my God.”* (John 20:27–28) Now, suppose Scotty comes and he falls down in front of me and he says, “My Lord and my God.” What should I say? I’d say, “Scotty, get up or we’ll both be in trouble”—isn’t that right?—“You for doing it and me for letting you do it.” But, you didn’t rebuke Thomas for doing that. Jesus commended Thomas for doing exactly what he did by saying, *“My LORD and my God.”* (John 20:28) Jesus received worship.

### **III. The Admission Jesus Gives of Himself**

I say, the attributes assigned to Him show that He is God. The adoration received by Him shows clearly and plainly that He is God. Now, there’s a third line of evidence: the admission that He gives of Himself. He clearly and plainly admits that He is God by His own words.

Turn to John chapter 8 with me for just a moment and begin to read in verse 56, and you’re going to find out where the Lord Jesus Christ clearly says that He is God. John 8 and verse 56: Jesus is speaking again to those Pharisees and those who wanted to see Him crucified, and Jesus said, *“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad”*—now, the Jews were always boasting that they were children of Abraham, and He said that *“Abraham saw my day.”* Well, they said—*“Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?”*—now, notice verse 58. And, if this verse is not underlined in your Bible, it needs to be—*“Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am”*—not “I was,” not that “I existed before Abraham was.” Of course He did, but that’s not what He says. He didn’t say, “I was before Abraham was.” Jesus said, *“Before Abraham was, I am.”* (John 8:58) When Jesus said that, that so infuriated them that they wanted to stone

Him. Look in verse 59—“*Then took they up stones to cast at him.*” (John 8:56–59)

Why did they want to stone Jesus when He said, “*Before Abraham was, I am*”? (John 8:58) Well, if you’ll turn to Exodus chapter 3, verse 14, you’ll find it’s very clear. Turn to Exodus, in the Old Testament, chapter 3. Moses has been called to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, through the wilderness, into the Promised Land. Moses is saying, “Well, when I go to them and tell them I am the messenger, I’m the one who is to lead them, they’ll say, ‘Well, who sent you?’” And so, let’s look at the background there. Exodus chapter 3 and verse 13: “*And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name?*”—that is, “What’s the name of the one who sent you?”—“*what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.*” (Exodus 3:13–14) Now, that was one of the most sacred names for Jehovah in all of the Bible. He said, “I Am,” not “I was,” not “I will be”—the great, eternal, self-existent God, who never had a beginning and never had an ending.

You say, “I don’t understand how God could be that way.” I don’t understand it either, but that doesn’t mean that I don’t rejoice in it. Proof things people don’t understand exist: I’ve been told that only ten people understand Einstein’s theory of relativity. I’m not sure about that because I don’t know who the other nine are besides me, but there are a lot of things we don’t understand. But, I’ll tell you this: God never had a beginning, and God never had an ending. And so, Moses said, “Who shall I say sent me?” (Exodus 3:13) And, the Father, Jehovah, says, “You tell them that I Am sent you.” (Exodus 3:14) And now, Jesus said, “*Abraham rejoiced to see my day...and was glad.*” (John 8:56) They said, “Have you seen Abraham? You’re not fifty years old.” And, Jesus said, “*Before Abraham was, I am.*” (John 8:58) And, He used the same word: “the self-existent One, the One who never had a beginning, the One who never had an ending.” No wonder they took up stones to stone Him, because, dear friend, either He was God or He was guilty of the most abject blasphemy that He could possibly be guilty of. Do you understand what I’m saying?

And, by the way, if the Jehovah’s Witnesses come to your door, and they bring the New World Translation of the Bible, and you find this verse, you’ll find it not translated this way in that Bible. They can’t allow it to be translated in their Bible that way. Now, they don’t translate it because of documentary evidence, or because of some of their manuscripts; they just force a translation. If I can remember what it says, it says something like this: “Before Abraham was, I have been.” That isn’t what the Greek says. It says, “*Before Abraham was, I am.*” (John 8:58) And, you can take any good Bible translation and put it down there and say, “Hey, friend, there’s something wrong here.”

No wonder they picked up stones to stone the Lord Jesus—because they did not

accept His deity, and this was His own admission of deity.

Turn with me to John chapter 14 here for just a moment. Again, I want to show you by His admission He is God. John chapter 14, beginning in verse 8: *“Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us”*—Philip wanted to see God the Father—*“Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me”*—now, wait a minute. Did Philip say, “Jesus, show us yourself?” No, Philip said, “Jesus, show us the Father.” Jesus said, “Hey, I’ve been with you all this time. Don’t you know me?”—*“Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?”* (John 14:8–9)

¶ Now, suppose I were to say to you, “Would you like to meet the president of the United States?” and you say, “Yes, I really would,” and I say, “Well, I’ve been speaking to you the whole time”—you’d say, “Go get the fellow with the white jacket.” Right?¶

They said, “We want to see the Father,” and Jesus said, “I’ve been talking to you. How long you’ve seen me”—*“He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”* (John 14:9)

#### **IV. The Activity Jesus Carries Out**

By His own admission, Jesus Christ is God. By His attributes, He is God. By His adoration, He is God. By His admission, He is God. One last thing I want to say: by His activity, He is shown to be God—by the very things He does. He does those things that God alone is able to do. Let me tell you what the Lord Jesus does—and I’m going to hurry and not make you turn to these verses.

##### **A. Jesus Creates All Things**

But, in John 1, verse 3, the Bible teaches, *“All things were made by him”* (John 1:3); and yet, the Bible says, *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”* (Genesis 1:1) Well, who created the heaven and the earth—Jesus or God? The answer to that is “yes.” Colossians 1, verse 16: *“For by him”—by Jesus—“were all things created.”* (Colossians 1:16)

##### **B. Jesus Sustains All Things**

Not only did He create all things, but He sustained all things. Colossians 1, verse 17: *“By him all things consist”* (Colossians 1:17)—and that word *consist* means they “hang together.” Jesus is the glue of the galaxy. Hebrews 1, verse 3: Jesus, the Son of God, is *“upholding all things by the word of his power.”* (Hebrews 1:3)

##### **C. Jesus Gives Life**

He is the creator of all things. Jesus is the sustainer of all things. Jesus is the giver of life. John 1, verse 4: *“In him was life; and the life was the light of men.”* (John 1:4)

## D. Jesus Answers Prayer

Jesus is the One who answers prayer. Jesus said in John chapter 14, verses 14: *“If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.”* (John 14:14) Now, tell me if the One who answers prayer is not God. *“If [you] ask any thing in my name”—not “God will do it”—“I will do it.”* (John 14:14) He is the One who answers prayer.

For there remains an eternal distinction in the Godhead: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. But, God the Father is God, God the Son is God, and God the Spirit is God. You say, “Well, I don’t understand the Holy Trinity.” Neither do I, but I believe it. Vance Havner said, “I don’t understand electricity, but I’m not going to sit around in the dark until I do.” *Explain the Trinity—you’ll lose your mind. Deny it—you’ll lose your soul.* I’m telling you something, friend—that God is the Great Unexplainable. He is the one God, the great God, the One in Three.

## Conclusion

Thank you, choir, for singing that wonderful song, “Praise His Holy Name.” And, they’re going to sing it now in just a moment of time, but I want to remind you who Jesus is:

*To the artist He’s the One Altogether Lovely.*

*To the architect He’s the Chief Cornerstone.*

*To the baker He’s the Living Bread.*

*To the banker He’s the Hidden Treasure.*

*To the biologist He’s the Life.*

*To the builder He’s the Sure Foundation.*

*To the doctor He’s the Great Physician.*

*To the educator He’s the Great Teacher.*

*To the farmer He’s the Lord of the Harvest.*

*To the florist He’s the Rose of Sharon.*

*To the geologist He’s the Rock of Ages.*

*To the judge He’s the Righteous Judge.*

*To the jeweler He’s the Pearl of Great Price.*

*To the lawyer He is the Advocate.*

*To the publisher He is Good Tidings of Great Joy.*

*To the philosopher He is the Wisdom of God.*

*To the preacher He is the Word of God.*

*To the sculptor He is the Living Stone.*

*To the statesman He is the Desire of All Nations.*

*To the theologian He is the Author and Finisher of Our Faith.*

*To the traveler He is the New and Living Way.*

*To the sinner He is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.*



*To the Christian He is forever the Son of the Living God, Savior, Redeemer, Lord,  
Everlasting Father, Mighty God, Prince of Peace.†*

# The Signs of the Times and the Beginning of the End

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: December 28, 2003**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 24:1-3**

## Outline

Introduction

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## Introduction

**B**e finding Matthew chapter 24. Mankind always wants to look into the future. We have the prognosticators, the guessers, the pundits, the so-called prophets, without divine inspiration, but the only book—the only book—that has a batting average of 1,000 is the Word of God. And, the next great event that we're looking for is the return—the literal, visible, bodily return—of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And, may I tell you that this episode, the coming of Christ, is a major doctrine in the Word of God. It is mentioned no less than 1,200 times in the Old Testament, and then again 300 more times in the New Testament. God is telling us that this same Jesus who has come is coming again. And, we're going to study today the words of Jesus, as He leads us on a journey of prophecy, as we look to our age, and then through our age to His coming, and we're going to see from the Word of God the fate of Planet Earth. Now, it's so important for our age, because those of us who are living in this age can say it and mean it: "The future is here."

### A. The Setting of the Prophecy

And, I want you to notice the setting of the prophecy that we're going to read. Matthew chapter 24—let's read the first three verses: *"And Jesus went out, and departed from the*

*temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple.*” Now, don’t you think Jesus had seen the Temple before? Why would the disciples be showing Jesus the buildings of the Temple? *“And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives,”*—and, by the way, the Mount of Olives looks down upon the Temple—*“the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the [age]?”* (Matthew 24:1-3). Now, when you keep this prophecy in mind, remember this is the setting.

Now, the Temple was absolutely magnificent. The Temple was the center of the Jewish life spiritually and socially. All of their hopes were based there in that temple. And, it sat there on Mount Moriah, the Temple Mount, like a mountain of gold—that’s what Josephus said—or like a mountain of snow there as it dazzles in the sun, as the sun rose from the east coming over the Mount of Olives. Well, why had the disciples come out and said, “Lord, look at this temple and the stones of it?” Why were they showing Him this?

Well, if you go backward in Matthew chapter 24, Jesus had made a prophecy in Matthew 23. Look in Matthew 23, beginning in verse 37. Jesus, coming down that Mount of Olives, begins to weep great salty, copious tears coursing down His cheeks as He looks at Jerusalem, and there is the Temple right before Him. He’s coming down the Mount of Olives, and He sees Jerusalem and the Temple, and here’s what He says: *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house...”*—He was talking about the Temple—*“Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord”* (Matthew 23:37-39).

They could not believe that this temple would ever be desolate. And, it didn’t look like it would ever be desolate. But, to make matters worse, Jesus said of this temple, not one stone would be left upon another. They couldn’t believe this. If you have seen even the remnant of the Temple, the great stones that have been tossed off into the valley, you see these massive stones, and it didn’t make sense to these disciples at all. They said, “Jesus, You’re saying this place is going to be desolate? Not one stone is going to be left upon another? Well, Jesus, look at these stones.”

Ladies and gentlemen, I’ve seen some of those stones even in the foundation wall. Some of those stones are as big as this carpet here that I’m standing on—literally that big. And, if it were a stone, it would be that thick. How they even moved these stones into place I cannot conceive, because they did not have the tools of modern construction that we have. And, they said, “Jesus, look at this. Look at these stones.”

Now, Jesus had prophesied destruction, and it didn't seem reasonable. The Romans were going to come and destroy Jerusalem, and there was already this fomenting there of rebellion against Roman rule, and Jesus also prophesied that. As a matter of fact, in Luke chapter 21 and verse 20, Jesus said, *"And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh"* (Luke 21:20). That is, "The Temple is going to be desolated. How are you going to know when this is going to happen? When you see the Temple compassed about with armies." Well, 40 years after Jesus said that, a little longer than I've been the pastor of this church, the Roman army, under Titus, came, and they compassed Jerusalem, just like Jesus said, with armies all the way around the city. They said, "We don't need to waste any lives going in there, and waste Roman soldiers' lives. We'll just build a circle around the city. They won't be able to come in. They won't be able to go out. They won't be able to get any food." Starvation stalked the city. "We'll just wait them out." Jesus prophesied all of this. It all happened.

The Romans were not destroyers of temples; the Romans were preservers of temples. And, Titus had given orders that the Temple, that Josephus described like a mountain of snow, was to be left untouched. But, somebody shot a flaming arrow, or something happened—one of the mishaps of war—and those great cedars of Lebanon began to burn, and this building went up in flames. And, it was layered with gold, and it was rumored that there were hidden subterranean chambers with treasures, and all of this just melted together and caved in on itself. The plunderers went in there with their mighty crowbars and prying equipment, and began to pry apart those stones one at a time, looking for treasure, collecting melted gold in the seams of those cracks.

And, what Jesus said that so many people thought was unthinkable—they said, "Lord, it's just unthinkable. Look at these stones. Look at this. Do You understand what You've said?" Jesus knew exactly what He was saying. And, friend, I've been there many times to the Temple Mount, and if you look for Herod's Temple, you can find other temples. I've seen the ruins of other temples. You will not find—listen to me—one stone left upon another; not one—exactly as Jesus said.

That ought to teach us something. We don't live by reason. We live by revelation. Don't try to explain away the prophecies of the Word of God. Now, this is the setting of this prophecy concerning the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The setting is, they were questioning this.

## **B. The Subject of the Prophecy**

Now, notice the subject of the prophecy. Look in verse 3: *"And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us,"*—number one—"when shall

*these things be? and*”—number two—“*what shall be the sign of thy coming,*”—number three—“*and of the end of the world?*” (Matthew 24:3). The disciples asked three questions. First of all, when will this be? When will the temple be destroyed?. Number two: What will be the sign of Thy coming? The word coming here is the Greek word *parousia*, and it means His coming in power and glory. That is, when are You going to set up Your kingdom? Lord, when are You going to take over and rule and reign? And then, last of all, what is the sign of the end of the world? The word world there literally means, “the end of the age.” They thought they were coming to the end of an old age, and the new age, the Messianic age, was about to begin. So they asked Jesus this question.

Now, these were Jewish Christians who were asking Him this question, and we’re going to see here the signs of the times as they deal with Israel and with the Church. Now, what Jesus does here, Jesus looks down through the tunnel of time, and Jesus gives them the signs of the times, the intervening days and ages between the time that they existed and when Jesus Christ is going to come again, and He gives them seven marks. And, that’s what we’re going to talk about today, okay? Now, here they are.

## **I. First Mark: The Deceptions of Counterfeit Christs**

First of all, Jesus said the first mark is going to be the deceptions of counterfeit Christs—the deceptions of counterfeit Christs. Now, look in verses 4 and 5: “*And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many*” (Matthew 24:4–5). Jesus said one of the marks of the last days, the end of the age, and the continuing age, will be a time of great deception. And so, many people have been deceived, though the Bible warns us not to be deceived.

Let me give you an ancillary scripture, 1 John chapter 4, verses 1 through 3—here’s what the Apostle John said: “*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try*”—or, “test”—“*the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world*” (1 John 4:1–3).

Two thousand years ago, the spirit of antichrist was in the world. The word *antichrist* takes the word *Christ* and puts the prefix *anti*—*a-n-t-i*—in front of it. *Anti* means, “against” or “instead of.” It can mean either. And, it means really both. The Antichrist comes against the true Christ, and presents himself instead of Christ, and therefore there are many false Christs and many false messiahs. In the past 50 years, no less than 1,100 people have

professed to be Christ. I'm amazed at what people will believe. Think, for example, of the Reverend Moon. Need I say more?

## **II. Second Mark: The Division of Continuing Conflict**

Number two: not only is there going to be the deceptions of counterfeit Christs; number two, there will be the division of continuing conflict. Would you think that in 2,000 years man would have solved the problem of war, to make the world safe? As young as I am, I've heard so many promises of wars to end all wars, and to bring in safety, and to make the world safe from war. But, Jesus said that will never happen. Look in verse 6: *"And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet"* (Matthew 24:6).

Now, the world, from the time that Jesus made this statement to this present day, in two millennia, has been plagued by the specter of war, and wars are growing in number, and wars are growing in intensity. Since World War I, at least every month there has been an attempt to take over a country and bring about political, economic, racial, or religious change. You think about what's going on in our day and in our age. Think of the conflict in the Middle East. Consider what is happening at this moment in Iraq. Consider what is happening in Iran. Consider what is happening in Afghanistan. Consider what is happening in North Korea. Consider what is happening in Red China, to name some places. In the 6,000-year recorded history of man, it is estimated that 600 million people have been killed in war, but friend, half of those—half of those—have died since 1900. Half of those who've died, in 6,000 years, have died since 1900.

Now, we seem to find these things coming together in a climax. More wars have been seen by this generation, the generation in which we live, than any other generation: terrorism, hijackings, bombings, assassinations, sabotage, war. And, all of this seems to center ultimately in Jerusalem. Does the Bible have anything to say about that? It does indeed. Zechariah 12, verse 2: *"Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it"* (Zechariah 12:2-3). Continuing conflicts. Divisions.

## **III. Third Mark: The Disasters of Cataclysmic Consequence**

Number three: The disasters of cataclysmic consequence. Skip on down now—Matthew 24—let's jump in again: *"For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom;*

*and there shall be”—here they are, here the cataclysms—“famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows” (Matthew 24:7–8).*

Now, Jesus, looking down through time, said there would be famine. You would think that perhaps man, with increased agricultural skill and genetic engineering, would be able to solve the problem of famine, but the problem of famine in our world is really twofold. Number one, there’s the failure of agriculture itself; and, number two, there is the bottleneck of distribution. Even when we have the food, we cannot get the food to the people who need the food. But, before long, we will not have the food. We are now living on Planet Earth from field to mouth. We don’t have granaries filled with food like we used to. A well-known biologist and sociologist has said—and I quote: “Planet Earth is no longer a sustainable society. With world population doubling twice in the past century, the world’s land is being worked so hard for food that one quarter of the soil is turning sterile and eroding away.” The Bible teaches that in the Tribulation, which may be just a few years away—Revelation chapter 6, verse 6—that you would pay 80 to 100 dollars for a quart of wheat, which would make about two loaves of bread. A famine is coming here upon this earth. China, for example, which was once a net exporter of grain, has become the number two importer of grain.

But, not only did Jesus speak of famine; Jesus spoke of plagues. Now, you would have thought that in 2,000 years we would do something about plagues. I can remember when I was a kid they said, “We’ve conquered polio,” and I thought, “Well, isn’t that wonderful? It won’t be long before every disease like polio, and smallpox, and these other things, we’ll know how to deal with those.” And then, along comes AIDS. And then, along comes SARS. And, along comes Ebola. And, along comes this thing and that thing. And then, to cap all of that off, biological and chemical warfare is a specter that we face. Jesus said plagues are going to be a sign of the day in which we live.

And then, He mentions earthquakes—earthquakes. Well, that ought to tell us something. Did you know there has been a dramatic increase in earthquakes in the last decades? Now, seismologists speak of something called plate tectonics. That is, there are these great plates, 70-mile-thick rock plates that float on the molten surface of the earth. And, these rock plates come together there at points where they meet. And, there is great pressure there. And, as these plates move just a little bit, then we see what we call an earthquake. It’s like a break-up of ice on the Great Lakes in the northern part of this continent. *The New York Times* states that there have been more macro earthquakes in the past 10 years than in the previous 100 years—more in the past 10 than the previous 100. Seismology historians have calculated that megalithic earthquakes have increased over 2,000 percent since Columbus discovered the New World. As many have died in

earthquakes in the last 40 years than had died in the previous 120 years. Our own *Commercial Appeal* said this, and I clipped it out: "March 25, 2002: Northern Afghanistan; a magnitude 5.8; as many as 1,000 killed. January 26, 2001: India; magnitude 7.9; at least 2,500 killed. Estimates put the death total as high as 13,000. September 21, 1999: Taiwan, magnitude 7.6; 2,400 killed. August 17, 1999: Western Turkey, magnitude 7.4; 17,000 killed. January 25, 1999: Western Columbia; magnitude 6.1; 1,171 killed. May 30, 1998: Northern Afghanistan; magnitude 6.9; as many as 5,000 killed. May 10, 1997: Northern Iran; magnitude 7.1; 1,500 killed. Recently in Iran, a few days ago, 20,000, if the estimates are right, killed. January 17, 1995: Kobe, Japan; magnitude 7.2; more than 6,000 killed. September 30, 1993: Latur, India; magnitude 6.0; as many as 10,000 killed. June 21, 1990: Northern Iran; magnitude 7.3 to 7.7; 50,000 killed."

Jesus said that in the ensuing age before He comes there will be earthquakes. It seems that Mother Earth itself is heaving in pain.

#### **IV. Fourth Mark: The Defamation of Committed Christians**

Now, number four: there's going to be the defamation of committed Christians. We're going to be defamed if we love the Lord Jesus. It's one of the marks of the age. Look in Matthew 24, verses 9 and 10: "*Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another*" (Matthew 24:9-10).

Jesus said that religious persecution will increase at the end of the age, and it's going to be centered on Christianity, those who follow the Lord Jesus Christ. This world does not mind religion, but it does resent the Lord Jesus Christ. Did you know that more Christians have died for their faith in the past century than all of the other centuries since Jesus Christ hung on the cross? It is estimated that more Christians were tortured and slain in 12 months of World War II than died under Rome in all of the early centuries. We think of those Christians who died when Jesus Christ ascended to Heaven and the Christians were persecuted under Rome. More people have died for Christ in our generation, in our age. Some authorities claim that over 50 million Christians were slaughtered in Russian and other communist countries because they named the name of Christ. Since the ascension of Jesus Christ, no generation has seen such worldwide persecution as is now in progress.

Open your eyes and look around. Bible-believing Christians are the whipping boys. Christian-bashing has become the favorite sport in newspapers, radio, and television. A while back, on National Public Radio, partially tax-funded, there was a man. His name is Mr. Codrescu. He complained about being handed a tract in downtown New Orleans about the Rapture. The tract was based on 1 Corinthians chapter 4, verses 16 through 17, and it



talked about Christians going up in the Rapture (1 Corinthians 4:16–17). Here’s what Mr. Codrescu stated—and I quote: “The evaporation of four million people who believe this crap would leave the world an instantly better place”—end of quote. This was broadcast over 300 stations to an estimated five million people, and shows the utter contempt that National Public Radio has for those who pay their salaries. Can you imagine this? It’s sad to see what is happening. But, this persecution in the last days will be turned to a white-hot heat, and I wonder how many Sunday morning benchwarmers will vacate themselves from Bible-believing churches. Now, there’s going to be a persecution of believers in the last days, and it’s going to separate those who are true believers from those who are cultural Christians.

## **V. Fifth Mark: The Distortion of Christless Cults**

Number five: The distortion of Christless cults. Look, if you will now, in Matthew 24, verse 11: “*And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many*” (Matthew 24:11). G. K. Chesterton has pointed out that when a man ceases to believe in the one true God, it doesn’t mean that he believes in nothing; it means that he will believe in anything. Now, when the Bible speaks of a *prophet* here, it doesn’t mean a person who is, even, religious. The word here means, “somebody who speaks with authority.” It could be a philosopher. It could be a college professor. It could be a scientist. It could be a statesman. But, these are people today who want to shape and to mold society into its thinking, and they will deceive many.

It’s like it was in the days of Noah, when the Bible says, “God saw the imagination of men’s hearts was evil continually” (Genesis 6:5). The word *imagination* there does not mean, “daydreams,” but it speaks of carefully crafted philosophies. It’s a word that was used to describe the molding of a piece of pottery. These philosophers are trying to fit society into their mold. And, what all of this comes down to, really, is New Age humanism, when New Age humanism just takes the teaching of all the religions of the world and tries to syncretize them into its mystical system. Let me tell you what one of them said: “We honor the truth and beauty of all the world’s religions, believing that each has a seed of God, a kernel of the spirit that unites us.” Now, the New Agers believe that God revealed Himself in Jesus, but He also revealed Himself in Buddha and Krishna and a host of other people.

## VI. Sixth Mark: The Disposition of Carnal Coldness

Now, let me give you the sixth sign that Jesus spoke about—and it is the disposition of carnal coldness. People are going to be cold-hearted. Notice again in Matthew 24, verse 12: *“And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold”* (Matthew 24:12).

Now, what brings about this cold-heartedness? It’s the teaching of these false prophets. These false prophets take away the moral base. When you have no moral base, when it’s all right to kill babies, when it’s all right to perform homosexual marriages, when it is all right to take away life from a person who has lost consciousness, or euthanize the aged, why is this all right? Because you have taken away the fixed standard of right and wrong. And, when you take away moral limits, you destroy the fire and the glow of true love, and you substitute that with the false fire of lust, and theology turns to *me-ology*. And, the Bible says, *“Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.”*

When you have a bounding iniquity, when you have a crime wave—and, the word *iniquity* literally means, “lawlessness”—what do we do? We get unfriendly. Somebody knocks at your door and says, “Look, can I come in and use your phone? My battery is dead.” You say, “No, I’m sorry.” You see somebody on the road with a thumb up. You have an empty seat. You want to pick them up. You say, “Well, I’m afraid.” And, you find yourself hardening your heart. *“Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.”* And, our society has replaced godly love with selfish protectionism and lust.

## VII. Seventh Mark: The Discharge of Christ’s Commission

Number seven, the next mark—and I love this one: The discharge of Christ’s commission. Before Jesus left this earth, He gave us a commission, and the commission was that we were to take the gospel to all of the world, and we were to go into every nation with the gospel. Nowhere has the Bible ever taught that we were going to win everybody to Christ. *The gospel was not given to save civilization from wreckage, but to save men from the wreckage of civilization.* And, the Bible prophesies that there’s going to be the Master’s minority, that little flock that’s going to be saved. But, Jesus said we’re to take the gospel to the whole world.

Will that be done? Absolutely! It has been done. Matthew 24, verses 13 and 14: *“But he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be...”*—it doesn’t say, “ought to be.” He says—*“shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come”* (Matthew 24:13–14). And, Jesus said that in the ensuing time, from the time that He left till the time that He came back, there is going to be the proliferation and the preaching of the gospel worldwide—worldwide. Has this happened? Indeed it has! Friend, the gospel has been preached in all of the world—not to

every person, but into all the world, to all the ethnic groups by radio, by television, by books, by tapes, by leaflets, and by crusades, the world has heard the gospel of Jesus Christ.

This does not mean all, every individual, but it means all nations have heard the gospel. Dr. Bill Bright was a personal friend of mine, the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ. Before he died, he invited me to join a celebration of praise to give God all the glory for the fulfilling of the Great Commission in our age. And, he said—and I quote—“New Life 2000 has now been implemented in 220 countries, representing 98 percent of the world’s population. More than two billion people have been exposed to the gospel.” And, you think of the *Jesus* film alone. More than 850 million people have viewed the film, which has been dubbed into more than 400 languages, making it the most widely translated film in history. I participated in a hookup—and, I had the privilege of doing this recently last year—to broadcast through the Internet to every nation on Earth the gospel of Jesus Christ. Today, what I am saying, what I’m preaching, will be telecast around the world. The sun will not set on this message. It will go around the world. Through the Internet everybody on Earth has access, if they have a computer and are hooked into the net, to hear the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now, Jesus says something very interesting. He says, “When all of these things begin to come to pass.” Look, if you will, in chapter 24 and verse 8. He says, “*All these [things] are the beginning of sorrows*” (Matthew 24:8). Now, what does He mean by that: “*all these [things]*”? When you see all the things that I’ve mentioned, when... You say, “Pastor, there have always been wars. There have always been famines. There’s always been persecution.” Yes, but Jesus said, “When you see all these things, all these things are the beginning of sorrows.”

Now, you look at that word *sorrows*. That word *sorrows* is the word for “birth pangs.” All of these things are the beginning of birth pangs. Now, those of us who are genuine fathers, like I am, you know what it is when your wife begins to talk to you about those birth pangs. You know, you see this thing happening. Somebody said, “Is your wife expecting?” I said, “No, it’s a sure thing.” You see this happening. But then, that time happens when she says, “Adrian, I think I felt something.” I said, “*Whoooa*.” And then, she says, “Yes, I felt something. There’s something stirring.” And then, you know that those birth pangs do what? When they multiply, and when they intensify, you know something’s about to come forth. Isn’t that right? When they multiply, and when they intensify, you know something’s about to come forth. Jesus said, “*All these [things] are the beginning of [birth pangs]*.”

## **Conclusion**

Now, we don’t have to wait on any signs for Jesus to come. He could come at any moment, and has always been willing to do that—and, I’m going to speak further about it tonight—

but precious friend, listen to me. The wisest thing anybody could do would be to give his heart to Jesus Christ if we knew Jesus Christ was not coming in a thousand years. But, when we know that our Lord may come at any moment, and when our Lord has given us the signs of the times, and when our Lord has looked down through the ages and helped us to be aware, don't you think that the wise thing to do would be to give your heart to Jesus Christ?

I love the Bible. We can trust the Word of God. And, you know, when I see all of these things, all of these things that Jesus said would happen, I don't get stampeded when people say to me, "Well, if there's a God, why are the earthquakes? If there's a God, why the wars? If there's a God, why the famines? If there's a God, why the plagues?" Well, even if you don't know why, I can tell you one thing. None of them took God by surprise. There is no fine print in this. I mean, God said, "There it is." Jesus said, "This is what's going to happen. Then shall the end come." If you stand before God unsaved, you won't be able to say, "I never knew," or, "I never heard," will you?

# Signs of the Times

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: April 20, 1997**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 24:1-14**

## Outline

Introduction

I. Deceptions

II. Divisions

III. Disasters

IV. Defamation

V. Disinformation

VI. Depravity

VII. Declaration

Conclusion

## Introduction

**W**ould you take God's Word and find Matthew chapter 24—Matthew chapter 24. We've been thinking in these days about end-time prophecy, the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Now, let me tell you something, folks. We're not talking about something that is incidental. We're talking about a major doctrine in the Word of God. In the Old Testament the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is mentioned 1,200 times. And, in the New Testament there are over 300 direct prophecies that deal with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Now, if the Bible puts that emphasis upon end-time prophecy and His coming, so should we.

Now, we live in a world that wants to know the future, and man has always had an intense desire to prophesy and to look into the future, and so we have all kinds of so-called clairvoyants, and soothsayers, and prognosticators, and astrologists, and all of these who pretend to tell the future, but they make some colossal mistakes. The only book that bats 1,000 is the Word of God. The Bible says, "*We have...a more sure word of prophecy*" (2 Peter 1:19). And, I want to say about the Bible, many times people say that the Bible is up to date. Friend, the Bible is ahead of time, more than up to date; more than it fits in with today's headlines, it fits in with tomorrow's headlines when they have not yet even been written.

One of the great chapters on prophecy is Matthew chapter 24. Let's look in verse 1: "*And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple*" (Matthew 24:1). Now, the Temple was a magnificent structure.

An ancient historian whose name was Josephus said that the Temple sat there on the mountain like a mountain of snow itself. It was indescribably wonderful and beautiful. But, why all this attention concerning the Temple? Because in the prior chapter, chapter 23, Jesus had said that temple would be destroyed (Matthew 23:38). And, Jesus said, not one stone would be left upon another (Matthew 24:2).

Now, Jesus was prophesying what the Romans would do 40 years later. Titus, the Roman General, came and surrounded Jerusalem with armies in order to starve out the Jews that were there inside Jerusalem. But, it would have been an unthinkable thing for Titus to have destroyed that temple, because the Romans were not destroyers of temples; they were preservers of temples. And, Josephus tells us that Pilate had given orders that the Temple was not to be burned, not to be destroyed. And yet, Jesus had said, not one stone would be left upon another. I want to tell you something, folks. It did not seem reasonable that the Temple would be destroyed.

That's the reason we need to learn to live by revelation and not by reason—because what happened is this: During the warfare, somebody shot a flaming arrow or something into the Temple, and the Temple caught on fire. It was done inadvertently, but the Temple burned, and as it burned, the timbers and so forth caved in upon themselves and left a charred ruin. Now, you know that the Temple, parts of it were overlaid with gold, and there were all kinds of treasures on the inside. And, in the succeeding days and months and even years, people, wanting to loot and to find the gold in that temple, got their great pry bars and began to pry the stones apart one from another. And, when they were finished, not one stone was left upon another—exactly as Jesus had said.

So, the disciples have come out to Jesus and said, "Lord Jesus, look at this temple." That's verse 1. *"And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down"* (Matthew 24:2). If you were to visit Jerusalem today and go to the Temple Mount, you would say, "Yes, Lord. You were exactly, precisely, right." You could visit the ruins of other temples, and they're still there, but not the ruin of this temple; not one stone is left upon another. *"And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things shall be?"*—that is, "When will the temple be destroyed?"—*"and what shall be the sign of thy coming,"*—now, the word for coming there is *parousia*, and it literally means, "What is the sign when, Lord Jesus, You are going to take over? The word *parousia* means, "to take over, to be present, to rule, to reign, as a king." "When, Lord, are You going to take your rightful kingdom?" And then, they asked the question, "And, what will be the end of the world?" Now, when he says, "the end of the world"—*"and of the end of*

*the world?*” (Matthew 24:3)—the word for *world* there literally means, “age”; it’s the word, the Greek word, that we get our English word *eon* from. And so, they’re not talking about Planet Earth disintegrating, but, “When is this present age, this dispensation, going to come to an end? When is the Temple going to be destroyed? Lord Jesus, when are You going to come and rule and reign, and when will this present age end?” That’s the question that they’re asking. And, if you want to understand the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, you have to understand the setting where they are asking this very important question.

Now, the Lord Jesus begins to answer this question. And, that’s what we’re going to do. Jesus gives them the signs of the times: what the age will be like between His first coming and His Second Coming, what we can look for, what will happen, and then what will be the convergence of these signs so that we can know that the Lord Jesus Christ is at the door.

Now, let me give you these signs. I’ll let them start with the letter *d*, so you can remember them, all right?

## **I. Deceptions**

Number one: deceptions. That’s the first sign: deceptions. Look, if you will, in verses 4 and 5: “*And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many*” (Matthew 24:4–5). So, deceivers and deceptions are one of the marks of the last day. Put in your margin 1 John chapter 4, verses 1 through 3: “*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits*”—that is, “test the spirits”—“*whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:*”—that is, don’t look for another messiah, don’t look for another Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. That’s the Spirit of God. Now, notice verse 3—“*and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world*” (1 John 4:1–3). That is, there are many antichrists already in the world today. As we told you last week, an *antichrist* means, “somebody who comes opposing Christ and instead of Christ. The prefix *anti*—*a-n-t-i*—means, “instead of” and “against.” It means both of these things at the same time.

Now, has this prophecy been fulfilled? And, is it being fulfilled? Well, we’re told that in our generation—many of you here at least 50 years of age; not all, but many—in the past 50 years, no less than 1,100 significant persons have claimed to be Christ. In the past 50 years, they’ve claimed to be Christ and the Savior of the world. And, they go from the Rev. Moon—your familiar with Moon, the Rev. Moon, and the Moonies; he’s a self-ordained

Korean evangelist. His followers believe that he has been chosen to fulfill Christ's mission on this earth. They believe that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ failed, and they believe that Moon is the twentieth-century messiah to do for us what the Lord Jesus Christ failed to do. Do you know what Moon and his followers believe? They believe that Jesus Christ failed, because He did not marry the ideal wife and raise up an ideal, perfect, generation to fill the earth with a perfect earthly family. They believe that the failure of Jesus was not primarily His failure, but it was the fault of the Jews, because they crucified Him. Now, they believe that America is God's chosen people, and they believe that the cross that we sang about this morning was a horrible mistake, and that when Jesus was crucified, 4,000 years of preparation were put to waste and failed, because Jesus was coming to establish here on Earth that perfect, ideal society by getting married.

Now, here's what Moon said. Let me quote from the false messiah Moon. Quote: "I want to have members under me who are willing to obey me, even though they may have to disobey their parents and the presidents of their own nations. And, if I gain half the population of the world, I can turn the whole world upside down. You must start over again your new life from the point of denying your past, family, friends, neighbors, and relatives." You say, "Nobody would follow a man like that." Thousands are following this deluded man who claims to be Christ. You know, it is an amazing thing what people will believe. Some people will believe there's a spaceship in the tail of Hale-Bopp, and that if they commit suicide, they can follow their false messiah on into some glorious Heaven. It is amazing what people will believe. But, Jesus said these days will be marked by deceptions and false Christs. And, the Bible says we are not to believe every spirit.

That's why you had better get a lock on the truth that is revealed in God's Word. All right?

## II. Divisions

Sign number two—sign number two. Not only are you going to find that you're going to have deceptions, but write down this word—sign number two: divisions. Look in verses 6 and 7, if you will: "*And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom*" (Matthew 24:6-7). Here we're talking about divisions. That is, people down through the centuries will never solve the problem of war.

Now, suppose that we lived in a world where there were no more wars. Then, Jesus would have been proven to be a false prophet. But, we have been plagued by the specter of war, and as we get toward the end of the age, we see more and more wars in number and intensity. Now, let me say that, from World War I to this present time, at least, there has



been some every month; there has been an attempt, since World War I, once a month at least, on an average—an attempt to take over the government of some country either by war or by terrorism, or by political, or economic, or racial, or religious change. Our world is in a state of division. You think about what is going on in the world today. Did you know in the 6,000-year history of mankind people have died in wars; 600 million, it is estimated, have died in 6,000 years, in war. Now, listen to me. Half of those people have died since 1900. Since 1900, as half as many have died in war as died in the entire 6,000-year history of mankind.

See what is happening in our world today. You see the spreading terrorism, sky-jackings; you see bombings, you see assassinations, you see sabotage, on every hand. You and I, when we go through the airport today, we have to be searched—bodily searched. We have to take everything out of our pockets just to walk through that magnometer that sees if we are carrying any particular contraband upon us. We've seen what has happened recently in the Balkans, and we see what is happening in Zaire. We see what is happening at this very moment in the holy city, Jerusalem. It's a fulfillment of prophecy. Zechariah chapter 12, verses 2 and 3—listen to it: *“Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people”* (Zechariah 12:2–3). Folks, that scripture is being fulfilled before our very eyes. Go home, get your newspaper, and read it.

### **III. Disasters**

Our Lord says, first of all, there will be deceptions. Secondly, there will be divisions. Now, here's the third sign: there will be disasters. Look, if you will, in verse 7 of this same chapter, the last part of verse 7: *“And there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers”*—or, “in different”—*“places”* (Matthew 24:7).

Now, our Lord Jesus looked down through the corridor of time, and the Lord Jesus knew that man with all of his wit and wisdom, with all of his ingenuity, with all of his agricultural know-how, would not be able to solve the food problem. He knew that famines would spread across the earth. Did you know that today, in this so-called modern society, we are living in a time of unprecedented famine? This is for two reasons. Reason number one is agriculture itself. We have raped the lands. The topsoil is gone—and we'll talk about that later on—but a second reason for famine is not only agriculture, but war. Now, He's just talked to us about war. And, even where there are places where we have the foodstuffs, we cannot get the foodstuffs to the people because of the divisions in those countries. And so, it's a compounded problem. One well-known biologist said this. Listen to this quote. It's

staggering. He said, “There is not the slightest hope of escaping a disastrous time of famine, from this moment onward.” He said, “There’s no hope. It’s going to come.” He’s not a Baptist preacher now. He said, “It is shockingly apparent that the battle to feed man will end in a rout.” That is, we’ll lose the battle. Not just lose it slowly; it will end in a rout. Another has said—and I quote: “Planet Earth is no longer a sustainable society. With world population doubling twice in this century, the world’s land is being worked so hard for food that one quarter of the topsoil is turning sterile or eroding away.”

Now, that takes us back to the sixth chapter of the Book of the Revelation. In the sixth chapter of the Book of the Revelation, the Bible says the day will come when it will take a day’s wage to buy a quart of wheat—a day’s wage to buy a quart of wheat. Put in there Revelation chapter 6 and verse 6, and listen to it: *“And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny”* (Revelation 6:6). Now, a measure of wheat is a little less than a quart. The word *penny* is a denarius. It was used as a day’s wage. And so, it would take, in the days that are coming, from 80 to 120 dollars to buy a quart of wheat.

Now, are we seeing the potentiality for that prophecy being fulfilled? I was reading recently *The Monetary and Economic Review*, and here’s what it says. It says, “In 1966,”—that’s last year, 1966—“the U.S. and much of the world witnessed record lows in grain supplies, along with record high prices. The world grain stock”—that’s wheat—“dropped to the lowest level ever last year.” And then, here’s what this article went on to say: “Whether by drought, flood, hurricane, hail, fungus, disease, or bugs, the results are the same.” It is estimated that 80 to 90 percent of the U.S. honeybees that make honey and pollinate food plants have been killed. The world now lives on a field-to-mouth process for food. Unless there are bumper harvests that come in soon and continue to make up for the food deficit, people worldwide will begin to starve.

Now, let me talk to you about China. At one time, China was an exporter of grains. This has been reversed. China is now the number two importer of grains. They’re even buying rice from Arkansas and from the Mid-South. China is known for its rice. The Russian government put out this alert—quote: “An emergency situation in the agriculture sector has developed following major declines in grain and livestock output.” Decades ago, the United States had several years of reserves set aside for times of emergency. Today we have only a matter of months in reserves in grain. I read in the newspaper the other day of a devastating famine in North Korea going on right now. They are cooking grass, and boiling grass, and stripping bark from trees. And, the world doesn’t know what to do with it. Shall we help this communist country? Will they allow us to help them? And, how shall we help them?

Then Jesus said, not only will there be famines; He also said there would be pestilences. Well, would you think that in the last days that man would be able to solve the matter of pestilences? What is the pestilence that comes to your mind more than anything else? It's AIDS, is it not? And, that is a pestilence we don't know what to do with it. I'm not talking now about some rhetoric from some person who doesn't know what he's talking about. But, the *US News and World Report* article recently said—and quoting microbiologist and Nobel laureate David Baltimore concerning AIDS—“It is today a crisis for the US more deadly than many wars of modern times. In just four more years, the disease will have killed more Americans than the Vietnam and Korean wars combined. It will probably be the most important health problem of the next decade, and going into the next century,” he went on to say, “it threatens to undermine countries.”

But, not only famines, not only pestilences, but earthquakes, Jesus said, would be a part of the signs of His coming and the end of the age. There has been a dramatic increase in earthquakes in the last days. Now, seismologists, those who measure earthquakes, have explained what is happening by what we call plate tectonics. That is, that the land masses of this earth are floating on semi-solid, semi-molten earth beneath, and these crusts of the earth, which are as thick as 70 miles, are resting on this semi-molten, seething center of the earth. And, as these landmasses, these plates, get close to one another, there's incredible pressure that's built up underneath, and they sit there for only so long, and then they begin to slip. And, when they slip, giving way to this pressure, of course, that's an earthquake. And, these places where they are joined together are called faults. And, it's very much like the ice breaking up that we are seeing in the North, in these Great Lakes. And, when they break loose, it means, not only has there been an earthquake, but more earthquakes are likely to follow.

*The New York Times* said that several decades ago there had not been one solitary measurable earthquake in Colorado, and since then more than 3,000, in Colorado alone, have been recorded. *Time* magazine states that there have been more macro earthquakes in the past ten years than in the previous 100 years. And, seismologists and historians have calculated that megalithic earthquakes have increased over 2,000 percent since Columbus discovered America. Now, it is a verifiable fact that more people have perished in earthquakes in the past dozen years as have perished in the past 120 years.

Now, Jesus said that these earthquakes are coming. In 1976, in a disaster of such proportion that the only greater disaster I believe would have been the flood of Noah, more than one million died in China in a great earthquake. Now, look, if you will, in verse 8. Jesus talks about these disasters, and Jesus says, “*All of these are the beginnings of sorrows*” (Matthew 24:8). And, the word for *sorrows* here literally means, “birth pangs.” It's as

though Mother Earth is heaving in pain, and our world is pregnant with judgment. *“All these are the beginnings of sorrows.”* When you see these things, you know that a birth is about to come forth.

#### **IV. Defamation**

And now, let me mention the next sign—number four: write down, “defamation.” Look, if you will, in verse 9 of this same chapter: *“Then they shall deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake”* (Matthew 24:9). So, he’s talking about believers now, those who take the name of the Lord Jesus. They are going to be defamed. Did you know this world has room for almost every religion except that of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? The persecution is going to center in the name of Jesus. The world does not mind religion, but it resents Jesus, because Jesus said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me”* (John 14:6).

Did you know that more Christians have died for their faith—listen to me—in this century than all the other centuries since the beginning of our faith? More Christians have died. In 12 months, in World War II, it is estimated that more Christians were tortured and slain than died under Rome in all of the early centuries—in just 12 months. Some authorities claim that over 50 million Christians were put to death and slaughtered in Russia and other communist countries when communism, the red devil of communism, was moving as it has. And, if you are astute at all, you know that Christian-bashing is a favorite sport today now in newspapers, radio, and television.

Let me give you an example of that which happened on National Public Television—that is, National Public Television, not even private television. Last year, one of the most listened to programs on NPR is called “All Things Considered,” and the host of that program was talking. Somebody had given him a tract concerning the Second Coming of Jesus Christ when he was in New Orleans. That tract was based on 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, which speaks of the Lord coming with a shout, and the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, and the dead in Christ rising, and the rest of us being caught up (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17). Now, here’s what this man said on the air in public television—quote: “The evaporation of four million people who believe in this...”—and he uses a four-letter word for excreta; I’ll not repeat it from the pulpit; listen to it—“The evaporation of four million people who believe in this [blank] would leave the world a better place.” This is public television. He says, when we’re gone, if we’re gone, good riddance—good riddance. Now, this is what Jesus is saying: “You are going to be hated of all people for my name’s sake.”

And, the devil now is getting more and more blatant in his persecution of Christians. A young man was given a skateboard by his granddad. Dan Moore purchased the skateboard

for his seven-year-old grandson. He got this skateboard from a Californian skateboard manufacturer. When they were unpacking the skateboard, a leaflet fell out. It looked like a gospel tract, and the title of the leaflet was “Let’s Make A Deal,” and on the front was a smiley-faced devil talking to someone that he calls Flame Boy, and he is explaining to Flame Boy—this devil is—what happened when he was banished from Heaven. Now, this is in a skateboard for kids. Quote: “First of all, they set up a bunch of dumb rules. And then, they imposed a really strict dress code. I’ll wager that people must be quite bored up there,”—that is, in Heaven—“but, hey, that’s what they get for being good.” And, he says, “Flame Boy, even a dimwit like you can see that Hell is by far the best place to retire. Just look at all the fun to be had.” And, in this tract was a place for the child to sign his name, a contract, by which he would give possession of his soul to the devil for eternity.

Now, can you image a child getting a hold of something like that? Folks, that’s what we’re up against. Our children are watching *Star Wars*, and the god in *Star Wars* is what? The Force. And, one man recently wrote—he, by the way, is on one of nearly 1,000 *Star Wars* sites that are on the Internet. He said, “It would be natural that my generation would latch on to the story,” said Jason Ruspini, webmaster of the unofficial *Star Wars* homepage. He goes on to say, “They were much more attractive and appropriate than the ancient myths of Judeo-Christian theology. How could these draconian and antiquated stories possibly compete with the majesty and scope of the *Star Wars* universe?”

## V. Desertion

Now, there will be defamation of Christians. I must move on. Look at the fifth sign. There will be desertion. Look, if you will, in verse 10 now: “*And then many shall be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another*” (Matthew 24:10). When this persecution begins, then true Christians will stand true to the Lord Jesus. And, He says they that endure to the end will be saved (Matthew 24:13). But, many are going to be leaving their churches. Why will they leave? Because they will not be able to stand the heat. Do you know we have today churches that are full of empty people? People have never committed to the lordship of Jesus Christ. And, when the persecution begins, they will leave like rats leaving a sinking ship, because some churches have been filled with a gospel with no Hell, no judgment, no cross, no repentance, no lordship. They have become glorified country clubs with steeples on top.

And then, when this begins, they are going to leave. This is what the Lord Jesus said. Look, if you will, in verse 10: “*And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.*” There’s going to be a contention within the churches. Real unity is in the Lord Jesus.

## VI. Disinformation

I must leave that point and go on the next because of time. There will be disinformation. That's the next sign. Number six. Look, if you will, in verse 11: "*And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many*" (Matthew 24:11). Now, what's the difference between a false prophet and a false Christ? A false Christ is definitely religious. A false prophet just means somebody who speaks with authority; he will become a philosopher of this day. Now, there are so many strident philosophies and humanistic philosophies that are in the world today. Humanism stresses the rights of mankind. A true prophet stresses the rights of Almighty God.

Now, we're up against New Age humanism today. And, I don't have time to get into that, but I must hurry now. Disinformation—our world is awash in disinformation, with many false prophets who seem and claim to speak with authority.

## VII. Depravity

The next sign, number seven, is depravity. Look, if you will, in verse 12: "*And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold*" (Matthew 24:12). And, when you have these false prophets who are preaching self-interest rather than the rights of Almighty God, you're going to lose your moral anchor. And, we have a generation today that no longer believes in a fixed standard of right and wrong, because of these false prophets. And, because of that, the moral anchor is gone, and they go down, down, down, down, down, into a swirling sewer of depravity. For further information, read any newspaper. The Bible speaks of man who drinks iniquity like water. And, the word *iniquity* here in the Bible is the word *lawlessness*. It speaks of violence and the lawlessness that will be a sign of the last days.

## VIII. Declaration

I wish I had more time for that, but I must move on. Write down the next sign. And, the next sign, the last sign—and I love it—it is declaration—declaration. The gospel will be preached around all of the world. Look, if you will, in verses 13 and 14: "*But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.*" Listen. There will be faithful people who will believe in the Lord Jesus right on to the end of the age. Listen: "*He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.*" He's not saying that you're saved because you endure; He's saying that you endure because you're saved. You want to know who the saved people are? Those who endure. And then, He says this: "*And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations;*"—that means, all tribes, all ethnicities—"*and then shall the end come*" (Matthew 24:13–14).

Now, these other things will exist throughout all of the age, but then He says there's coming a special sign at the very end. This is the last one. This is the *coup de grace*. This is when the gospel is being preached around the world. This was impossible in all other ages except our age, and now it has come to pass in our age. You think about what is happening in this generation. Through radio and television and books and tapes and leaflets and crusades, all of the world has heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. Not every person, but all nations, all ethnicities, have heard. I just received a missive from Bill Bright, a dear friend of mine, who asked me to come and help celebrate the closure of the Great Commission in getting the gospel of Jesus Christ around the world. And, he said—and I quote—“New Life 2000 has now been implemented in 220 countries representing 98 percent of the world's population. More than two billion people have been exposed to the gospel; 850 million have seen the *Jesus* film alone.” I remember several years ago when Billy Graham set up the most massive telecasting that has ever been done from the Caribbean. And, in all nations around the world they heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. And, our own ministry, Love Worth Finding, is being heard in some 70 foreign countries around the world, even in the Middle East, and broadcasting into China. Around the world through broadcasting the gospel of Jesus Christ is being preached.

Now, notice what our Lord is saying. Our Lord is saying here, “*And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come*” (Matthew 24:14).

## **Conclusion**

Now, ladies and gentleman, what does all of this mean? What does this mean to me? What does this mean to you? Let me tell you what it means. It means, first of all, you can trust the Word of God. It means secondly, that Jesus Christ is coming. The end of the age is coming, and we'd better bring people to Jesus Christ. Thirdly, it means that those of us who know and love the Lord Jesus Christ ought to be moving one step higher. And God's people said, “Amen.”

# The Signs of the End of the Age

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** March 20, 1988

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 24:1–14

*“And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?”*

MATTHEW 24:3

## Outline

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Conclusion

## Introduction

Matthew chapter 24—turn to it, and look up here. And, while you're finding it, may I remind you that mankind has always wanted to be able to look into the future, to know what the future holds? We have many forecasters, many prognosticators, many fortunetellers, many soothsayers, many false prophets, but they all have one thing in common: they cannot forecast the future; they all fail. Even our local weathermen fail



sometimes. I heard we were going to have snow last Friday or Saturday, and they failed—I'm glad. I heard of a weatherman who had to leave one city and go to another because the weather didn't agree with him. Many times, it doesn't agree with them, and they're wrong. But, the Bible bats 1,000. God's Word is never wrong on the subject of prophecy.

One of the most amazing, startling, and revealing prophecies in all of the Word of God is found in Matthew chapter 24, and this prophecy comes from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. I read in Matthew 24:1: *“And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?”* (Matthew 24:1–3). I want you to notice three things about the prophecy that is contained in Matthew 24.

## **I. The Setting of This Prophecy**

First of all, I want you to notice the setting of this prophecy. The Bible says that the disciples had come to Jesus, and they're going to show Jesus the magnificence of the temple. Well, why would they do that? Jesus knew the temple as well as they. Jesus had been in the temple many times. Why were they pointing out the magnificence of the temple? Well, if you'll go back to the 23<sup>rd</sup> chapter, you'll find out that Jesus had said to them, “This temple (your house) is going to be left desolate” (Matthew 23:38). They couldn't believe it. This magnificent temple—how could this temple be left desolate? Josephus, the historian, said it sat there upon Mount Moriah like a mountain of snow. And, when the sun would come up over the Mount of Olives and gleam on that façade, it was indescribably beautiful, and it looked like it would be there forever. The Jews thought of this as the very dwelling place of God. This temple was the very center of their society, but Jesus said it would be left desolate. They said, “Well, Lord, look at this place. How can this be?” Well, then, to make matters worse, Jesus said in the first few verses of Matthew chapter 24—He said, “I'm going to tell you something else: not only is it going to be left desolate; it's going to be destroyed. There will not be left one stone upon another” (Matthew 24:2).

Now, this seemed highly unlikely. Why? Because they were living under Roman occupation. The Romans were lovers of temples, and they were also builders of temples; and they were also preservers of temples. They were not vandals. They didn't come in and destroy temples when they conquered; they preserved the temples. And, you can visit around the world and see many of the temples that were extant in the time

of the Roman Empire and see how the Romans left them. They did not destroy them. If they were destroyed, they were destroyed later on by earthquakes and vandals. But, Jesus said, “Not one stone will be left upon another” (Matthew 24:2).

Forty years later, Titus, the Roman general, came because of rebellion in Rome...rebellion in Jerusalem. He and his army surrounded Jerusalem, as Jesus said that the armies would do in Matthew chapter 21. They cut the city off from food. Inside, starvation stalked the streets. Mothers even cooked and ate their own children. It was terrible. And then, when the city was weakened, they stormed the city. But, Titus had given orders, “Do not—do not—destroy the temple.” But, somehow—perhaps a flaming arrow, some arsonist—someone set fire on the temple. The great cedars of Lebanon began to burn, and the gold and the precious metals in that temple melted and ran down between the cracks. Also, there were rumors of hidden treasure and great resources—vast secret chambers full of gold and treasure—in the temple. When the temple burned and the ruins were left, then others came and took great pry bars and actually pried every stone apart looking for treasure and seeking the gold that had run down in the crevices, and the prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ was fulfilled minutely.

I have visited Jerusalem many times, and I can tell you, my friend, while the western wall remains, which is the outer parameter of the platform upon which the temple sat, not one stone is left upon another—not one—exactly as Christ said that it would happen. It was an unlikely prophecy, but it came to pass. It was unreasonable that it should happen, but it came to pass. We’d better learn right away that *we do not live by reason but by revelation*. And secondly, we’d better learn, dear friend, that we don’t have to say that a thing seems likely or not for it to come to pass if the Bible prophesies it. Now, that’s the setting of this prophecy.

## **II. The Subject of This Prophecy**

Now, I want you to notice the subject of this prophecy. The disciples came to the Lord Jesus, and they asked Him a pertinent question here in verse 3: the Bible says, “*As he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came [to] him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be?*”—that is, “When is the temple going to be destroyed?” And, secondly—“*what shall be the sign of thy coming?*” (Matthew 24:3). Now, look at the word *coming*. It’s not the normal word for *coming*, like you’d *come* to town or you *come* home. But, it is the word *Parousia*, and it actually means “the sign of your presence.” And, what they meant by that is “when You come to rule and to reign.” The Lord Jesus, they knew, was the Messiah. He was the One who was to rule and reign, and they said, “Lord, when are You coming—that is, coming to take over? When are You coming, Lord, for Your rightful place? What is the sign of Your coming?” That was the second question they asked. And then, here’s the third question, which was the subject of this

prophecy: and they said, “And what is the sign of the end of the world?” (Matthew 24:3). Now, what it literally says is not, primarily, “the end of the world,” but “the end of the age.” And, some Bibles are translated that way—and correctly so. What is the sign of the end of the age? They felt, “Well, if the temple is going to be destroyed, certainly the age that we know it is coming to an end.” What are the signs of the end of this age—things as they are now? When is the new age going to begin? When is the new dispensation going to begin?

#### A. **The Signs of the End of the Age**

Jesus answers that first quest...that last question first, and that’s going to be the subject of our study this morning. What are the signs of the end of the age? And so, we want to continue to read here and see what these signs are, and I want to mention eight of them—I want to mention eight. Jesus is saying that there’s going to be an indeterminable period of time—an intermediate period of time—between the time that He was there with them on the Mount of Olives and when He comes again. And, Jesus describes the course of this age and the precourses of the end of this age, and I want you to see them. As I say, there are eight of them.

##### **1. Counterfeit Christs**

The very first I want to mention is counterfeit Christs—counterfeit Christs. Notice in chapter 24:4: “*And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you*”—that is, “Be very careful. You can be easily deceived”—“*Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ*”—the word *Christ* means “Messiah”—“*and shall deceive many*” (Matthew 24:4–5). Now, the Lord Jesus said, therefore, that the end of the age will be marked by counterfeit Christs. We would say, “antichrist.” You know that the word *anti* means “against Christ,” but it also means “instead of Christ.” The prefix *anti* means “instead of” and “against.” And, there are going to come many who, of course, will be against Jesus, but the way they will be against Jesus is they themselves will say that they are Messiah.

You say, “Pastor, has this been fulfilled? Are there many false Messiahs?” Dear friend, in recent days, in the past 50 years, no less than 1100 different religious leaders have claimed to be the Christ, the Messiah, of the world. You say, “Can you give me a pertinent example, one that I can understand?”

Let’s think about the Reverend Moon—the Reverend Moon. We call his followers “Moonies.” Of course, it is the Unification Church. He is the self-ordained Korean evangelist. His followers believe that he is here to fulfill Christ’s mission on earth. They believe that he is a 20<sup>th</sup>-century—or, back up—he is *the* 20<sup>th</sup>-century Messiah. The Moonies believe that Jesus Christ failed. They do not believe that He succeeded. They believe that the cross was a horrible mistake—that for 4,000 years, the world had been

preparing for the coming of the Messiah, but the Jews ruined God's plan when they crucified the Lord Jesus Christ; and now, God has to start over again. And, guess who He chose? The Reverend Moon. And, they believe that what Jesus should have done—rather than be crucified, He should have sought out an ideal wife; He should have been married and started a new race of people. And so, the Lord is starting all over again with the Reverend Moon.

Now, that might seem almost humorous, except when you see what Moon requires of his followers—and I quote (here's what he said): "I want to have members under me who are willing to obey me, even though they may have to disobey their own parents and the presidents of their own nations. And, if I gain half the population of the world, I can turn the whole world upside down." And then, he said to his followers, "You must start over again your new life from the point of denying your past. Deny your families, friends, neighbors, and relatives." Now, the tragedy of this is that the Reverend Moon has found many deluded followers. You'll see them on street corners of every major city, and they pay a price that sometimes puts modern-day Christians to shame. Counterfeit Christs.

## **2. Continual Conflicts**

Second sign: Not only counterfeit Christs, but continual conflicts. Notice verses 6–7: and Jesus said, *"And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom"* (Matthew 24:6–7). Now, Jesus said continuing conflicts are going to be a sign of the end of the age. Now, there have always been wars and rumors of wars, but now wars are growing in number; they're growing in intensity, and they are growing in devastation. An expert, Richard Sanger, has said this: "Since World War II, at least every month there has been an attempt to take over a country and to bring about political or economic or racial or religious change."

Think of the wars—just think of them that are going on right now. Think what is happening this very day in Israel. I listened to the news this morning...with an uprising in Bethlehem where our Lord was born. Think what is happening in Afghanistan. Think what is happening in Ireland. Think what is happening in South Africa. Think what is happening in Central America, as American boys are now down there again in greater number in Central America. Think all over the world of the uprisings and the wars. Ted Koppel, the ABC commentator on *Nightline*, told his audience not long ago, "While we're sitting here talking, there are more than 39 wars going on simultaneously in the world"—39! Never has there been a generation that has known the terrorism, the hijackings, the bombings, the assassinations, the sabotage, and the open hostility that we know. Continual conflict, Jesus said—a sign of the end of the age.

### 3. Costly Calamities

The third sign that I want to mention is what I'm going to call "costly calamities." Jesus mentions these in the latter part of verse. Jesus goes on to say: "*and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places*" (Matthew 24:7). Now, Jesus lived in a very small part of the world. He never traveled outside of Palestine. He did not have the knowledge that we have of world conditions.

#### a. Famines

But, Jesus looked down through the tunnel of time, and Jesus omnisciently forecast that there would be famines in the last days. Those of us who know what is happening in the world today know that the experts tell us that we are on the threshold of a great unprecedented famine in the land of Ethiopia. The Ethiopians have known a famine not so long ago. We breathed a sigh of relieve, and we thought, "Well, perhaps there has been some requiting of that famine." But, now we are told that it is inevitable that new famine will come. Which of us has not turned his head and looked away, not hardly able to bear to look at the little babies with their distended stomachs, their bloated bodies, the flies swarming on them, and those gaunt little faces—mothers gnawing at dry breasts? And, we think, "How can this be? How can this be in our world where there is so much?" My dear friend, the problem is not only with the production of food; it is with the distribution of food. You see, war always causes famine for two reasons: number one, the means of production are put into military production; and number two, that the means of communication and distribution are always inhibited by the hardness of men's hearts. And, famine follows war like night follows day.

Let me tell you what some men have said. Dr. Paul Ehrlich of Stanford University, an expert, said, "There are whole areas of the globe today where the people who are alive will die of starvation tomorrow"—vast areas, not just in incidental people or villages. He went on to say, "There is not the slightest hope of escaping a disastrous time of famines from this moment onward." And then, he said, "It is shockingly apparent that the battle to feed mankind will end in a rout." That is, there won't even really be a battle.

Lester Brown, whom the *Washington Post* called "one of the world's most influential thinkers of 1982," and who is President of the Worldwatch Institute, said—and I quote: "Forget about using the word *crisis* when talking about world production of food. Crisis suggests a severe but temporary shortage. The correct word is now *climax*, meaning 'a final and irreversible shortage.'" It's not just that we're going to try to work our way through it; he's saying we can't. He went on to say, "Planet Earth is no longer a sustainable society. With world population doubling twice this century, the world's land is being worked so hard for food that one quarter of the topsoil is turning sterile and eroding away."

In the face of this, the United Nations has created what they call a "World Food

Bank.” Their estimate is that one-half billion people will die from famine in the next five years. Can you imagine one-half billion dying of starvation in five years? They went on to say that at the end of the century, another one billion will die of starvation. Now friend, you put those figures together, and you have almost 25 percent of the world’s population—one out of four—dying of starvation. Now, the Lord Jesus said that would be one of the signs of the end of the age. He mentioned the costly calamity of famine.

#### **b. Pestilence**

And then, He mentioned the costly calamity of pestilence. We would have thought that with modern ingenuity and high-powered drugs, penicillin and the rest, that we would not have to worry about pestilence. I take from my illustration one pestilence that stares us in the face right now. It’s like we’re looking at the end of a loaded gun, and it is AIDS. Which of us does not shiver—which of us does not think seriously—about the specter of AIDS? I read recently in *U.S. News and World Report* this quotation: “AIDS today is a crisis for the modern United States, more deadly than many wars of modern times. In just four more years, the disease will have killed more Americans than the Vietnam and Korean wars combined. It will probably be the most important public health problem of the next decade and going into the next century,” warns microbiologist and Nobel Laureate, David Baltimore. And then, he said, “It threatens to undermine whole countries.” Entire countries will cave because of this pestilence. And, we stand around and ring our hands, but we are helpless.

#### **c. Earthquakes**

Thirdly, our Lord not only warned about famines and pestilence, but He warned about earthquakes. As I told you last Sunday night, there has been a dramatic increase of earthquakes in these last days. Seismologists now have a theory called “plate tectonics.” They believe that there are about a dozen landmasses or plates that cover this globe, and these plates are about 70-mile-thick rock crust. And, they bump up to each other, and they rub against each other. And, as the molten core of the earth begins to move and pulsate, there is a desire for movement, but the edges are stuck one to another. But, when the pressure comes strong enough and hard enough, it slips. And then, when it slips, there’s what is called an “earthquake.” Now, there may be a little slippage, or there may be a great slippage, but every slippage is only a prognostication and a forecast of more to come. *In the reading I was doing, they said the way to understand this is like understanding the breakup of an ice flow on a great lake, like one—Lake Michigan or something—up in the north. When the ice begins to break up a little bit, you know that it’s going to break up more. You know that more is coming.*

For example—for example—*The New York Times* reported that 20 years ago there was no recorded earthquake in Colorado, but we had one. And, since then, there have

been 3,000 measurable earthquakes. That is, what begins will increase. *Time Magazine* states that there have been more macro-earthquakes in the past ten years than in the previous 100 years.” And, seismology experts have shown us that there have been more megalithic earthquakes since the time of Columbus to this time. As a matter of fact, they have increased 2,000 percent. And, it is absolutely verifiable that as many have died in earthquakes during the last dozen years as have perished in the previous 120.

Now, Jesus said that earthquakes are going to be a sign of the last days. As a matter of fact, there was an earthquake that hit Red China in 1976. The figures have never been released by the Red Chinese, but outside observers believe that at least a million Chinese died in 1976—one million. If that is true, that’s the greatest disaster to hit mankind since the flood of Noah. And friend, that’s in our age. That’s just a little more than a decade ago. God’s alarm clock is going off all around us. God is saying that earthquakes are a sign of the last days.

And, Jesus says here in verse 8: *“All [of] these are the beginning of sorrows”* (Matthew 24:8). Now, the word for *sorrow* here is the word for birth pains. They are the beginning of travail. You know that when a woman is getting ready to give birth to a baby, first of all, there are little, minute pains—a pain here, and then a long time, and another pain. “Was that a birth pain or was that something else?” “Well, we’ll see.” But then, the birth pains get stronger, and they get closer together. And then, they get stronger; and then, they get closer together. And, when this happens, you know that you’re coming to the climax, that the birth is due. And, that’s what Jesus is saying. Now, you see, when we preach on these things, someone will say, “Well, look, we have always had false Messiahs. We have always had wars and rumors of wars. We have always had famines, and earthquakes, and pestilences.” But, what is our Lord saying? When you see an intensification, when you see a multiplication, when you see a convergence of these signs, you know—you know—that the end is near.

#### **4. Condemned Christians**

Now, let me give you another sign in verses 10: *“And [many] shall...be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another”* (Matthew 24:10). Well, let me back up to verse 9: *“Then”—* I skipped verse 9; let me read it—*“[And] then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake”* (Matthew 24:9). Now, who is the Lord speaking to? He’s talking to His disciples, and they are representative of the Christians who are going to be hated in the last days. The fourth sign, therefore, is condemned Christians. Christians are going to be condemned, and Christians, many of them, are going to be put to death. There will be an increase of religious persecution—primarily of Christians. Now, not all religious people are going to be persecuted. Primarily, those who are going to be persecuted are

Christians. You say, “How do you know?” Because Jesus said it will be “*for [His] name’s sake*” (Matthew 24:9). Do you see that? “*For [His] name’s sake*” (Matthew 24:9)—in verse 9. You’re going to be persecuted because of the name of Jesus.

Now, you can leave the name of Jesus out and get along real well in the world today. You can go pray at a ballgame. You can pray at the Rotary Club or anything else. Just don’t pray in the name of Jesus, and nobody will mind it at all. You can just say, “Your religion is as good as mine,” and put our arms around everybody else and say, “Everybody’s all going to heaven, just different ways,” and everybody will like it fine. But, when you stand up and say, “*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is [no] other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*” (Acts 4:12), my dear friend, then the persecution will begin.

Have you ever noticed that on television, radio, in the newspapers today, that the favorite indoor sport is Christian bashing? Have you noticed that? I mean, everybody today—they would not dare speak of any other group. They would not dare speak of any other ethnic group or religious group as they speak of Christians—and especially Bible-believing Christians. Listen, folks: it is estimated that more Christians were tortured and slain in 12 months during World War II than died under all of the Neros in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. In Seoul, Korea, in our time, 10,000 Christian martyrs have paid for their faith with their lives. Authorities claim that over 50 million died under the hands of the communists in the Communist Revolution in Russia and other places. More people have died for Christ in this generation than have died in any other generation.

Now, I wonder—I wonder—if the noose tightens more and real persecution begins in the United States, I wonder how many Sunday morning benchwarmers will fall away. I wonder how many here in this place, when persecution begins, will follow the Lord Jesus Christ. We have people, very honestly, who think they do God a wild favor when they get to church on Sunday morning, once in a while, and especially if they drop a few bucks in the plate: “O God, You’re so fortunate to have me.” But, what... To them, the church is little more than a country club with a steeple on top. Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you love the Lord Jesus Christ? Jesus spoke of those hothouse Christians who would fall away when persecution began.

But, dear friend, it has begun. And, I want to tell you that people have died for the name of Jesus and the cause of Christ, and we need to understand that persecution is coming. Now, it’s a sign of the last days.

## **5. Contentious Churches**

I want to mention a fifth sign, and that fifth sign is what I’m going to call “contentious churches”—“contentious churches.” Now look, if you will, in verse 10: “*And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another*” (Matthew 24:10). Now, I believe—and it breaks my heart to say this—but I believe He’s talking



about the religious world. He's talking about when persecution arises, that one brother will turn in another brother; one brother will spy on another brother. There will be denominations and churches divided by squabbles and church fights. Denominations will be at one another's throat. And, rather than working together and praying together and loving one another, we will be divided, betraying one another. It will break the heart of our God. It causes angels to weep. It sets back the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. That's the reason I want our church to be characterized by love—that when people see us, they will say, “Behold how they love one another.” Contentious Christians, contentious churches—one of the signs of the last days. I ask you, do you see that today? Oh, just look around. That's what you see today.

## 6. Cynical Coldness

But, let me mention the sixth sign, and it's what I call “cynical coldness”—not just any kind of coldness, but cynical coldness. Our world will be filled with cynics as a result of all of these other things. Look, if you will please, in verses 11–12: “*And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold*” (Matthew 24:11–12). I put 11 and 12 together—verses 11 and 12 together—because I believe they belong together.

Now, a false prophet may be in the world of religion, but not only in the world of religion—he may be in the world of politics; he may be in the world of philosophy; he may be in the world of economy; he may be in the world of education. A false prophet is somebody who says, “I have the answer,” and he speaks with authority. These are not necessarily religious false prophets, but these are those who are saying, “This is the way to survive. This is the way to live. This is the thing to do.” And, all of these false prophets have two things in common: number one, they don't have the answer; but, number two, their answers are some way, somehow, centered in mankind and what man can do in self-expression, self-gratification, “me-ism,” “live for number one,” and “take care of yourself.” Now, my friend, this is rampant in the world today. A true prophet speaks to the glory of God. A false prophet ultimately speaks to the glory of man.

Now, what is going to happen is this: people will substitute the Word of God. False prophets will arise. And, as a result of false prophets, the Bible says that “*iniquity shall abound*” (Matthew 24:12). The word *iniquity* is really the word *lawlessness*. That is, there will be no fixed standards. We will not be living by the Ten Commandments, and the Beatitudes, and the Golden Rule, and the laws of the Lord Jesus, and the teachings of our Lord and Savior. There will be... Lawlessness will abound. There will be no more laws. There will be no more fixed standard. “*Iniquity [will] abound*” (Matthew 24:12). And, when that happens, the fire will go out in the hearts of mankind, because they will hate one another and betray one another. And, we'll be afraid to even to walk the streets of our city.

Which of you would like to take a stroll through downtown Memphis this evening unescorted, whether you're male or female? You'd be afraid to do so. Many of us are afraid to walk in our own neighborhoods after dark. Is it not true? What happens is this: we put bars on our windows, double deadlocks on our doors, and we stay inside while the criminals are on the streets. Is that not true? You see, the non-criminals are in the prison; the criminals are walking the streets. And, the Bible says, "*The love of many [will] wax cold*" (Matthew 24:12). We don't even want to open the door. We peep out through the curtains to see who is there. "Don't open the door, children, to a stranger. Little boys, little girls, don't speak to that man. He may be a child molester." You see this hatred, this fear, that is in the hearts of men. It's an amazing thing that we've come to.

This was in our paper the other day, in *The Memphis Commercial Appeal*. A woman—a woman—wrote Ann Landers, and this is what she said: "Dear Ann Landers, a few days ago, I took my 15-year-old daughter and three of her friends to a rock concert. I decided on the way that instead of fighting the traffic both ways, I would buy a ticket, and stay, and see the show. I consider myself fairly open-minded, but I was shocked senseless by what I saw and heard. The language of the kids around me was unreal. Every other word started with 'F' or 'S.' When one of the rock stars appeared in a g-string, the crowd went wild. That fellow was ninety-nine and seven-eighths percent naked. The audio was turned up, and the audience went crazy. My eardrums began to pop, but no one else seemed to mind. In fact, they loved it. Then, the kids around me started to light up joints"—that is, marijuana—"People all over the place began to throw firecrackers. I swear, Ann Landers, I have never been so petrified in my life—not only for me, but for every person in that building. There were broken bottles all over the place and several fights going on. The police were nowhere to be seen. I lost track of the number of people who had to be carried out. Some were unconscious; others were hysterical. I saw two couples having sex right out in the open. Others were taking off their clothes all over the place. When the concert ended, there was an incredible stampede. I was afraid if I fell, I would be stomped to death. I prayed for strength to stay on my feet. On the way home, still shaking, I told my daughter she would not go to another rock show as long as she lived in my house, no matter how old she was, and I'm going to stick to it." Now folks, it is an amazing thing to me that this kind of thing could take place. What has happened is this: that lust has been substituted for love, and iniquity doesn't exist. It abounds in America today. We live in a world gone wild.

## **7. Continuing Courage**

But, I want to mention the seventh sign of these last days: not only cynical coldness, but, thank God—here's a good one—continuing courage. There will be those who will stay true to the Lord Jesus Christ. Look in verse 13: "*But he that shall endure unto the end...shall be saved*" (Matthew 24:13). Now, don't ever get the idea that our Lord says,

“If you can endure, I will save you.” That is not what He’s saying. He says, “You want to know who the real Christians are? You want to know who’s saved? See who endures. Those who endure—those are the saved ones.” And, thank God, they will be there. Thank God, there will be the Master’s minority. Thank God, there are the faithful few. Thank God, there are those who will sail through bloody seas, but they will march under the blood-stained banner of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Thank God for these who are the courageous ones, and courage will continue.

Our Lord will not leave Himself without a witness. The Lord Jesus said, *“Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”* (Matthew 16:18). And, my dear friend, if you think that I have written to...I have given this message this morning to discourage you, you need to understand what Jesus said when He said, *“Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars...[let not your heart be] troubled”* (Matthew 24:6). What Jesus is saying is, “Don’t get blown out of the saddle when all of these things come to pass. Those who are saved—those who know Me—they will endure, and they will make it.”

## **8. Completed Commission**

The last sign I want to give you, because I’ve run out of time, is a completed commission—the completed commission. Notice here in verse 14: *“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come”* (Matthew 24:14). Our Lord gave us the commission to preach the gospel to every nation. Ladies and gentlemen, this is the only generation that can say that that has been done. It has been done not primarily because of our missionaries going, though that’s one of the reasons, but the major reason it has been done has been shortwave radio, and television, and modern printing, and communication. And, the gospel has girdled the globe. Not every person has heard, but every nation has heard the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And, Jesus had the audacity to look to the future and say, *“This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all [of] the world”* (Matthew 24:14). And, my dear friend, it has been done.

### **B. What This Prophecy Means**

Now, you put these signs together, and you tell me if you do not have a feeling in your heart that the birth pangs are getting closer and closer and more and more intense. And, we have every reason to believe that we are living in the closing moments of this present dispensation and this age. That means several things to me.

#### **1. It Means the Word of God Is True**

Number one: It means the Word of God is true. Only a true prophet could have prophesied as the Lord Jesus did.

## 2. It Means That Those of Us Who Are Christians Should Take Hope

Number two: It means that those of us who are Christians should take hope and take courage. I have not given this to discourage you. Frankly, I'm very encouraged. I'll say, "Bless God, it's getting gloriously dark!" Amen. For Jesus said, "*When [all of] these things begin to come to pass, then look up...lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh*" (Luke 21:28).

## 3. It Means That We Should Get Busy Sharing the Gospel

I'll tell you a third thing it tells me: it tells me that we had better get busy sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. The real proof that you believe these things is not whether you have it in your notebook but whether you have it in your heart. *We need to get our heads out of the clouds of prophecy and on the pavement of soul winning* and begin to win...warn people to flee from the wrath to come and to be saved.

## 4. It Means If You Don't Know the Lord, You Ought to Get Saved

I'll tell you fourth thing it means: it means, my dear friend, if you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ, you ought to get saved. I mean, soon, you ought to give your heart to the Lord Jesus Christ. And oh, He'll save you. He wants to save you, and He will save you.

## Conclusion

I'd like every head bowed, every eye closed, no one stirring now. And, I want you to begin to pray for those around you—those around you who may or may not know the Lord Jesus Christ. Just pray for the person to your right, the person to your left—no one moving, no one stirring.

Now, I want to ask you a question: How many in this building today could say, "Brother Rogers, if the Lord Jesus Christ were to burst through the blue this morning, if the Lord Jesus were to come today, I know that I know that I know that I'm saved. I'd be ready for Christ to come, and He would take me and receive me unto Himself. I know it not because of any good that I have done but because I have repented of my sin; I've trusted Christ as my personal Savior, and God's Spirit bears witness with my spirit that I'm a child of God"? If you can say that and mean it out of your heart, your conscience bearing witness, would you slip up your hand? Hold it up. Thank God—many of you. Praise the Lord. Now, take it down.

For those of you who could not lift your hand, I want to tell you, dear friend, that the next service, you'll be able to lift your hand if you'll do what I'm going to ask you to do right now, and that is to say, "Lord Jesus, come into my heart, forgive my sin, and save me." The Bible says, "*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*" (Romans 10:13). Would you pray a prayer and say, "Lord Jesus, I need You. Come into my heart. Save me, and help me, Lord Jesus, never—never—to be ashamed of You"? The Bible says, "*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be*

*saved*" (Romans 10:13). Father, I pray that many today will say *yes* to Christ. In His precious name I pray. Amen.

# The Signs of the End of the Age

*By Adrian Rogers*

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**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 24:1–14

*“And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?”*

MATTHEW 24:3

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## Introduction

Matthew chapter 24—turn to it, and look up here. And while you're finding it, may I remind you that mankind has always wanted to be able to look into the future, to know what the future holds. We have many forecasters, many prognosticators, many fortunetellers, many soothsayers, many false prophets, but they all have one thing in common: They cannot forecast the future; they all fail. Even our local weathermen fail sometimes. I heard we were going to have snow last Friday or Saturday, and they failed—I'm glad. I heard of a weatherman who had to leave one city and go to another

because the weather didn't agree with him. Many times, it doesn't agree with them, and they're wrong. But the Bible bats one thousand. God's Word is never wrong on the subject of prophecy.

One of the most amazing, startling, and revealing prophecies in all of the Word of God is found in Matthew chapter 24, and this prophecy comes from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. I read in Matthew 24:1: *“And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?”* (Matthew 24:1–3) I want you to notice three things about the prophecy that is contained in Matthew 24.

## **I. The Setting of This Prophecy**

First of all, I want you to notice the setting of this prophecy. The Bible says that the disciples had come to Jesus, and they were going to show Jesus the magnificence of the temple. Well, why would they do that? Jesus knew the temple as well as they. Jesus had been in the temple many times. Why were they pointing out the magnificence of the temple? Well, if you'll go back to the twenty-third chapter, you'll find out that Jesus had said to them, “This temple—your house—is going to be left desolate.” (Matthew 23:38) They couldn't believe it. This magnificent temple, how could this temple be left desolate? Josephus, the historian, said it sat there upon Mount Moriah like a mountain of snow. And when the sun would come up over the Mount of Olives and gleam on that façade, it was indescribably beautiful, and it looked like it would be there forever. The Jews thought of this as the very dwelling place of God. This temple was the very center of their society. But Jesus said it would be left desolate. They said, “Well, Lord, look at this place. How can this be?” Well then, to make matters worse, Jesus said in the first few verses of Matthew chapter 24, “I'm going to tell you something else: Not only is it going to be left desolate; it's going to be destroyed. There will not be left one stone upon another.”

Now this seemed highly unlikely. Why? Because they were living under Roman occupation. The Romans were lovers of temples. And they were also builders of temples. And they were also preservers of temples. They were not vandals. They didn't come in and destroy temples when they conquered; they preserved the temples. And you can visit around the world and see many of the temples that were extant in the time of the Roman Empire and see how the Romans left them. They did not destroy them. If they were destroyed, they were destroyed later on by earthquakes and vandals. But

Jesus said, “Not one stone will be left upon another.”

Forty years later, Titus, the Roman general, came because of rebellion in Jerusalem. He and his army surrounded Jerusalem as Jesus said that the armies would do in Matthew chapter 21. They cut the city off from food. Inside, starvation stalked the streets. Mothers even cooked and ate their own children. It was terrible. And then, when the city was weakened, they stormed the city. But Titus had given orders, “Do not—do not—destroy the temple.” But somehow—perhaps a flaming arrow, some arsonist—someone set the temple on fire. The great cedars of Lebanon began to burn, and the gold and the precious metals in that temple melted and ran down between the cracks. Also, there were rumors of hidden treasure and great resources—vast secret chambers full of gold and treasure—in the temple. When the temple burned and the ruins were left, then others came and took great pry bars and actually pried every stone apart looking for treasure and seeking the gold that had run down in the crevices; and the prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ was fulfilled minutely.

I have visited Jerusalem many times; and I can tell you, my friend, although the Western Wall remains, which is the outer parameter of the platform upon which the temple sat, not one stone is left upon another—not one—exactly as Christ said that it would happen! It was an unlikely prophecy; but it came to pass. It was unreasonable that it should happen; but it came to pass. We’d better learn right away that *we do not live by reason, but by revelation*. And, secondly, we’d better learn, dear friend, that we don’t have to say that a thing seems likely or not for it to come to pass, if the Bible prophesies it.

## II. The Subject of This Prophecy

That’s the setting of this prophecy. Now I want you to notice the subject of this prophecy. The disciples came to the Lord Jesus and they asked Him a pertinent question here in verse 3. The Bible says, “*As he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be?*”—that is, “when is the temple going to be destroyed?”—“and”—secondly—“*what shall be the sign of thy coming?*”

Now, look at the word *coming*. It’s not the normal word for *coming*, like you’d *come* to town, or you *come* home. But it is the word *parousia*, and it actually means “the sign of your presence.” And what they meant by that is “when you come to rule and to reign.” The Lord Jesus, they knew, was the Messiah. He was the One who was to rule and reign, and they said, “Lord, when are you coming?”—that is, coming to take over. “When are you coming, Lord, for your rightful place? What is the sign of your coming?” That was the second question they asked.

And then, here’s the third question, which was the subject of this prophecy—and



they said, “And what is the sign of the end of the world?” Now what it literally says is not primarily “the end of the world,” but “the end of the age.” And some Bibles are translated that way—and correctly so: “What is the sign of the end of the age?” They felt, “Well, if the temple is going to be destroyed, certainly the age that we know it is coming to an end. What are the signs of the end of this age—things as they are now? When is the new age going to begin? When is the new dispensation going to begin?”

Jesus answers that last question first—and that’s going to be the subject of our study this morning: “What are the signs of the end of the age?” And so we want to continue to read here and see what these signs are; and I want to mention eight of them—I want to mention eight. Jesus is saying that there’s going to be an indeterminable period of time—an intermediate period of time—between the time that He was there with them on the Mount of Olives and when He comes again. And Jesus describes the course of this age and the precursors of the end of this age—and I want you to see them. As I say, there are eight of them.

#### A. Counterfeit Christians

The very first I want to mention is counterfeit Christs—counterfeit Christs. Notice in chapter 24:4: “*And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you...*”—that is, “Be very careful. You can be easily deceived”—“*Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ;*”—the word *Christ* means “messiah”—“*and shall deceive many.*” (Matthew 24:4–5) Now the Lord Jesus said, therefore, that the end of the age will be marked by counterfeit Christs. We would say “antichrists.” You know that the word *anti* means “against Christ,” but it also means “instead of Christ.” The prefix *anti* means “instead of” and “against.” And there are going to come many who will be against Jesus, but the way they will be against Jesus is they themselves will say that they are Messiah.

You say, “Pastor, has this been fulfilled? Are there many false messiahs?” Dear friend, in recent days, in the past fifty years, no less than 1,100 different religious leaders have claimed to be the Christ, the Messiah, of the world. You say, “Can you give me a pertinent example, one that I can understand?” Let’s think about the Reverend Moon—the Reverend Moon. We call his followers *Moonies*. Of course, it is the Unification Church. He is the self-ordained Korean evangelist. His followers believe that he is here to fulfill Christ’s mission on earth. They believe that he is the twentieth-century Messiah. The Moonies believe that Jesus Christ failed. They do not believe that He succeeded. They believe that the cross was a horrible mistake—that for four thousand years, the world had been preparing for the coming of the Messiah, but the Jews ruined God’s plan when they crucified the Lord Jesus Christ; and now God has to start over again. And, guess who He chose? The Reverend Moon. And they believe that

what Jesus should have done, rather than be crucified, He should have sought out an ideal wife; He should have been married and started a new race of people. And so the Lord is starting all over again with the Reverend Moon.

Now that might seem almost humorous, except when you see what Moon requires of his followers. Here's what he said: "I want to have members under me who are willing to obey me, even though they may have to disobey their own parents and the presidents of their own nations. And if I gain half the population of the world, I can turn the whole world upside down." And then he said to his followers, "You must start over again your new life from the point of denying your past. Deny your families, friends, neighbors, and relatives." Now the tragedy of this is that the Reverend Moon has found many deluded followers. You'll see them on street corners of every major city, and they pay a price that sometimes puts modern-day Christians to shame. Counterfeit Christs.

### **B. Continual Conflicts**

Second sign: not only counterfeit Christs, but continual conflicts. Notice verses 6 and 7: and Jesus said, "*And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.*" (Matthew 24:6–7) Now Jesus said continuing conflicts are going to be a sign of the end of the age. Now there have always been wars and rumors of wars; but now wars are growing in number, they're growing in intensity, and they are growing in devastation. An expert, Richard Sanger, has said this: "Since World War II, at least every month there has been an attempt to take over a country and to bring about political or economic or racial or religious change."

Think of the wars—just think of them that are going on right now. Think what is happening this very day in Israel. I listened to the news this morning about an uprising in Bethlehem where our Lord was born. Think what is happening in Afghanistan. Think what is happening in Ireland. Think what is happening in South Africa. Think what is happening in Central America, as American boys are now down there again in greater number in Central America. Think all over the world of the uprisings and the wars. Ted Koppel, the ABC commentator on Nightline, told his audience not long ago, "While we're sitting here talking, there are more than thirty-nine wars going on simultaneously in the world"—thirty-nine! Never has there been a generation that has known the terrorism, the hijackings, the bombings, the assassinations, the sabotage, and the open hostility that we know. Continual conflict, Jesus said, is a sign of the end of the age.

### **C. Costly Calamities**

The third sign that I want to mention is what I'm going to call costly calamities. Jesus mentions these in the latter part of verse. Jesus goes on to say, "*And there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.*" (Matthew 24:7)

## 1. Famines

Now Jesus lived in a very small part of the world. He never traveled outside of Palestine. He did not have the knowledge that we have of world conditions. But Jesus looked down through the tunnel of time, and Jesus omnisciently forecast that there would be famines in the last days. Those of us who know what is happening in the world today know that the experts tell us that we are on the threshold of a great unprecedented famine in the land of Ethiopia. The Ethiopians have known a famine not so long ago. We breathed a sigh of relief, and we thought, well, perhaps there had been some abatement of that famine. But now we are told that it is inevitable that new famine will come. Which of us has not turned his head and looked away, not hardly able to bear to look at the little babies with their distended stomachs, their bloated bodies, the flies swarming on them, and those gaunt little faces—mothers gnawing at dry breasts? And we think, “How can this be? How can this be in our world where there is so much?” My dear friend, the problem is not only with the production of food; it is with the distribution of food. You see, war always causes famine for two reasons: number one, the means of production are put into military production; and, number two, the means of communication and distribution are always inhibited by the hardness of men’s hearts. And famine follows war, like night follows day.

Let me tell you what some men have said. Dr. Paul Ehrlich of Stanford University, an expert, said, “There are whole areas of the globe today where the people who are alive will die of starvation tomorrow”—vast areas, not just in incidental people or villages. He went on to say, “There is not the slightest hope of escaping a disastrous time of famines from this moment onward.” And then he said, “It is shockingly apparent that the battle to feed mankind will end in a rout.” That is, there won’t even really be a battle.

Lester Brown, whom *The Washington Post* called one of the world’s most influential thinkers of 1982, and who is president of the Worldwatch Institute, said—and I quote—“Forget about using the word *crisis* when talking about world production of food. Crisis suggests a severe but temporary shortage. The correct word is now *climax*, meaning ‘a final and irreversible shortage.’” It’s not just that we’re going to try to work our way through it; he’s saying we can’t. He went on to say, “Planet Earth is no longer a sustainable society. With world population doubling twice this century, the world’s land is being worked so hard for food that one quarter of the topsoil is turning sterile and eroding away.”

In the face of this, the United Nations has created what they call a World Food Bank. Their estimate is that one-half billion people will die from famine in the next five years. Can you imagine one-half billion dying of starvation in five years? They went on to say that at the end of the century, another one billion will die of starvation. Now, friend, you put those figures together, and you have almost twenty-five percent of the world’s

population—one out of four—dying of starvation. Now the Lord Jesus said that would be one of the signs of the end of the age. He mentioned the costly calamity of famine.

## **2. Pestilence**

And then He mentioned the costly calamity of pestilence. We would have thought that with modern ingenuity and high-powered drugs, penicillin and the rest, that we would not have to worry about pestilence. I take from my illustration one pestilence that stares us in the face right now. It's like we're looking at the end of a loaded gun, and it is AIDS. Which of us does not shiver—which of us does not think seriously—about the specter of AIDS? I read recently in *U.S. News and World Report* this quotation: "AIDS today is a crisis for the modern United States, more deadly than many wars of modern times. In just four more years, the disease will have killed more Americans than the Vietnam and Korean wars combined. It will probably be the most important public health problem of the next decade and going into the next century," warns microbiologist and Nobel Laureate, David Baltimore. And then he said, "It threatens to undermine whole countries." Entire countries will cave because of this pestilence. And we stand around and wring our hands, but we are helpless.

## **3. Earthquakes**

Thirdly, our Lord not only warned about famines, and pestilence, but He warned about earthquakes. As I told you last Sunday night, there has been a dramatic increase of earthquakes in these last days. Seismologists now have a theory called plate tectonics. They believe that there are about a dozen landmasses or plates that cover this globe, and these plates are made of about seventy-mile-thick rock crust. And they bump up to each other, and they rub against each other. And as the molten core of the earth begins to move and pulsate, there is a desire for movement, but the edges are stuck one to another. But when the pressure comes strong enough and hard enough, it slips. And then when it slips, there's what is called an earthquake. Now there may be a little slippage, or there may be a great slippage, but every slippage is only a prognostication and a forecast of more to come.

In the reading I was doing, they said the way to understand this is like understanding the breakup of an ice floe on a great lake—Lake Michigan or something—up in the north. When the ice begins to break up a little bit, you know that it's going to break up more. You know that more is coming.

For example, *The New York Times* reported that twenty years ago there was no recorded earthquake in Colorado. But we had one. And since then, there have been three thousand measurable earthquakes. That is, what begins will increase. *Time* magazine states that there have been more macro-earthquakes in the past ten years than in the previous hundred years. And seismology experts have shown us that there have been more megalithic earthquakes since the time of Columbus to this time. As a

matter of fact, they have increased two thousand percent. And it is absolutely verifiable that as many have died in earthquakes during the last dozen years as have perished in the previous 120.

Now Jesus said that earthquakes are going to be a sign of the last days. As a matter of fact, there was an earthquake that hit Red China in 1976. The figures have never been released by the Red Chinese, but outside observers believe that at least a million Chinese died in 1976—one million! If that is true, that's the greatest disaster to hit mankind since the flood of Noah. And, friend, that's in our age. That's just a little more than a decade ago. God's alarm clock is going off all around us. God is saying that earthquakes are a sign of the last days.

And Jesus says here in verse 8, *"All these are the beginning of sorrows."* (Matthew 24:8) Now the word for *sorrow* here is the word for birth pains. They are the beginning of travail. You know that when a woman is getting ready to give birth to a baby, first of all, there are little, minute pains—a pain here, and then a long time, and another pain. "Was that a birth pain, or was that something else?" "Well, we'll see." But then, the birth pains get stronger, and they get closer together. And then, they get stronger; and then, they get closer together. And when this happens, you know that you're coming to the climax, that the birth is due. And that's what Jesus is saying.

Now, you see, when we preach on these things, someone will say, "Well, look, we have always had false messiahs. We have always had wars and rumors of wars. We have always had famines and earthquakes and pestilences." But what is our Lord saying? When you see an intensification, when you see a multiplication, when you see a convergence of these signs, you know—you know—that the end is near.

#### **D. Condemned Christians**

Now, let me give you another sign in verses 9 and 10: *"Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another."* (Matthew 24:9–10) Now, to whom is the Lord speaking? He's talking to His disciples, and they are representative of the Christians who are going to be hated in the last days. The fourth sign, therefore, is condemned Christians. Christians are going to be condemned, and Christians, many of them, are going to be put to death. There will be an increase of religious persecution, primarily of Christians. Now not all religious people are going to be persecuted. Primarily, those who are going to be persecuted are Christians. You say, "How do you know?" Because Jesus said it will be for His name's sake. Do you see that? For His name's sake—in verse 9. You're going to be persecuted because of the name of Jesus.

Now you can leave the name of Jesus out and get along real well in the world today.

You can go pray at a ballgame. You can pray at the Rotary Club or anything else. Just don't pray in the name of Jesus, and nobody will mind it at all. You can just say, "Your religion is as good as mine," and put our arms around everybody else and say, "Everybody's all going to heaven, just different ways," and everybody will like it fine. But when you stand up and say, "*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,*" (Acts 4:12) my dear friend, then the persecution will begin.

Have you ever noticed that on television, radio, in the newspapers today, that the favorite indoor sport is Christian bashing? Have you noticed that? I mean, everybody today, they would not dare speak of any other group. They would not dare speak of any other ethnic group or religious group as they speak of Christians—and especially Bible-believing Christians. Listen, folks. It is estimated that more Christians were tortured and slain in twelve months during World War II than died under all of the Neros in the First Century. In Seoul, Korea, in our time, ten thousand Christian martyrs have paid for their faith with their lives. Authorities claim that over fifty million died under the hands of the communists in the Communist Revolution in Russia and other places. More people have died for Christ in this generation than have died in any other generation.

Now, if the noose tightens more, and real persecution begins in the United States, I wonder how many Sunday morning benchwarmers will fall away. I wonder how many here in this place, when persecution begins, will follow the Lord Jesus Christ. We have people, very honestly, who think they do God a wild favor when they get to church on Sunday morning, once in a while—and especially if they drop a few bucks in the plate: "O God, you're so fortunate to have me." To them, the church is little more than a country club with a steeple on top. Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you love the Lord Jesus Christ? Jesus spoke of those hothouse Christians who would fall away when persecution began.

But, dear friend, it has begun. And I want to tell you that people have died for the name of Jesus and the cause of Christ, and we need to understand that persecution is coming. Now it's a sign of the last days.

### **E. Contentious Churches**

I want to mention a fifth sign, and that fifth sign is what I'm going to call contentious churches—contentious churches. Now, look, if you will, in verse 10: "*And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.*" (Matthew 24:10) Now I believe—and it breaks my heart to say this—but I believe He's talking about the religious world. He's talking about, when persecution arises, that one brother will turn in another brother; one brother will spy on another brother. There will be denominations and churches divided by squabbles and church fights. Denominations

will be at one another's throat. And rather than working together, and praying together, and loving one another, we will be divided, betraying one another. It will break the heart of our God. It causes angels to weep. It sets back the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

That's the reason I want our church to be characterized by love, that when people see us, they will say, "Behold, how they love one another!" Contentious Christians, contentious churches: one of the signs of the last days. I ask you, do you see that today? Oh, just look around! That's what you see today.

## F. Cynical Coldness

But let me mention the sixth sign, and it's what I call cynical coldness—not just any kind of coldness, but cynical coldness. Our world will be filled with cynics as a result of all of these other things. Look, if you will, please, in verses 11 and 12: "*And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.*" (Matthew 24:11–12) I put verses 11 and 12 together because I believe they belong together.

Now a false prophet may be in the world of religion; but not only in the world of religion, he may be in the world of politics; he may be in the world of philosophy; he may be in the world of economy; he may be in the world of education. A false prophet is somebody who says, "I have the answer," and he speaks with authority. These are not necessarily religious false prophets; but these are those who are saying, "This is the way to survive. This is the way to live. This is the thing to do." And all of these false prophets have two things in common: number one, they don't have the answer; but, number two, their answers are some way, somehow, centered in mankind and what man can do in self-expression, self-gratification, *me-ism*: "live for number one" and "take care of yourself."

Now, my friend, this is rampant in the world today. A true prophet speaks to the glory of God. A false prophet ultimately speaks to the glory of man. Now what is going to happen is this: People will substitute the Word of God. False prophets will arise. And as a result of false prophets, the Bible says that "*iniquity shall abound.*" The word *iniquity* is really the word *lawlessness*. That is, there will be no fixed standards. We will not be living by the Ten Commandments, and the Beatitudes, and the Golden Rule, and the laws of the Lord Jesus, and the teachings of our Lord and Savior. Lawlessness will abound. There will be no more laws. There will be no more fixed standard. "*Iniquity shall abound.*" And when that happens, the fire will go out in the hearts of mankind, because they will hate one another and betray one another. And we'll be afraid to even to walk the streets of our city.

Which of you would like to take a stroll through downtown Memphis this evening

unescorted, whether you're male or female? You'd be afraid to do so. Many of us are afraid to walk in our own neighborhoods after dark, is it not true? What happens is this: We put bars on our windows, double deadlocks on our doors, and we stay inside while the criminals are on the streets, is that not true? You see, the non-criminals are in the prison; the criminals are walking the streets. And the Bible says, "*The love of many shall wax cold.*" We don't even want to open the door. We peep out through the curtains to see who is there. "Don't open the door, children, to a stranger. Little boys, little girls, don't speak to that man. He may be a child molester." You see this hatred, this fear, that is in the hearts of men. It's an amazing thing that we've come to.

This was in our paper the other day, in the Memphis *Commercial Appeal*. A woman wrote Ann Landers, and this is what she said: "Dear Ann Landers, A few days ago, I took my fifteen-year-old daughter and three of her friends to a rock concert. I decided on the way that instead of fighting the traffic both ways, I would buy a ticket, and stay, and see the show. I consider myself fairly open-minded; but I was shocked senseless by what I saw and heard. The language of the kids around me was unreal. Every other word started with *f* or *s*. When one of the rock stars appeared in a g-string, the crowd went wild. That fellow was ninety-nine and seven-eighths percent naked. The audio was turned up, and the audience went crazy. My eardrums began to pop, but no one else seemed to mind. In fact, they loved it. Then the kids around me started to light up joints"—that is, marijuana. "People all over the place began to throw firecrackers. I swear, Ann Landers, I have never been so petrified in my life, not only for me, but for every person in that building. There were broken bottles all over the place and several fights going on. The police were nowhere to be seen. I lost track of the number of people who had to be carried out. Some were unconscious; others were hysterical. I saw two couples having sex right out in the open. Others were taking off their clothes all over the place. When the concert ended, there was an incredible stampede. I was afraid if I fell, I would be stomped to death. I prayed for strength to stay on my feet. On the way home, still shaking, I told my daughter she would not go to another rock show as long as she lived in my house, no matter how old she was, and I'm going to stick to it."

Now, folks, it is an amazing thing to me that this kind of thing could take place. What has happened is this: that lust has been substituted for love, and iniquity doesn't exist. It abounds in America today. We live in a world gone wild.

### G. **Continuing Courage**

But I want to mention the seventh sign of these last days: not only cynical coldness, but, thank God—here's a good one—continuing courage. There will be those who will stay true to the Lord Jesus Christ. Look in verse 13: "*But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.*" (Matthew 24:13) Now, don't ever get the idea that our



Lord says, “If you can endure, I will save you.” That is not what He’s saying. He says, “You want to know who the real Christians are? You want to know who’s saved? See who endures. Those who endure, those are the saved ones.” And, thank God, they will be there. Thank God, there will be the Master’s minority. Thank God, there are the faithful few. Thank God, there are those who will sail through bloody seas, but they will march under the blood-stained banner of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Thank God for these who are the courageous ones—and courage will continue.

Our Lord will not leave Himself without a witness. The Lord Jesus said, *“Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”* (Matthew 16:18) And, my dear friend, if you think that I have given this message this morning to discourage you, you need to understand what Jesus said when He said, *“Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled.”* (Matthew 24:6) What Jesus is saying is, “Don’t get blown out of the saddle when all of these things come to pass. Those who are saved, those who know me, they will endure, and they will make it.”

#### **H. Completed Commission**

The last sign I want to give you, because I’ve run out of time, is a completed commission—the completed commission. Notice here in verse 14: *“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”* (Matthew 24:14) Our Lord gave us the commission to preach the gospel to every nation. Ladies and gentlemen, this is the only generation that can say that that has been done. It has been done not primarily because of our missionaries going—though that’s one of the reasons—but the major reason it has been done has been shortwave radio, and television, and modern printing, and communication. And the gospel has girdled the globe. Not every person has heard, but every nation has heard the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And Jesus had the audacity to look to the future and say, *“This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world.”* And, my dear friend, it has been done.

### **Conclusion**

Now, you put these signs together, and you tell me if you do not have a feeling in your heart that the birth pangs are getting closer and closer and more and more intense. And we have every reason to believe that we are living in the closing moments of this present dispensation and this age. That means several things to me.

#### **A. It Means the Word of God Is True**

Number one: It means the Word of God is true. Only a true prophet could have prophesied as the Lord Jesus did.

## **B. It Means That Those of Us Who Are Christians Should Take Hope**

Number two: It means that those of us who are Christians should take hope and take courage. I have not given this to discourage you. Frankly, I'm very encouraged. I say, "Bless God, it's getting gloriously dark," amen? For Jesus said, "*When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.*" (Luke 21:28)

## **C. It Means That We Should Get Busy Sharing the Gospel**

I'll tell you a third thing it tells me. It tells me that we had better get busy sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. The real proof that you believe these things is not whether you have it in your notebook, but whether you have it in your heart. *We need to get our heads out of the clouds of prophecy and on the pavement of soul winning* and begin to warn people to flee from the wrath to come and to be saved.

## **D. It Means If You Don't Know the Lord, You Ought to Get Saved**

I'll tell you fourth thing it means. It means, my dear friend, if you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ, you ought to get saved. I mean, soon, you ought to give your heart to the Lord Jesus Christ. And, oh, He'll save you. He wants to save you, and He will save you.

# Earthquakes

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: October 6, 1985**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 24:3–8**

*“For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.”*

MATTHEW 24:7

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Earthquake of Redemption
- II. The Earthquake of Resurrection
- III. The Earthquake of Revival
- IV. The Earthquake of Retribution
- V. The Earthquake of Return

Conclusion

## Introduction

All right, take God’s Word, please, and turn to Matthew chapter 24, and we’re going to begin reading in verse 3. Matthew 24:3–8 says, *“And as he sat upon the mount of Olives,”*—he now refers to the Lord Jesus Christ—*“the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.”*

The Lord Jesus Christ now is giving the signs of the times. He’s telling about God’s alarm clock that is to jolt us away, and to warn us, and to prepare us for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

And, he mentions many things. He mentions, for example, false Messiahs. The word *Christ* there means “Messiah,” not people coming to pretend to be Jesus—oh, no; people coming who say that they are God’s anointed messenger. Never, never, never have there been so many false Christs and false Messiahs who are prophesying, preaching, and have their followings around the world. I was talking to the staff the other

day. I am amazed that people will not believe in Jesus Christ, and even more amazed at what they will believe in. It is indeed amazing. But then, the Lord Jesus Christ went on to say that not only were these false Christs a sign of the end time, but wars and rumors of wars. This jittery old world is sick of war, and yet it seems that the war clouds are looming dark. And, now the world is divided into two camps. We have taken the war from the earth to the very skies, and we talk about “Star Wars,” and it’s like some Shakespearian tragedy. We know that every day we come closer and closer to a nuclear holocaust, it seems: wars and rumors of wars.

And then, the Lord Jesus went on to say not only that but there are going to be pestilences and famines. Let’s talk about famines here in verse 7. Our heart goes out. Folks, I don’t know how you feel about it, but it’s gut-wrenching to me to watch those little children in Northern Africa, those little emaciated bodies. I think, “My God, my God, could this be happening in the twentieth century?” But, the Lord Jesus Christ looked down through the corridors of time, and with a telescope of prophecy Jesus Christ knew that the end times would be a time of unprecedented famine. And, ladies and gentlemen, it doesn’t seem that it’s going to get better. It’s going to get worse.

And then, our Lord mentions pestilences, all kinds of numbing diseases that are going to come. You would think, in this day of modern medicine and heart transplants, that we would have conquered disease. Now, this thing called AIDS is upon us. And, they tell us now that it is going to become a worldwide epidemic, and really no one is all that safe. Of course, the way to be the safest is to obey the Bible, and to live in a monogamous marriage, and to keep oneself pure. So many people are talking about what we can do to stop this epidemic. That would be a good place to start: just by living according to the standards of God’s Holy Word.

And then, the Lord Jesus went on to say that, not only would there be false Christs, not only would there be wars and rumors or wars, not only would there be famines, and not only would there be pestilences, but the Lord Jesus said that there’s one sign that we all need to be aware of, and it is “*earthquakes, in divers places*” (Matthew 24:7).

I was reading *Newsweek* this past week, the September 30 edition, and it speaks of the disaster in Mexico. This is the opening paragraph, and it says something like this: “During the first few moments there was remarkably little alarm. Earth tremors were common enough in Mexico City. As a matter of fact, the previous weekend most had endured a moderate earthquake without bothering to leave their beds. But the upheaval that week was different: downtown buildings began to vibrate wildly, their walls and girders groaning from the stress. Metal lampposts swayed and bent like rubber in their sockets in the shuddering streets. Telephone and electric wires snapped, windows shattered and huge chunks of concrete smashed murderously onto the pavement below. Underground gas lines ruptured in large areas of the city, some erupting in

geyser-like flames. Like thousands of other residents, Teresa Mendoza raced from her home in a panic. “It was absolutely dark from the dust and the smoke,” she later recalled. “Everybody was crying—men, women, and children. They were saying it’s the end of the world.” And, that’s the way this article begins here in *Newsweek*, September 30.

And, indeed, earthquakes are in the headlines. After this, there was a tremor in California. After this, another in Japan. “*Earthquakes, in divers places*” (Matthew 24:7). The question comes: “There have always been earthquakes. There were earthquakes in Jesus’ time. Are there more earthquakes? Are they getting more serious?”

John Wesley White, in the book *Re-entry*, gives these statistics. To me they’re startling. He said, in the fourteenth century, there were 137 major earthquakes. In the fifteenth century, there were 174 major earthquakes reported. In the sixteenth century, 253 major earthquakes reported. In the seventeenth century, 378 major earthquakes reported. In the eighteenth century, 640 major earthquakes reported. In the nineteenth century, 2,119 major earthquakes, and in the twentieth century, over 3,000 major earthquakes have been reported. Why is this? There are some physicists who believe that the earth is wobbling on its axis. You see, there is the North Pole, and the magnetic field. There are certain ions that line up with the true magnetic center of the north. And, there seems to be a movement of these ions from the true North Pole, which makes the scientists and physicists believe that there has been a polar axis shift.

Now, they tell us that a shift like this occurs about once every 5,000 years. The last time a polar axis shift took place, according to some physicists, was back in the time of Noah, during the flood. They tell us that we are due for another polar axis shift, and when that happens, when the earth seems to wobble just a little bit, this is going to cause an increase not only in the frequency but the intensity of earthquakes. And so, dear friend, we are seeing earthquakes in this century. I did a little research, and I found out that over one million people have lost their lives to earthquakes in the twentieth century—one million people have lost their lives in the twentieth century to earthquakes. And, every tremor that we feel, every earthquake that we feel, every time Mother Earth seems to shudder, it just reminds us of greater earthquakes and greater tremors that are to come.

The Bible predicts an earthquake is coming that is going to be so violent that it is actually going to level the mountains, and it is going to be felt worldwide. Dr. Charles Richter, who recently died—as a matter of fact, just died a few days ago—said this—and I quote: “No place is safe from earthquakes. We can predict confidently that where earthquakes have occurred in the past they will occur again perhaps soon and as population increases they will be more destructive.” A geologist, Lloyd Cluff, recently warned a conference of 300 scientists at Stanford University that all evidence indicates

continuous activity in earthquake zones with eminent possibility of major shocks. That is, the supposedly solid earth beneath us is inwardly a seething mass of motion, quivering and pulsating.

Now, these scientists warned of earthquakes, and earthquakes that are coming upon us, but the Bible is way ahead of them. Now, dear friend, an earthquake unleashes immense, almost measureless, power. One physicist said that an average major earthquake is 100,000 times more powerful than the atomic bomb that destroyed Hiroshima; not just twice as powerful, but 100,000 times more powerful, is one major earthquake.

Now, as I studied the Bible, I found out that the Bible has quite a bit to say about earthquakes. As a matter of fact, God seems to use earthquakes in a very strange way. God seems to use earthquakes as a demonstration and as a reminder of His mighty power. As a matter of fact, if you'll study the Bible, you'll find out that almost all of the major spiritual events in the Bible have been inaugurated with an earthquake. It's remarkable. I'm going to show you that in just a little bit. It is almost as though earthquakes are God's way of saying *amen*. When God wants to do something earthshaking in the spiritual world, He generally says *amen* with an earthquake in the physical, material world. I believe that earthquakes are God's exclamation points. I believe that earthquakes are God's alarm clock to jolt this world awake.

Now, I believe you'll believe it too if you'll just simply take the Bible and go with me today as we look at the earthquakes. We want to see how God has used earthquakes in the physical, material world when God has done something dramatic and earthshaking in the spiritual world.

## **I. The Earthquake of Redemption**

For example, we're in Matthew chapter 24; turn to Matthew chapter 27, and look, if you will, in verse 50: "*Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent*" (Matthew 27:50–51). That is, after the death of the Lord Jesus Christ there was a mighty earthquake. It is as though the heart of Mother Earth was broken by the death of her Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, I want to tell you, if the death of Jesus doesn't break your heart, you have a heart that's harder than the rocks. When Jesus died, the earth shivered, shook, and quaked. I wonder, has the death that shook the world disturbed your hard heart? I pray God it has.

## **II. The Earthquake of Resurrection**

There was what I want to call the earthquake of redemption, but not only the earthquake of redemption; the earthquake of resurrection. Look, if you will, in Matthew chapter 28

now, verses 1 and 2: *“In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men”* (Matthew 28:1–4). When the Lord God came out of that tomb, when Jesus was resurrected and came forth, the Bible says that that was accompanied by an earthquake. The resurrection of Jesus Christ shook Mother Earth. What was God saying? I believe that when God shook the earth at Calvary, He was saying, “This is an earthshaking event. There’s power in the death of My Son.”

I believe when God shook the earth at the resurrection of Jesus Christ, He was saying, “There’s power here.” He was illustrating in the material world the power that is there in the spiritual world: what the apostle calls *“the power of his resurrection”* (Philippians 3:10).

### **III. The Earthquake of Revival**

But now, let’s continue. You’re in the Book of Matthew. Let’s go to the Book of Acts for a moment, and look in Acts chapter 4 and verse 31. Not only are you going to see the earthquake of redemption, and the earthquake of resurrection, but you’re going to see the earthquake of revival. You’re going to see God’s mighty spiritual power. You’re going to see God pouring out his Holy Spirit upon that infant church. And, look, if you will, in Acts chapter 4 and verse 31 right now: *“And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness”* (Acts 4:31)—the earthquake of revival. These people were not Quakers; they were *earthquakers*. I mean, folks, when they prayed, things happened.

We get in our average Baptist Church, and we pray, “Lord, shake this place.” If He did, most of us would die of fright. But, listen, folks. Literally—not figuratively, literally—the place was shaken. Now, what was God saying? God was saying, dear friend, there’s power in the death of Jesus Christ, wonder-working power in the blood of the Lamb. When Jesus Christ came out of the grave, God is saying there is power in His resurrection. When the Holy Spirit descended upon that infant church, God is saying here is a dynamite power that can shake the world; here is a power that can not only shake this world but make Hell’s foundations quiver, because there is what I want to call revival power. There is also redemption power, and resurrection power. God said *amen* with an earthquake.

#### IV. The Earthquake of Retribution

Now, you take your Bible and turn to Revelation chapter 6, and let's look. I want to show you something else: not only the earthquake of revival, but the earthquake of retribution. When God gets ready to judge the world, God sends earthquakes as His alarm clock and as His reminder. Revelation chapter 6 and verse 12 says, *"And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood"* (Revelation 6:12). I thought about what this lady said there in *U.S. News and World Report* when she said, "It was dark, and we couldn't see, because of the dust and the clouds that were there." Look, if you will, in Revelation chapter 8 and verse 5: *"And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings, and an earthquake"* (Revelation 8:5). Look, if you will, in Revelation chapter 11 and verse 13: *"And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven"* (Revelation 11:13). And then, look, if you will, at the mightiest earthquake, in Revelation chapter 16 and verse 18: *"And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great"* (Revelation 16:18). Now, what does this tell us? This tells us, ladies and gentlemen, that the greatest earthquakes are in the future, and that God is going to shake this world in judgment.

I believe that the military might of Soviet Russia is going to be destroyed most likely with an earthquake. Turn to Ezekiel chapter 38, and look with me. God teaches that in the last days there's going to be a Soviet invasion of Israel. The Soviets—the Great Northern Bear, Russia—are going to come down and invade Israel in the last days. Now, the Bible scholars generally agree that the invading force that is spoken of here in Ezekiel chapter 38—I'm talking about conservative Bible scholars—refers to modern Soviet Russia. Notice in chapter 38—Ezekiel 38 and verse 8—God says, *"After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them"* (Ezekiel 38:5). That is, there's coming a time when Israel is going to be re-gathered, and not only are they going to be re-gathered; they are going to be dwelling in confidence and in safety.

Well, when would that be? Well, let's look again, if we will, in verse 16. God says to this invading force coming out of the North, *"And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days,"*—in other words, this was a prophecy that Ezekiel was giving of a time way off—*"and I will bring thee against*



*my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes” (Ezekiel 38:16).* As a matter of fact, it may be this that will be the catalyst that will cause Antichrist to turn against Israel. He will be so envious and so jealous of the glory that God is getting.

But, mark it down. There are going to come great earthquakes in the future, and there’s the earthquake of redemption, and there’s an earthquake when Jesus died. There was an earthquake of resurrection, an earthquake when he came out of the grave. There was an earthquake of revival when God sent the Holy Spirit upon that infant church. There will be in the Great Tribulation earthquakes of retribution. God is going to shake this earth. But, there’s another earthquake that’s coming. At the close of the Great Tribulation, Jesus Christ is coming back to this earth.

Turn to the Book of Zechariah with me for a moment—Zechariah chapter 14. Let me show you a sweet and a blessed earthquake, if you could call an earthquake sweet and blessed—Zechariah chapter 14, and I begin to read now in verse 1. It speaks of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. It says, *“Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.”* That is, it’s going to look like a dark day for Jerusalem. It’s going to look like Antichrist and his armies are about to destroy God’s chosen people. But, notice verse 3. It says, *“Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives...”*—then Jesus Christ comes for the Church. That’s the Rapture. We’re going to be caught up, and we’ll meet the Lord in the air. We’ll go to a honeymoon with Jesus in the skies, and down here on Earth will be the Great Tribulation. The storm clouds of Armageddon will gather, Russian will be judged, and Antichrist will be in power. It looks like he’s about to destroy Jerusalem. It looks like there’s no hope. This time Jesus Christ comes, not for His saints, but He comes with His saints. And, notice what the Bible says—*“Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives...”*—folks, I want to tell you, it’s a thrill to think that one day our dear Lord’s feet are going to stand on that Mount of Olives. Zechariah 14:4 says, *“And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.”* That is, dear friend, there is going to come a tremendous earthquake, and the Bible says, in verse 5, *“And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye*

*shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee” (Zechariah 14:1–5). At first, He comes for us. And then, we come with Him.*

## **V. The Earthquake of Return**

Dear friend, the most earthshaking event of all time is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. That’s what I want to call the earthquake of return—when Jesus Christ comes again. What a day that’s going to be when His blessed nail-pierced feet touch that mountain! And, the Mount of Olives splits in two as a reminder of the mighty power of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Now, I hope you’ve caught the theme. There’s power in the death of Jesus. And so, God sent an earthquake to say so. There’s power in the resurrection of Jesus, so God sent an earthquake to say so. There’s power in the coming of the Holy Spirit, so God sent an earthquake to say so. There’s power in the Tribulation judgments, so God sends an earthquake to say so. There’s power in the Second Coming of Jesus, so God sends an earthquake to say so.

## **Conclusion**

Now, did I not tell you at the beginning of this message that you can look in the Bible and see that when God is doing something significant in the spiritual world that he says amen with an earthquake in the physical material world? Now, folks, you can just follow—it is an amazing thing to see God doing something amazing and fantastic in the spiritual world, and then God saying *amen* with an earthquake in the physical, material world. I do believe, therefore, that the earthquakes that we’re seeing now, that are becoming very severe, and perhaps to get more severe, are reminders of the soon coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. I want to remind you that Jesus said that one of the signs of His coming is *“earthquakes, in divers places”* (Matthew 24:7).

Now, one last verse I want you to turn to is Hebrews chapter 12 with me for a moment—Hebrews chapter 12, and let’s look in verse 25: *“See that ye refuse not him that speaketh.”* When God speaks, pay attention. *“For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape,”*—that is, if those people who refused what Moses said, if they escape not, and refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape—*“if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven:”*—that is, listen. If God speaks, you ought to pay attention. I mean, if the people who refused what Moses said were punished in Hell, how much more when God Himself speaks? Now, get the argument. Listen—*“whose voice then shook the earth:”*—that is, when God gave the Ten Commandments, when Moses was up on Mount Sinai, when God gave His law, and when God spoke, Mount Sinai trembled. There was an

earthquake at the giving of the Ten Commandments. That's what the Bible says. When God spoke, His voice then shook the earth. But now, notice. Continue in Hebrews 12:26—*“but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven”* (Hebrews 12:25–26)—not just the earth, but the heaven.

I was reading in my study about earthquakes, and I read about a man in South Carolina during an earthquake. He said that everything that had been stable to him started to move. The great buildings that he had depended on, their walls were wobbling, and so he said he couldn't depend upon those for stability. He said he went outside to get in a meadow, but he said the ground was heaving and undulating, and there was no stability there. He said he went to the great trees of the forest and he looked at the trees. He said the trees were swaying like grain in a field, and there was no stability there. He was there by the shore in South Carolina. He said he looked there at the ocean, and he said even the sea was like a bowl of water being shaken; there was nothing that was standing still. All of the things that he had depended upon for stability were moving. He said it was the most terrible feeling that he had. He couldn't find anything that was standing still. It was at nighttime, and he said he looked straight up, and the stars were not moving. He said the stars were standing still, and it gave him a faint glimmer of hope.

But, I want you to notice what God says here. God says, “The time is coming when I'm going to shake not only the earth, but Heaven also.” I mean, everything is going to be shaken.

Now, this is yet to come. Why is God going to do that? Well, look in verse 27. It says, *“And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear”* (Hebrews 12:27–28). Now, folks, listen. If an earthquake doesn't make you reverence the great God, I don't know what would—I mean, when you see the mighty power of God unleashed in an earthquake. Now, God says, “When I spoke to Moses to let people know that I meant business, I shook the earth. Now,” He said, “there's coming a time when I'm going to shake not only the earth but I'm going to shake the heavens. I'm going to shake everything that can be shaken. Everything that is not nailed down is going to come up. And then, everything that is nailed down is going to come loose. Everything that is made is going to be shaken that can be shaken. But then,” He said, “we have a Kingdom that can't be shaken.”

Now, folks, I want to ask you a question. There's no doubt about it but what Mother Earth is going to suffer great earthquakes in the future. And, you know, we're right on top of a major earthquake fault. Don't you know that? I don't mean to frighten you, but I

just want to ask you, do you have a good place to stand when all that happens? Do you have a firm place to stand? Do you know what the Bible says in Psalm 46:2? *“Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea,”* for the Lord of hosts is with us. God is going to shake everything that can be shaken, so that the things that cannot be shaken will remain.

Do you know where I’m standing tonight? You say, “Well, I see you, pastor. You’re standing up there on the platform.” I want to tell you where I’m standing. I’m standing on the Rock of Ages. And, friend, it doesn’t tremble. You may tremble on the rock, but it will never tremble under you. Do you have a place to stand? Is there something in your life that cannot be shaken? Your bank account can be shaken. Your health can be shaken. Your family can be shaken. Your job can be shaken. But Jesus never fails.

# Will the Church Go Through the Tribulation?

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: February 26, 1978**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 24:21**

*“For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.”*

MATTHEW 24:21

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Period Described
- II. The Purpose Designed
  - A. To Prepare the Jews
  - B. To Punish the Gentiles
- III. The People Designated
- IV. The Promise Declared
- V. The Power Derived

Conclusion

## Introduction

We’re speaking tonight on this subject: “Will the Church Go through the Great Tribulation?” Turn to Matthew chapter 24, and let’s look in verse 21. Some of the most terrifying scriptures or words to ever fall from the lips of Jesus are these that I’m about to read in Matthew chapter 24 and verse 21. Jesus said, *“For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.”* (Matthew 24:21)

Now, the Lord Jesus Christ was Truth incarnate, and Jesus Christ was not given to exaggeration. And, Jesus Christ speaks of a time so terrifying, so horrible, so awesome, that there’s absolutely nothing in all of history to be compared to this time that He calls “the Great Tribulation.”

If you were here with us last Sunday morning, you will remember that we preached on the horrors of the Great Tribulation. And, we took the book of the Revelation, and we opened the seven seals; and out of each of the openings of these seals came a new horror of the Tribulation. And, I wish we had time tonight to recapitulate and to sum up

and redescribe the horrors of the Great Tribulation, but we would never get finished if we did that. And so, I want us to think just a little bit about this period called “the Great Tribulation.”

## **I. The Period Described**

First of all, I want us to think of the period described. Now, this is a unique period. All Christians have tribulation. Jesus said, *“In the world ye shall have tribulation.”* (John 16:33) But, this period is not the general tribulation that Christians have; it is a unique time. There is nothing like it. It will be seven years of hell on earth.

Now, I wish we had time tonight to tell you why we know that the Tribulation period will be seven years in length, but we have not the time. If you were interested in pursuing this further, would you check out the tape *The Countdown in the Holy Land?* And there, you’ll discover why the Tribulation period is seven years in length. But, simply, the period described—this first point will be very brief. It is a unique period. There is nothing like it in all of biblical history or secular history.

## **II. The Purpose Designed**

Now, the second thing I want us to notice: not only the period described, but I want us to notice the purpose designed. Why would there be such a thing as a Great Tribulation?

### **A. To Prepare the Jews**

As you study the Great Tribulation, you’re going to find that it is basically Jewish in character. The Tribulation is the last seven years of God’s dealing with the nation Israel before they are destroyed as a spiritual leader-nation in all of the world. And, it will take seven more years of Jewish history to purge this nation, to prepare this nation for the receiving of their Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me give you some scriptures now to back that up. So, lick your fingers, and turn, first of all, to Deuteronomy chapter 4, and we’ll begin reading in verse 39. Here in the dawn of God’s history with Israel, the prophet Moses makes a prediction. Deuteronomy chapter 4, and I begin reading in verse 29: *“But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul. When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the LORD thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice...”* (Deuteronomy 4:29–30) Now, God is saying, in the latter days, out of tribulation, the Jews will turn to Him, and they will seek Him with all of their heart; and, at that time, they will be heard of the Lord.

Turn now, if you will, to the prophecy of Jeremiah—Jeremiah chapter 30—and we’re going to see something of the same thing. Jeremiah chapter 30, and begin reading with me in verse 4: *“And these are the words that the LORD spake concerning Israel and*

*concerning Judah. For thus saith the LORD; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble”—now, let me say that sometimes people speak of “spiritual Israel,” and there is a sense in which the Church is spiritual Israel; but when the Bible uses the word *Jacob*, it always refers to fleshly Israel, natural Israel, the Jews as we know them. And, God calls this time, this great time of tribulation, “the time of Jacob's trouble.” But, notice again the last part of verse 7—“*but he shall be saved out of it. For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him: But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them. Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid. For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet I will not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.*” (Jeremiah 30:4–11)*

This scripture and this magnificent prophecy from Jeremiah makes it abundantly clear to my mind that the Tribulation period is a time to prepare the Jewish people to receive David's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to serve Him. It is a “*time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.*” (Jeremiah 30:7)

Now, turn, if you will, to the prophecy of Daniel—Daniel chapter 12—and we'll read again in verse 1. Again, the prophecy very clearly, very evidently, speaks of the Great Tribulation. In Daniel chapter 12 and verse 1: “*And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people*”—whose people? Daniel's people. Who is that? The Jews—“*and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.*” (Daniel 12:1) Here God is speaking of the elect, who are going to be delivered from the Great Tribulation. That's what Jesus meant when He said, “*And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.*” (Matthew 24:22)

## **B. To Punish the Gentiles**

And so, the period described is a period of Great Tribulation. But, the purpose designed, number one, is to prepare the Jews to receive the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah—but not only to prepare the Jews, but to punish the Gentiles. It is a time of God pouring out

His wrath upon this world that has spurned Him, that has laughed at Him, that has ridiculed Him. And, man has said, “We don’t want any God to rule over us. Let us burst His bonds asunder; let us cast His cords away from us.” (Psalms 2:3)

All right, I want you to notice some scripture now. Turn to Isaiah chapter 24, and I want you to begin reading with me in verse 6. And, you’re going to find out that not only is God preparing the Jews, but He’s getting ready to punish the Gentiles. Isaiah chapter 24, verse 1: *“Behold, the LORD maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him. The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the LORD hath spoken this word. The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish. The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left. The new wine mourneth, the vine languisheth, all the merryhearted do sigh.”* (Isaiah 24:1–7) And, God goes on here to describe this terrible, horrible period of time that’s coming upon the Gentiles.

Turn again to the prophecy of Jeremiah, this time Jeremiah chapter 25—and I regret that we don’t have time to elucidate on these passages but just barely to read them in order to get in what we wish to get in before we go off the air—Jeremiah chapter 25, and I begin reading in verse 30: *“Therefore prophesy thou against them all these words, and say unto them, The LORD shall roar from on high, and utter his voice from his holy habitation; he shall mightily roar upon his habitation; he shall give a shout, as they that tread the grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth. A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for the LORD hath a controversy with the nations”—*that’s the key; just underscore that—*“the LORD hath a controversy with the nations, he will plead with all flesh; he will give them that are wicked to the sword, saith the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth. And the slain of the LORD shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground.”* (Jeremiah 25:30–33) *“The LORD hath a controversy with the nations.”* (Jeremiah 25:31)

And so, what is the purpose of the Great Tribulation? From these scriptures that we’ve read to you, it seems quite obvious to me that, number one, He’s preparing the Jews to receive the Messiah and, number two, He is punishing the Gentiles for their



arrogance, for their rebellion, and their godlessness.

### III. The People Designated

Now, we've talked about the period described; that's the *when*. We've talked about the purpose designed; that is the *why*. But now, let's talk about the people designated; that is the *who*. Who will be going through this Great Tribulation? Well, it's obvious that Israel will be in the Great Tribulation, for it is the "*time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.*" (Jeremiah 30:7) It's obvious that the Gentiles—that is, the unsaved, as the Bible describes them—will be going through the Great Tribulation. But, I want you to notice in these scriptures, and in all of the scriptures that deal with the Great Tribulation, there is not one scripture that mentions the Church as being in the Great Tribulation.

For example, turn with me, please, to the book of the Revelation, if you will, and let's notice God's outline of the book of the Revelation. Now, every passage of Scripture has a key to understanding it, every book has a key to understanding it, and in the book of the Revelation, the key is hanging right on the front door. And, there is one verse in the book of the Revelation that, if you do not understand this one verse, in my estimation, you will not understand any of the book of the Revelation. It, to me, is the key to the entire book of the Revelation. It's Revelation chapter 1, verse 19. God is commissioning the Apostle John to write the book of the Revelation, and God gives John his own outline of the book of the Revelation.

God says to the Apostle John, "*Write the things which thou hast seen*"—that's point number one—"*and the things which are*"—that's point number two—"*and the things which shall be hereafter.*" (Revelation 1:19) The book of the Revelation is clearly divided into three sections: the things John had seen, then "the things which are," and then "the things which shall be hereafter." What had John seen? Well, if you study Revelation chapter 1, John had a vision of Jesus Christ coming in power and great glory, and he wrote that. And so, the first division is complete. And now, John moves, in chapters 2 and 3, to the second division of the book of the Revelation, and that is "the things which are." And, John brings seven messages to seven churches.

Now, seven, in the Bible, is a symbolic number, which stands for perfection, or for fullness or completeness. Now, these were seven literal, actual churches, but they represent all churches of all times. And, as you study chapters 2 and 3, you will read the word *church* over and over and over again—"the church," "the church," "the church." But, notice there are three divisions in the book of the Revelation: the first division, "the things which thou hast seen"; the second division, "the things which are"—that is the Church Age. Ladies and gentlemen, we're living in the Church Age. That's "the things which are."

But now, I want you to notice something remarkable. Turn to Revelation chapter 4,

and notice verse 1: *“After this”—and literally, the Greek means “after these”—“After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.”* (Revelation 4:1) It’s quite obvious, from Revelation chapter 4, verse 1 on through the end of the book, we have entered into—the book of the Revelation—“the things which must be hereafter.” Let me sum up: “the things which thou hast seen”—chapter 1, a vision of Jesus in glory; “the things which are”—the Church Age, chapters 2 and 3; “the things which must be hereafter”—chapter 4, verse 1 and on through the end of the book.

Now, it’s remarkable to me, beginning in chapter 4, verse 1, that we hear this kind of language: *“the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.”* (Revelation 4:1) Remember John was a part of that early church; he is our brother in the Church Age. But, I want you to notice how, symbolically, John is lifted out of this earth. He’s taken up to heaven, and then “the things which must be hereafter” begin. And, it is with Revelation chapter 4, verse 1 and on through the end of the book that we see the horrors of the Great Tribulation. And, while the Church is mentioned over and over again in the early chapters of Revelation—chapters 2 and 3—from chapter 4, verse 1 through the end of the book you do not hear the Church mentioned again—no more mention of the Church.

Someone says, “But the Bible mentions the saints.” Yes, but remember, in the Old Testament, the Jewish people are called “saints”; that word simply means “holy ones.” Christians are saints, but Old Testament Jews were saints also. But, the Church is mentioned no more. You will find that the Tribulation is a time dealing with Israel; you will find that the Tribulation is a time of God’s punishing of the Gentiles. But, I do not believe that you will find a mention of the Church in all of the book of the Revelation during that time known as the Great Tribulation.

#### **IV. The Promise Declared**

Now, to the contrary, I want you to notice not only the people designated, but I want you to notice the promise declared, that God has given the Church. I want you to notice that the Lord has specifically, in my estimation, promised to keep the Church from the Great Tribulation.

Look in 1 Thessalonians chapter 1 for a moment. All right, in 1 Thessalonians chapter 1, read verses 9 and 10: *“For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God. And to wait for his Son from heaven”—do you know what I’m doing right now? I’m waiting for Jesus—“to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead,*

*even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.”* (1 Thessalonians 1:9–10)

Now, what is “the wrath to come”? “The wrath to come” is not hell; that’s not what he’s talking about here, not in my estimation. Remember here in Revelation chapter 6 where the seals begin to be opened and the Tribulation horrors are poured out upon the world. Look in Revelation chapter 6 for just a moment, and beginning in verse 15: *“And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?”* (Revelation 6:15–17)

Now remember, *“the great day of his wrath is [coming],”* (Revelation 6:17) and “the great day of his wrath” is the Tribulation. But, go back again now, in 1 Thessalonians 1 and verse 10, and find out what the saints are doing. They are *“[waiting] for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.”* (1 Thessalonians 1:10)

Now, while we’re in the neighborhood, turn to 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 for a moment, and let’s read verses 1 through 5: *“But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night”—and, incidentally, a thief in the night comes as a surprise, does he not?—“For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.”* (1 Thessalonians 5:1–5) And so, the Lord is saying that these things pertain to the unsaved but they do not pertain to those of us who are saved.

Look in verses 9 through 11 of that same chapter: *“For God hath not appointed us to wrath”—that’s not what God has in mind for His Church. Do you think the Lord wants to pour His vials of wrath out upon His bride, upon His Church? Oh, it is indeed true that our Lord allows us to go through tribulation. “In the world ye shall have tribulation.”* (John 16:33) It is true that the Lord allows the devil to torment us. It is true that the Lord allows the wicked to persecute us. It is true that because we have these human frames, we suffer sickness, moan, groan, and woe. But, it is not true that Almighty God would pour out His wrath upon His beloved—*“For God hath not appointed us to wrath”—I want you to notice again; I’m reading here verses 9 through 11—“For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort*

*yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.*" (1 Thessalonians 5:9–11) Now, he's saying that the thought of our Lord rescuing us is a comforting thought and it's an edifying thought, so how we thank God for this!

Then, I want you to notice, in Revelation chapter 3, I want you to notice the message to the church at Philadelphia, the church of brotherly love—Revelation chapter 3 and verse 10. God is speaking to this wonderful, marvelous New Testament church, and God says to this church, *"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."* (Revelation 3:10) Now, the Lord speaks to the church at Philadelphia, and He says to this church: "You kept my Word, and now I'm keeping you—I'm keeping you from this hour of temptation that's coming on all the earth."

Someone says, "But, Brother Rogers, that's a message known as to the church at Philadelphia. Dare we abrogate that message? Dare we take that message to ourselves?" Well, I want you to look, as we continue to read—look in verse 13: *"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches"*—not simply, "what the Spirit saith to the church at Philadelphia," but *"what the Spirit saith unto the churches."* (Revelation 3:13) These were messages to individuals, but they were messages to all churches, and for the church at Memphis, Tennessee, as well as for the church in Philadelphia, in Asia Minor. *"Hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."* (Revelation 3:13) *"I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation."* (Revelation 3:10)

Now, there are some, in the last days, who have come with a new message; they say that our message is a new message. They say that Christians have been expecting to go through the Great Tribulation, and they believe that the Church will be raptured after the Tribulation.

Now, we have some terms that are technical terms—there's the premillennialist, postmillennialist, and the amillennialist. They're hard to say and harder to understand. But, a premillennialist believes that Jesus is coming prior to the Millennium. The Millennium is the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ upon this earth.

A postmillennialist believes that Jesus is coming after the Millennium—that is, that the world is going to get better and better and better until we have one thousand years of perfect peace, where men *"beat their swords into plowshares...their spears into pruninghooks."* (Isaiah 2:4; Micah 4:3) *"The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as waters that cover the sea,"* (Habakkuk 2:14) and then Jesus will come. That is, we're getting better and better. Folks, there ain't many of them left, the postmillennialists. All right, they have failed to understand that scripture that says, *"In the last days perilous times shall come."* (2 Timothy 3:1)

All right, but there are the premillennialists, the postmillennialists, and then there are the amillennialists. And, if you put a in front of anything, that means "no." For example,

*amuse* means “not to think.” Did you know that most people are amusing themselves into hell? They refuse to think. See, “a-muse.” *Muse* is “to think.” You go to a museum to think. Most people had rather watch television than go to a museum. They want to be amused rather than mused. And, you put the prefix *a* in front of something, it means “no.” Amillennialist is “no-millennial”; he just believes, somehow, all that is just to be spiritualized away.

I remember hearing Dr. Lee preach on one occasion; he said, “I went to the doctor. He said, ‘Stick out your tongue and say, ‘Ah.’” He said, “I won’t do it.” Dr. Lee certainly didn’t believe in amillennialism. He wouldn’t stick out his tongue to the doctor and say “Ah.”

Well, but there are those today who are premillennialists who believe Jesus Christ is coming—and, incidentally, I’m premillennial, in case you have not guessed it—those who believe that Jesus is coming prior to the Millennium—that is, we must have the Prince of Peace before we can have peace on earth. Still, this camp is divided—of the premillennialists. There are the pre-Tribulation premillennialists and the post-Tribulation premillennialists. There are some premillennialists who believe that Jesus is coming before the Millennium but after the Tribulation. Other premillennialists believe that Jesus is coming before the Millennium and also before the Tribulation.

Now, I happen to be a pre-Tribulation premillennialist; I believe that Jesus is coming prior to the Tribulation. But, there are some today, and some fine Christians—and I’m not ridiculing them; they love the Lord—who believe that the Lord is coming after the Tribulation for His Church and that the Church will be raptured after the Tribulation. And, here’s one of the scriptures that they often use. Would you turn, please, to 2 Thessalonians, the second chapter? Beginning in verse 1: “*Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him*”—that is, by the Rapture—“*That ye be not soon shaken in mind*”—some of you are still turning, and I’m reading. All right, sometimes you get ahead of me. You know, I’ve always had a fear of preaching and not being able to find the book in the Bible. Wouldn’t that be awful? All right. But, I beat you this time. All right, 2 Thessalonians, the second chapter—“*Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God*”—do you realize we’ve already run out of time? But, we’re going on for a few minutes. I didn’t realize that; I thought I was talking faster. You’re just not listening fast enough. All right—“*Who*

*opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”* (2 Thessalonians 2:1–12)

Now, this is a highly technical passage of Scripture, but some say that Paul is saying that Jesus cannot come until the antichrist is revealed. And, they say that Paul was saying to these Thessalonians, those people at Thessalonica, that they were unduly alarmed that Jesus was ready to come. And, they’re saying that these saints were expecting Jesus at any moment, and Paul is writing to tell them, “Cool it. He’s not coming at any moment. He cannot come except, first of all, there is an apostasy—’til people turn from the faith—and ’til, secondly, the man of sin is revealed.” And, they say that Paul said that before Christ comes, the antichrist must first come, and before the Church is taken out, the antichrist must be revealed. And, they get that from this passage of Scripture. I think that it teaches just 180 degrees the opposite. I think that it teaches that the antichrist cannot come until the Church is taken out.

Now, it hinges on some interpretation. Now, Paul says in verses 1 and 2: *“Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him”*—well, we all agree that He’s coming; we all agree that we’re going to be gathered—*“that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us.”* (2 Thessalonians 2:1–2) Now, evidently, someone had written a serious letter to the church and signed Paul’s name to it. And, Paul said, “It wasn’t from me, and don’t get all shook up about it”—if I can use that phrase in Memphis, Tennessee—*“Don’t be all shaken. Don’t be ‘soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.”* (2 Thessalonians 2:2) Now, what does this phrase “the day of Christ” mean? Some say that it means the Rapture of the Church, and they make it synonymous with *“our gathering together unto him.”* (2 Thessalonians 2:1) But, literally, it is “the day of the Lord,” although it’s translated in the King James “the day of Christ.” The best translation is “the day of the Lord.” And, the day of the Lord is the Tribulation. It is a dark day—a day of noise, a day of battle, a day of gloom, a day of judgment, a

day of horror. And, these Christians at Thessalonica were shaken because someone had said, “The day of the Lord is at hand; the Tribulation is about to begin.”

Now, certainly, they wouldn't have been shaken if the Rapture were at hand. They wouldn't have been troubled if Jesus were at hand. That would not have troubled them. But, they had thought that they were going to escape these things, that God had not appointed them to wrath. And now, someone has written a serious letter, someone has intimidated them, and said that the Tribulation has already started and the day of the Lord is at hand. And, the Apostle Paul says, “No. The day of the Lord—the Tribulation—cannot begin until the antichrist is revealed. But,” he says, “something else is going to have to happen: there's going have to be a falling away.”

Now, in verse 3 we read, *“Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away.”* (2 Thessalonians 2:3) Now, what does this word “falling away”—*apostasia* or, transliterated, “the apostasy”—mean? Well, some people say that it means “a turning from the faith.” But, let me tell you, it is translated some fifteen times in the Bible. Three times it may be translated “an apostasy,” like “a turning from the faith,” but eleven times it is aptly and correctly translated “a departure.” I believe what Paul is saying here is that the day of the Lord can't come unless there's a departure—unless some folks check out, unless some folks are gone, unless the calling away comes first. Now, the word “falling away” is unfortunate. I think it could just as well be translated, and correctly translated, “The Day of Judgment cannot come unless there first comes a catching away”—a catching away, or a departure—“and that the man of sin be revealed.”

Now, you see, there must be a departure before the man of sin can be revealed, because there's something that's keeping the man of sin—and the man of sin is the antichrist—there's something that is keeping him from being revealed. You see, John tells us that the spirit of antichrist is already in the world. (1 John 4:3) And, do you know I believe, though I cannot prove it, that the antichrist is alive on earth now? I believe that. And, I believe he's ready to take over, but there's something restraining him; there's something holding him back. And, what is it that's holding him back? Well, let's look and see what it is. He says here in verse 6: *“And now ye know what withholdeth that he”—the antichrist—“might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work”—oh, the spirit of lawlessness is already in the world, even in Paul's time—“only he who now [restrains] will [restrain], until he be taken out of the way.”* (2 Thessalonians 2:7) There is a Great Restrainer.

Now, who is that Great Restrainer? I believe that He is the Holy Spirit living in the Church, the One whom Jesus said *“may abide with you for ever.”* (John 14:16) He cannot be taken away from me because He abides with me forever. And, if the Restrainer is to be taken out and He cannot be taken away from me, I must go away

with Him because He is in me. And, I believe, ladies and gentlemen, that the only thing that keeps the floodtide of lawlessness from spewing out like a broken sewer upon this world is the Church of the Lord God.

You will find, as you study the Bible, that before God brings judgment, He takes His own out. And, God took Lot out of Sodom before He burned it with fire and brimstone and incinerated that wicked place. God put Noah in the ark before He sent the flood. God took Rahab out of Jericho before that city was destroyed. There is a principle that God takes His own out before He pours out His wrath and judgment because, ladies and gentlemen, *“God [has] not appointed us to wrath.”* (1 Thessalonians 5:9) And so, I believe here that the Lord is going to take His people out.

Look, if you will, in Luke chapter 21, verse 34, for a moment—I’m reading verse 34: *“And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.”* (Luke 21:34–36) There are some who are going to be counted worthy to escape all these things, and they’re going to stand before the Son of man.

## **V. The Power Derived**

Now, let me just add the last point, because time has definitely gone from us. We have talked about the promise declared—that the Lord promises to take His people out. In my estimation, He does. But now, I want you to notice the power derived. I want you to see the power that is derived from looking for a pre-Tribulation Rapture.

First of all, there is the power that comes from a constant expectancy of Jesus. Did you know, ladies and gentlemen, that if I believed that the Church had to go through the Rapture, I would not be expecting Jesus tonight, nor would you? I wouldn’t be looking up; I’d be looking around. I wouldn’t be looking for Christ; I would be looking for antichrist. Don’t you understand that? But, the Bible teaches that Christians are to be expecting Jesus at any moment.

Look at these scriptures. Turn to Matthew chapter 24 for a moment, and look in verse 36: *“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.”* (Matthew 24:36) But, I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, that if the Church goes through the Tribulation, I would be able to put it on a calendar when Jesus Christ was coming. All I would have to do is wait until the middle of the Great Tribulation, when antichrist appears in the temple, shows himself that he is God, and count down three-and-a-half years—forty-two months, 1,260 days—and Jesus would be here. But, don’t you see that if I believe that, if we’re going through the Tribulation, then



I cannot be expecting Jesus Christ to come at any moment? But, Jesus said, *“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.”* (Matthew 24:36)

Notice verse 38: *“For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came.”* (Matthew 24:38–39) I want you to notice verse 42: *“Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.”* (Matthew 24:42) And, somebody may quibble and say, “Well, we don’t know the hour, but we can tell the day or the week.” That’s mere quibble; that’s missing the point altogether. *“Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.”* (Matthew 24:42)

Look in verse 44: *“Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.”* (Matthew 24:44) “Be ready,” “be ready,” “be ready”—not, “Get out your little chart and start counting the years.” *“That day and hour knoweth no man.”* (Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32) Oh listen, ladies and gentlemen. Turn to Mark chapter 13, if you will for a moment, and begin reading in verse 32: *“But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.”* (Mark 13:32–37)

We are to be ready, ladies and gentlemen. Jesus Christ may come at any moment. But, those who believe in a post-Tribulation Rapture tell us that the coming of our Lord is not imminent and we are not to be looking for our Lord. Well, I tell you, ladies and gentlemen, if I’m not looking for my Lord, if I’m not waiting for the Son from heaven, if I’m not *“looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ,”* (Titus 2:13) then it ceases to be a blessed hope to me.

Now, if I were in the Tribulation, it would be a blessed hope. But, I mean, right now, it’s not a blessed hope. I would say not, “Welcome Tribulation, welcome death”; I would say, “The ones who die are the fortunate ones.” I would say, “Even so, come coffin.” I would stop looking up; I would start looking around. Oh, but, my friend, there is a purifying hope when we know that Jesus may come at any moment. That’s the reason the Bible says in 1 John chapter 3, verse 3: *“that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”* (1 John 3:3)

I must live today as though I would give an account tonight to my dear Lord. And, I’m going to meet Jesus. I may meet Him tonight. Oh, *“little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, [you] may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at*

*his coming.” (1 John 2:28)*

## **Conclusion**

Now, I must conclude, but let me say this: If the Lord decides that I’m wrong and He wants to come after the Tribulation, He has my permission. *I am not on the program committee; I’m on the welcoming committee.* And, I want you to know that whenever my Lord does it and whatever He does, that’s fine with me. But, I want you to know what I believe about this.

But, I’m going to tell you something, ladies and gentlemen: whether I go before the Tribulation or whether I go through the Tribulation, I’m going with Jesus. How about you? How about you? I’m telling you, whatever we’re talking about, we’re talking about some great and some terrible things. And, these are not times to be living lightly, carelessly, deliciously; these are times to be living and keeping with the urgency and the emergency of the days. And, our Lord said, again, and I say to you, *“For ye know not what hour.”* (Matthew 24:42)†

# Israel and Prophecy

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: Merritt Island**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 24:34**

*“Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.”*

MATTHEW 24:34

## Outline

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## Introduction

What a joy it is to be here this morning! And God is doing great things in our church, and we praise Him for it. And while you're here in this auditorium, down in the gymnasium, which we've turned into another auditorium this morning, we have, I suppose, five-hundred-plus young people who are down there saying, "Worthy is the Lamb" and praising the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm talking now about teenagers—junior high school, high school, and college-age young people—down there in a youth rally. So, if you're here this morning, and you look around, and you say, "There are not many young people in this church," you're just looking in the wrong place. Down there at the other end of this building, it's freighted with young people. And we thank God for what is happening there.

And if you know any teenagers, young people, who are not in these eleven o'clock Jesus rallies, you ought to tell them about it and tell them that for the next five Sunday mornings we're going to be having these special rallies, follow-up on the Freddie Gage Crusade. And they'll be held in the gymnasium, so we ask all of the teenagers to come at 9:30. So, I got to preach to them this morning at 9:30. For those of you who are guests and visitors and don't know, we have two morning worship services. And believe

it or not, we had even a larger crowd at 9:30 this morning than this crowd here. Plus now we have that group down there in the gymnasium.

And so, we praise God for what He's doing, and for the mighty moving of the Holy Spirit. And, you know, it feels good to me to be able to stand here now and preach. I haven't preached for a while, and I'm afraid I'm going to get rusty. And so, I'm just thrilled today for the joy and the privilege of preaching. And this is the first time, really, I've had a chance to say much since we've been back from the Holy Land. Those of you who know us know that we had the joy and the privilege of traveling for ten days in the Holy Land. I look out in the faces of many of you who went with us. And so, this morning I want to speak on this subject: "Israel and Prophecy." Now, if you're not a student of prophecy, I just hope this won't be too much over your head. I'm going to try and keep it simple. But I think if you're not a student of prophecy, you ought to be a student of prophecy.

You know, God the Father loves prophecy. One-fourth of all of the Bible is prophecy. So, if we preach the Bible, one out of every four sermons ought to be on prophecy, amen? We ought to be preaching prophecy. And when you preach prophecy, there are those who say, "Oh, he's just riding a hobby." Dear friend, God the Father loves it. We ought to love it. The early church loved it. They called the Second Coming of Jesus the "blessed hope." I'll tell you, not only do I love it because God loves it and the early church loved it; I love it because the devil hates it. If the devil had his way, we'd never preach Bible prophecy. There are two books in the Bible that the devil especially hates: one is the book of Genesis, and the other is the book of Revelation. Do you know why? Because it is in Genesis his doom is pronounced and in Revelation his doom is executed. The devil tries to make us think that the book of Genesis is myth and the book of Revelation is mystery. He doesn't want us to understand either one of those two books, and he tries to get us to discount both of those two books.

But let's come back to our subject. I want you to think of some things this morning that start with the letter "p" so it will be a little easier to remember.

## I. The People

First of all, we're talking about Israel and prophecy so let's talk about the people: Israel. Jesus said in Matthew 24: *"This generation shall not pass"—this people, this race, this stock, this breed shall not pass—"[until] all these things [shall] be fulfilled."* (Matthew 24:34) Israel is a miracle nation. Now, if you want to understand the Bible, one good way to understand the Bible is to understand the Jew. The destiny of the nations and the destiny of the world depends upon what happens to the Jew. The Jew is God's yardstick. The Jew is God's measuring rod. The Jew is God's plan. The Jew is God's outline. The Jew is God's blueprint. As the Jew goes, so goes the world. Understand

this—understand what God is doing with the Jew—and you can understand just about where we are in prophecy.

And why am I so interested in the land of Palestine? Why go back again and again and again? Because you see, dear friend, this is where the action is. And not only is it where the action is; it's where the action is going to be. The kids say, "Tell it like it is." Dear friend, the Bible does better than that. The Bible tells it like it will be—I mean, like it will be. And God says that this land is the land of destiny.

#### **A. It Is the Geographical Center of the World**

You see, it's the geographic center of the world. Ezekiel 5:5 says, "[I've] set [thee] in the midst of the nations." (Ezekiel 5:5) It's been called the "navel of the earth," the "hub of the earth." It's the confluence of three great continents, the ancient crossroads, the ancient trails. It's the land bridge that Russia wants now in order to get down to the Mediterranean, to get down to this warm-water port. It links these continents together. It's in the very of the earth. It's the geographical center of the earth.

#### **B. It Is the Religious Center of the World**

More important, this is the religious center of the earth. It was here in Palestine that we had the Garden of Eden. Not only was it there, but it was in the Garden of Eden that man fell. It was in this land that God spoke to Abraham and called Abraham into this land. It was here, in this general area, that God gave the Ten Commandments. It was here that the Lord Jesus Christ was born. It's here that Jesus Christ taught. It's here where Jesus Christ bled, suffered, and died. It's here, in the land of Palestine, from which Jesus arose and where He ascended and went back to heaven. And it's to this place that Jesus is coming again. So certainly, it's the religious center of the world.

#### **C. It Is the Prophetic Center of the World**

And it's the prophetic center of the world, for the Bible teaches and prophesized that one day the Lord Jesus is coming back and when He touches on the earth that His feet are going to touch upon the Mount of Olives. And when His feet touch that Mount of Olives, there's going to be a great earthquake. We don't even have time to get into that. But the Bible teaches that the Lord Jesus is literally, visibly, actually, going to reign from Jerusalem, rule for a thousand years from Jerusalem. So, it is the prophetic center of the earth.

#### **D. It Will Be the Economic Center of the World**

And actually, it's going to become the economic center of the earth. You know, the richest oil deposits in the world are in the bosom of Abraham's land. But the wealth there is nothing compared to the wealth in the Dead Sea. Did you know that the Dead Sea men have looked at and said, "Oh, what a horrible, hideous thing! The Dead Sea,

nothing can live in it”? Did you know that for centuries God has been pumping wealth, wealth, wealth—mineral wealth—into the Dead Sea, and that the mineral wealth in the Dead Sea now is greater than the combined wealth of Russia, United States, and Great Britain put together—just the wealth in the Dead Sea? You say, “I don’t believe it.” Well, then you’re uneducated. You go and do a little study. Israel now is beginning to learn how to mine this wealth, to get it out—the potash.

You see, we’re facing a colossal famine. One man who knows says there’s not the slightest chance that we can avoid famine of colossal proportions from 1975 onward in the world. And what would we want if we were going to try to avert famine? Fertilizer. Where does fertilizer come from? Potash. Where’s the potash? In the Dead Sea. Bromides, all of the salts and the minerals that are there. It’s going to be, soon, the economic center of the world. And so, when we talk about these people, we’re talking about a chosen people. And when we talk about this land, we’re talking about a promised land.

Let me say right away when I talk about the Jew as being a chosen person, God didn’t chose them because they’re better than other people. They are neither better nor worse. *“All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”* (Romans 3:23) And there’s no difference between the Jew and the Greek, for all have sinned. They are no better, no worse. But God chose them for a purpose. And what is the purpose? God said concerning this people, the Jew, that “through you all the nations of the world are going to be blessed.” (Genesis 12:3) You see, God didn’t chose them as a reservoir in which He was going to pour His blessings, but God chose them as a pipeline through which to pour His blessings. Do you understand? And, therefore, it’s through the Jew that we have the great doctrine of one God.

It is through the Jew that we have the prophets, the inspiration, the Bible. It’s through the Jew that Messiah came, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is through the Jew that the gospels were written, the New Testament. And the apostles were Jews. And here we have, in the last days, there’s a time coming when the Jew is going to evangelize the world. Did you know that? In the Tribulation there are going to be 144,000 Apostle Pauls preaching the gospel around the world. And a great multitude are going to be saved through the Jews because God said, *“In thee shall all [the nations] of the [world] be blessed.”* (Genesis 12:3) And so, these are the people, important people, the Jews. Keep your eye on the Jew. Frederick the Great one time asked his chaplain—he said, “Give me proof that the Bible is the Word of God.” The chaplain answered in one word. He said, “The Jew.” Just study the Jew.

## **II. The Problem**

All right now, the people. Now, I want you to notice the problem—because, let me tell

you something, friend, there is a problem over there. And what is the problem? Well, the Jew is living in the land of Palestine, and so is the Arab—living in the land of Palestine. And Arabs say, “It’s our land.” The Jew says, “It’s our land.” Now, how are you going to reconcile it? Who’s right? You look at it in human terms, and you can’t figure it out. The Jew moved away. Whether he was driven out, dispersed, makes no difference. He moved away. For centuries the Arabs have been living there. Suddenly the Jews come back. The British say, “All right, we’re going to turn it over to Israel.” The Arab says, “You can’t do that. That’s our property. My father lived there. My grandfather lived there. My great-great-grandfather lived there. That’s ours.” And they say, “No, it’s ours.” And so, a war ensues. And if you were an Arab, you’d be a part of that war. If you were a Jew, you’d be a part of it. Either way, you can argue from either side. How are you going to answer this problem? Dear friend, this problem is not going to be answered any way except from the Word of God. I mean, you can’t answer it apart from the Word of God. But the only way I know the answer is through a study of the Bible.

Now, how do I know to whom the land belongs? I can tell you clearly and plainly to whom that land belongs: it belongs to the Jew. Now, how do I know? The Bible. Let me show you. Look in Genesis chapter 17 for just a moment. Now, in Genesis chapter 17, let’s start in verses 6 and 7. The Lord is talking to the progenitor of the Jews, Abraham, and God says in verse 6: *“And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee”*—well, that’s been fulfilled, hasn’t it? And God says—*“And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed”*—God says, “This is a covenant, Abraham, not only between me and thee, but with your children—*“after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant”*—now, there are some people who will say, “Oh, this covenant’s going to be broken. Don’t pay any attention to this. This is just Old Testament history. This doesn’t relate to 1972.” Well, you underscore that part that says “an everlasting covenant”—*“everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee”*—now, notice what God said to Abraham. God said—*“And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger”*—what land was that? Well, He answers—*“all the land of Canaan”*—Canaan: that’s Palestine; that’s the Promised Land, the Middle East. “All the land of Canaan,” God says, “I’m going to give to you”—*“for”*—what kind of a possession?—*“an everlasting possession.”* (Genesis 17:6–8) Now, God says, “Abraham, I’m going to give you this land. It belongs to you.” Who has the right to give anything away? God. God created the earth. God said, “Abraham, I’ve chosen you. I’ve called you. This land is your land. I’ve given it to you.” Now, of course, Abraham had to die, so God said, “Abraham, I’ve given it to you and to your children.”

Now, here’s the problem. Abraham had several sons. One of his sons was Ishmael, and Ishmael was the progenitor and the father of all the Arabs. The other son was

Isaac, who was the forebear, the progenitor, the father of all the Jews. All right. Now, the Arabs say, “Okay, Abraham’s our father. We own the land.” The Jews say, “Abraham’s our father. We own the land.” And so, you have two brothers here arguing.

Well, how are you going to settle that? Well, again, you have to settle it the only way I know of: it’s to settle it from the Word of God. And what does the Word of God say about it? Well, look in chapter 17, verse 19: *“And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him. And as for Ishmael”—* that is, the father of the Arabs—*“I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation”—*but watch it—*“But my covenant will I establish with Isaac.”* (Genesis 17:19–21) And so, to whom does the land belong? God says, “The covenant belongs to Isaac.” God gave the land of Palestine to Isaac and to his descendants, who are the Jews of today, and the land belongs there.

Now, it’s not because I’ve said so and not because God has no plan for the Arab. As a matter of fact, God has a great and a wonderful and a marvelous plan for the Arabs. And the Bible prophesizes a time when they are going to come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, as the Bible prophesizes a time when many Jews are going to turn to the Lord Jesus Christ. But let me say that the problem is not a new problem. The problem didn’t begin in 1948. The problem is four thousand years old. And God has given the answer to this problem in the Word of God.

### **III. The Prophecies**

Now, let’s think of some prophecy, the third “p.” First “p,” people; second “p,” problem; third “p,” prophecy. Let’s think of some prophecies that God has to say is going to happen to the Jew. Now, you see, God has given prewritten history. God has told us before it comes to pass what’s going to come to pass. First of all, God prophesied that the Jew was going to rebel. They were going to disobey His laws. God gave the Jew a law, but he defiled the law. God gave him a land, and he despised the land. God gave him a Lord, and he denied the Lord. And so, he got in bad trouble. And God said, “Because of this, punishment is coming.”

Look in Leviticus 26 and see what God said is going to happen to these dear people and see if it happened. See if the Bible is true. Now, you just go along with me, you people who say, “Oh, prove that the Bible is true.” Well, friend, keep your ears open this morning. You’ll have all the proof you need. Now listen, in Leviticus 26, starting in verse 27, God tells how they are going to “walk contrary.” Notice in verse 27 He says, *“And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me; then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins.”*



(Leviticus 26:27–28) Now, skip down to verse 31: *“And I will make your cities waste”—*well, that’s happened. Friend, I’ve tramped over a lot of waste cities in the past few days—*“and [I will] bring your sanctuaries into desolation”—*where once that great temple of Herod stood is nothing now but a Muslim mosque, the mosque of Omar; and those beautiful sanctuaries are in desolation—*“and”—*then—*“I will not smell the savour of your sweet odours”—*no more are they making temple sacrifices—*“And I will bring the land into desolation: and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it. And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste.”* (Leviticus 26:31–33) Now, ladies and gentlemen, that has been fulfilled right down to the minutiae. God has done exactly what He said He would do.

Let’s go on and skip a few verses and look at the rest of these verses. Look in verse 36: *“And upon them that are left alive of you I will send a faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies; and the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them; and they shall flee, as fleeing from a sword; and they shall fall when none pursueth. And they shall fall one upon another, as it were before a sword, when none pursueth: and ye shall have no power to stand before your enemies. And ye shall perish among the heathen, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up. And they that are left of you shall pine away in their iniquity in your enemies’ lands.”* (Leviticus 26:36–39) Has that been fulfilled? You study the history of the Jew and you will see that the Jew has fled. He’s been scattered to the four quarters of the earth. The land of his enemies has eaten him up, and he has suffered persecution and atrocities under Nebuchadnezzar, under Alexander the Great, under Nero, under the Turks, under Hitler. Hitler, it’s said, killed six million of them. With my own eyes I’ve seen bars of soap made out of human Jewish fat. With my own eyes I’ve seen lampshades made out of human skin and seen shirts—buckskin shirts—made out of human skin stripped from the back of Jewish prisoners. Terrible! Can you imagine them hiding in cellars and garrets and attics? And even the sound of a shaking leaf would cause terror in their heart. It has been exactly as God has prophesied.

But oh, the prophecy’s not finished. God says after this—He says, “I’m going to re-gather you.” God says, “I’m going to bring you back.” Now, notice what He says: “You’re going to rebel. I’m going to scatter you. The land’s going to be desolate.” This has all been fulfilled. But then, God says, “In the last days, I’m going to start bringing you back from all the countries of the world.” Look in Isaiah 11, and let’s start reading in verse 11: *“And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea”—*even God knew there would be some in New

York City—*“and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.”* (Isaiah 11:11–12) God says, “I’m going to gather them now. In the last days, I’m going to bring them back.”

Incidentally, did you read recently in the newspapers over the last several weeks where Russia has finally decided to let those Jews that live in Russia go back? Have you read that in the newspaper? And they said, “If you want to go, you can go.” And did they want to go! I read recently where Israel now is negotiating for Boeing 747s to fly them back from Russia. Isn’t that interesting? Does the Bible have anything to say about that? Certainly! Isaiah 43, verse 6 says, *“I will say to the north, Give up,”* (Isaiah 43:6) and they’ll come from the north. You see, God has spoken to the Jew, and God has spoken to the Russian. And God says to Russia, “You can’t keep them. Give them up.” The north part, that’s Russia. And she’s giving them up, and they are coming back.

By the way, I’m going to preach tonight on this subject if God continues to lead: “When the Russian Bear Meets the Lion of Judah.” That’s going to happen. And I’m going to be preaching tonight on that subject. When Russia meets her demise, when Russia meets her Waterloo, when Russia gets it in the land of Palestine, Russia’s not going to rule the world. Russian Communism will not rule the world. There’s not the slightest chance that Russia will rule the world. And neither will the United States. God has a plan, and God’s plan is being fulfilled. But I want you to be here tonight and hear this message, and you’re going to see what happens to Russia when Russia invades Palestine, as she’s getting ready to do. If you don’t believe she’s getting ready to do it, read your newspapers. See the deal she’s making with the Arabs. She’s getting ready to double-cross the Arabs. They don’t know it. They think that they are standing with Russia’s power, Russia’s might. One of the biggest, dirtiest double-crosses that’s ever going to take place is what Russia’s going to do to the Arabs, and especially Egypt. We’ll talk about that some tonight.

But let me say, dear friend, that God is bringing them back; He’s re-gathering them. People laughed about it. They mocked. They said, “This will never happen.” For eighteen centuries, they mocked. But on May 14, 1948, the Republic of Israel was reconstituted, and Israel is now a nation. I mean, you can’t explain it. When other people are spread abroad, they are assimilated, they are gobbled up, they disappear. I mean, you don’t hear any more about the Hittites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and all of these other ancient people. But this Israelite, the Jew, he’s still here. For God says, *“This generation shall not pass [away].”* (Matthew 24:34) You just can’t imagine what happened.

Listen, Israel was a British Mandate in 1948. The British said, “Okay, we’ll back off. We’ll let this tiny state become a nation.” Before this time it was against the law for them

to even be caught carrying a gun. Now, watch it. There are 650,000 Jews and forty million Arabs who have sworn by all that they know to be holy that they will drive Israel into the sea. How do you like those odds—650,000 against forty million? And here's a little fledgling nation that had no air force, that had no navy, that had nothing, so to speak of. They had no guns except what they could smuggle in and hide. They had no tanks except what they could take trucks and put boilerplate on the sides—airplanes, Piper Cubs, and this sort of a thing. But yet, here they are waiting. The document is signed, and the war begins. Why, they put a gun in a trench; then they put two black broomsticks, and then another gun. Here are the kinds of tanks they had. They put rocks in fifty-five-gallon drums and rolled them down the street at night to make the enemy think the tanks were coming. Those are the kind of tanks that they had. This is history that I'm talking about.

Why, I told some of you a long time ago about a battle that I call the "Battle of the Bees." When the war started and the Arab legions swept from the east toward Tel Aviv, they came through some groves, and in those groves were thousands of beehives. You know, it's the land of milk and honey, so you understand the bees. The bees were there in these thick groves. They didn't know it. This Arab legion came through those groves and knocked over those beehives, and the bees swarmed out by the millions and stung them from the crown of their head to the sole of their feet. In consternation, they dropped their modern weapons and fled. The Israelis had no weapons and just walked in and picked up these brand-new weapons.

Now at the same time, from the north, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, are coming across the Jezreel Valley, which is where the Battle of Armageddon is going to be fought eventually—coming across there when they got in the middle of this huge valley and were struck with a strange dysentery and a sickness. Nausea made them so weak they couldn't even stand up. And here came the Israelis with their weapons and took all of them without attack. Sick, couldn't fight—how do you explain that? Friend, you can't explain it. There's one record where four hundred Jews captured twenty thousand Arabs. Now, how do you explain that? You can't explain it. Don't say, "Oh, they're smarter; they're wiser." They are not. The hand of God has been upon them. Our guide, whose name was Miriam, fought in that war in 1948. She was a twenty-two-year-old girl. She said, "They put a gun in my hand. I'd never held a gun before"—an old rusty gun. They said, "You shoot anything that moves." She said, "Thank God I never had to pull the trigger." "You shoot anything that moves"—never had a gun in her hand before.

We stayed in a town called Sfat way up on a mountain—the city set on a hill. And she told how there were 1,300 of the Israelis there in that town with their children and their babies, and they said, "Get the children out of here." And they said, "We're not going to get the children out. If we keep our children here, we'll fight better." They left

their children there surrounded by seventeen thousand of the enemy. They had to sneak out at nighttime for food. They were hemmed in on the mountaintop, nowhere to go. It looked like they were going to be picked off one at a time, but somehow two hundred young Israelis broke through the lines and with no guns or anything started to walk down the main street of the little town of Sfat singing at the top of their voice praise to God. When the Arabs heard it, it frightened them to death. They said, “The war must be over. We’ve lost.” They fled, and the city was taken with a song. With a song! How do you explain that? You can’t explain it, except God said, “I’m going to bring them back. I’m going to put them in their land, and they will no more be cut up.” That’s what God said.

You read the last verses of Amos. God said, “I’m going to put them there. I’m going to plant them there.” (Amos 9:14–15) Why? Because God has a purpose, and God is moving the nations of this world as checkers on a chessboard. Jesus said in Matthew 24, verse 34: *“Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.”* (Matthew 24:34) That’s really what the word *generation* means: this “nation,” this “stock,” this “breed,” this “kind.” Think about the Six-Day War. How do you explain the Six-Day War? Israel was outnumbered eighty to one, and yet they won the war in six days.

All right, we’re talking, dear friend, about prophecy. God says, “I’m going to judge. I’m going to scatter you. You’re going to be persecuted.” They were. God said, “I’m going to bring you back.” They have been. God says, “I’m going to plant you.” They are. But listen, dear friend, prophecy is in the making right now. The Bible prophesizes that Israel, in the last days, is going to make a covenant and a contract with a ten-horned nation, a nation federated under ten kingdoms. Did you hear me? A federation. Not a nation, but a federation of ten nations. Israel is going to make a covenant in the last days with them. The Bible teaches this very plainly.

You see, you’ve heard me preach for a long time—haven’t you?—that the face of Europe is going to be unified under ten kings. Haven’t you heard me preach that? All right, did you read your newspapers this morning? Do you understand what’s happened now? Do you understand now that the face of Europe, the old Roman Empire, is now unified under ten nations, just as the Bible said that it would be? I don’t even have time to get into that much, but look, if you will, in Revelation chapter 17 for just a moment. I just want to point out several verses. Look in Revelation 17, verse 12: *“And the ten horns which thou sawest”*—now, a horn in the Bible is a symbol of power; like a horn that grows on an animal, not the kind of horn you play in a band—*“And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet”*—that is, when John wrote this, these kings were not in existence—*“And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as*

*kings one hour with the beast.*” (Revelation 17:12)

Now, one hour does not mean sixty minutes. That isn't what it means. In the Bible the term “an hour” may mean “a determined period of time.” For example, when Jesus was being crucified, He said, “This is your hour. My hour has not yet come.” (Luke 22:53; John 2:4) Jesus didn't mean, “You've got sixty minutes; then I'm going to have sixty minutes.” Jesus meant, “This is your time; my time has not yet come.” There's coming a time when there are going to be ten nations, and they're going to receive power as kings one hour with the beast. The beast is the antichrist.

Now, notice what the Bible says in verse 13: *“These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.”* (Revelation 17:13) These ten nations that you're reading about in the newspaper this morning—go home and read your newspaper—they're going to have one mind. And out of these ten nations is going to come another leader. He's going to root up three of these nations, and then he's going to take over these nations; and he is going to eventually become the world dictator. The Bible calls him “the son of perdition.” The Bible calls him “the man of sin.” The Bible calls him “the beast.” The Bible calls him “the antichrist.” The Bible calls him “the wicked one.” He's going to come with deceitfulness and wonders and lies. He's going to be energized by the devil. He is going to have the power of influence and the economy in the world under his control.

And then, the Bible says that he's going to make a covenant with Israel, and he's going to say to Israel, “Relax. I'll take care of you.” And they'll say, “At last, we don't have to worry about Egypt. We don't have to worry about Syria. We don't have to worry about Jordan. We don't have to worry about Russia. We don't have to worry about Libya. We don't have to worry about these things. At last, our benefactor has come! Oh, thank God, thank God, our benefactor has come!”

You see, Jesus said, “I've come in my Father's name, and you'll not receive me. If another should come in his own name, him you shall receive.” (John 5:43) You know what they're talking about over there in Israel? Messiah—when Messiah comes. I asked our guide, “Do you think the Temple will be rebuilt?” She said, “When Messiah comes, he will rebuild the Temple”—“when Messiah comes.” Oh, they're looking for a person who is going to deliver them from the yoke of bondage.

And the stage is set. Now, you read your headlines today, and your headlines say, “Ten Sign European Treaty.” And then, it goes on to tell about how Western Europe unites. But here's a clipping that I clipped even before yesterday's headlines. I wish you were close enough to read it. Do you know what it says? “Israel Signs Agreement with Common Market.” This was even before the ten had come into their form. Let me just read the first paragraph: “Luxembourg. The European community and Israel Monday signed a five-day preferential trade agreement”—now, watch it—“which Israeli Foreign

Minister Abba Eban said had a significance beyond its economic content in providing the basis for deeper political relationships.” The stage is being set. And already the little nation Israel is looking over to united Rome and saying, “Rome will protect us. We’re going to have trade now, but we’re going to have a deep political commitment.” You watch it, my friends. The stage is set. I wish I had more time to preach on this, but let me just simply say that we are right now entering into the birth pains of Armageddon.

#### **IV. Our Preparation**

One last word, and I’ll finish. The last word is “p,” which is our preparation. Look, if you will, in Luke 21. I want to read starting in verse 29: *“And he spake to them”—Jesus spoke to them—“a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees”—now, you know that, in Bible symbolism, that a fig tree is a symbol of the Jew—“And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree”—in other words, keep your eye on the Jewish nation—“and all the trees”—the rest of the nations—“when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.”* (Luke 21:29–31) This is what the Lord said. The Lord said, “You watch that fig tree. You watch Israel. Just as when you see a literal fig tree start to bud and the leaves start to come out, you say, ‘Oh, summer is close,’” God says, “when you see the budding of the fig tree my people Israel, when you see these things begin to come to pass, then,” God says, “you know that the kingdom of heaven is near.” And then, our Lord gives a warning in verse 34: *“And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.”* (Luke 21:34–35) As a snare it’s going to come. What is our Lord saying? Our Lord says, “Keep your eye on the fig tree. Watch when the fig tree starts to bud and blossom. When you see these things start to come to pass, get ready and take heed because that day’s coming like a snare.”

And there are going to be many people in that day that are not going to be ready. They are going to be caught up with surfeiting and the cares of this world. They’re going to be interested in movies, and football, and games, and rodeos, and houses, and clothes, and cars, and things, and parties, and education, and the things of this world. And when Jesus comes, it’s going to be too late. Well, I know He’s coming as a thief in the night, but the Bible says, *“Ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.”* (1 Thessalonians 5:4) The Rapture of the Church, I believe, is near. And I believe one of these days—and it may be sooner than we think; it may be this afternoon—we’ll hear that cry, *“Behold the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.”* (Matthew 25:6)

## Conclusion

This is a great time to be living. It's a great time when we can open our newspapers and see prophecy being fulfilled before our very eyes. What a time to be living—in the closing hours of this dispensation, living in the valley between the blood-drenched slopes of Calvary and the sun-lit peaks of glory! If I did not know the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Savior, I would not go twenty-four hours without Jesus for one million dollars. I mean that. Christ may easily come in the next twenty-four hours. You couldn't pay me a million dollars to put down my Christianity now and pick it up twenty-four hours later. And yet some of you, for far less than that, will deny the Lord Jesus day after day after day. *“What [should] it profit a man, if he...gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?...what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”* (Mark 8:36–37)†

# The Days of Noah

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** March 26, 2000

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 24:35–39

*“But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”*

MATTHEW 24:37

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Days of Secular Philosophy
- II. Days of Scientific Progress
- III. Days of Social Plagues
- IV. Days of Sexual Perversion
- V. Days of Selfish Prosperity
- VI. Days of Solemn Preaching
- VII. Days of Sudden Panic

Conclusion

## Introduction

Be finding, please, Matthew chapter 24. In a moment, we’re going to begin reading in verse 36—Matthew chapter 24.

¶ I’m told that a man asked another man on the street, “Do you know what the two biggest problems in the world are today?” The man said, “I don’t know, and I don’t care.” He said, “You have them both.” ¶

The two great problems in the world today are what? Ignorance and indifference. Now, there are some things that we cannot, should not be ignorant of, and dare not be indifferent to, and that is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, the end of this age as we know it. And, I want to speak to you on that subject today, and we’re going to call the message “The Days of Noah.”

Now, history is coming to a climax. It would be wrong—as a matter of fact, it would be blasphemous—for me to set a date and tell you when Jesus Christ is coming. Number one: I could not do it because I don’t know, and you don’t know, and no one knows. But, the Bible does teach us that we can know what the days will be like when Jesus comes again. Jesus said they will be like the days of Noah.

Read with me Matthew 24, and begin in verse 35, Jesus speaking of that time: *“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. But of that*



day”—speaking of the climax of all things—*“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only”*—but now, notice in contradistinction to the fact that we do not know the day and the hour—*“But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be”*—as it was, so shall it be. That’s what verse 37 says. Now, notice Jesus’ explanation in verse 38—*“For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that [Noah] entered into the ark. And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”* (Matthew 24:35–39) Now, *“eating...drinking, marrying and giving in marriage”* (Matthew 24:38) speaks of indifference. *“And [they] knew not”* (Matthew 24:39)—that speaks of ignorance. Indeed, these are the two major problems—ignorance and indifference—that will mark the last days just before Jesus comes.

Now, if we want to know what the days of Noah were like, we have to go back to some chapters in the Word of God, specifically Genesis chapters 4, 5, and 6. So, for the rest of the message would you open your Bibles to the first book of the Bible, Genesis, chapters 4, 5, and 6? And, I’m going to be selecting some verses from these chapters to show you what the days of Noah were like. And then, we’re going to apply the days of Noah to our day, and we’re going to understand why this age is ripe for Jesus Christ to come again. I have picked out of these chapters seven signs, seven marks, of the days of Noah, and I would like for you to jot them down on a piece of paper; and I’ll give you the scripture for them. But, what are the days of Noah? And, how do they compare to the days in which we live today?

## **I. Days of Secular Philosophy**

First of these seven signs is this: the days of Noah were days of secular philosophy. They were days of secular philosophy. Genesis chapter 6, verses 5 and 6: The Bible says, *“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth”—now, watch this next phrase—“and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.”* (Genesis 6:5–6) Now, look at the word *imagination*. The word *imagination*, Dr. John Phillips, who happens to be a member of this church, has told us, comes from a Hebrew root that means “to fashion as a potter.” Actually, they were trying to mold society by philosophy. And, here’s what Dr. Phillips says: “Men fashioned wicked philosophies, espoused filthy causes, made fashionable vile sins, and endeavored to pour society into their mold.”

Now, New Age philosophies today are rampant. We have those, some of them, in pulpits that were founded by Bible-believers but no longer holding to the faith. They teach strange doctrines. They deny the Bible. They mock at the blood atonement. They

do not recognize the Lordship of Jesus Christ. And, once great denominations, many of them, have gone the way of all flesh, and we see today a floodgate of vile and wicked philosophies today.

The faith that was delivered to Adam—and Adam understood the blood atonement because God made for Adam coats of skin—and the truth that the martyr Abel died for, and the truth that was revealed to Enoch the prophet was now rapidly receding over the horizon. We live in a day and an age like that.

Secularism today in America and in the world has taken over the arts. It has taken over the sciences. It has taken over philosophy. It has taken over education. And, our days are so much like the days of Noah. There's only one acceptable bigotry in the world today. Do you know what it is? It is you can still be bigoted against a Bible-believing Christian. A Bible-believing Christian today is the whipping boy of modern society.

## **II. Days of Scientific Progress**

What were the days of Noah like? Number one: They were days of secular philosophy. That cuts across the board in America and in the world today. The second mark of Noah's day: not only secular philosophy, but scientific progress. Now, you may not have thought that the days of Noah were days of scientific progress, but the days of Noah had reached a zenith in knowledge and achievement. If you will read the early chapters of the book of Genesis, you will find that in those days, there were men—great men, Nephilim—they were called in the Hebrew *“men of renown.”* (Genesis 6:4) They had prodigious intellects. And, many of you may think that back in those days, they were plowing with sticks and that they did not understand. But no! This was a day of great scientific achievement, maybe in many ways greater than our day and in our age.

For example, they had great cities. Look in Genesis chapter 4, verse 17: *“And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he builded a city”* (Genesis 4:17)—now, not just a village, but here is a metroplex, a metropolitan city, teeming with life. There was an industrial revolution. Look, if you will, in Genesis, chapter 4 and verse 22: *“And Zillah, she also bore Tubalcain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron”* (Genesis 4:22)—an industrial revolution. They were into metallurgy. They were making now tools and machinery. And so, you have urban centers. You have an industrial revolution. Man, who had been driven from Paradise because of his sin, is now trying to create an artificial paradise of wit and wisdom and fire. He's building his own technological paradise.

If you think that these were days without scientific progress, think for a moment again. Think of how God instructed Noah to build the ark. Think of that ark. That ark was an engineering miracle. It was 450 feet long. That's longer by far than a football field—

150 feet wide, forty-five feet tall, a three-story vessel. Those who are oceanographers and sailors tell us that it was built to about the same proportion and size of many modern ocean-going liners. That boat had to be built with specifications, engineering strong enough to withstand the greatest storm history has ever recorded. And, that ship went through all of that fearful storm. It was a day of technological advance.

Now, what is our day like? Well, think of our day. My father's day began with a horse and buggy. It ended up with the splitting of the atom. In our lifetime, we've seen men walk on the moon. We're so pushed back the frontiers of science that we've lost all ability to be surprised. We're now tinkering with genetic engineering. That holds all sorts of awesome and frightening implications, potentiality, as scientists now are actually trying to alter and manipulate man's gene pool.

I was reading just this past week about a new implant technology where the scientists are now able to take a mini computer, inject it under your skin, and therefore you can have an onboard computer that will do many things. The interesting thing is that this company, which has gotten a trademark and also a patent, calls this mini computer "Digital Angel." So, you can have an angel in you of a different kind. And, what they're going to do with this is—it's tamper-proof. What they mean by that is that you will have your identity with you always so that you can do e-commerce (electronic commerce). And, by having this computer on board, now, when this is put into you, if that happens to you, global positioning satellites will be able to track you wherever you are from a distance no wider than this pulpit that I am speaking from. This little computer will be empowered electromechanically by your muscle movements. And, what it is is a joining of man and machine.

Now, law enforcement will be able to use this to track criminals. They will know where they are. If you're in an accident, they'll be able to find you. If you're in distress, your doctor can monitor your heart. He will know all about your blood pressure and other vital functions. The article that I read said this: "Your doctor will know the problem before you do." And, they said, "Already we've received many requests from around the world for this product." A contractor for the U. S. Army has been looking into this because, they say, "We'll be able to track troop movements. We'll be able to know the whereabouts of all of our soldiers, and we'll know about their health." Of course, this will help in a cashless society. Your identity will be on board. If you want to cash a check, you can do it. Digital Angel will be there—a very useful method of control. I think the most frightening thing about the article that I read was in the *World Net Daily*, from Dr. Peter Zhou. He is the chief scientist, and here's what he said. Listen to it. Here's a quote: "We will be a hybrid of electronic intelligence and our own soul." So, you'll have electronic intelligence and your own soul together—sort of a hybrid.

Now, they're also working on virtual reality. Do you know the chief moneymaker on

the net today is pornography? And, the pornographers are doing billions of dollars of business on the Internet. And, you need to guard your children very carefully—very, very carefully—in this matter. And businessmen, of course, need to guard your own eyes and your employees’. But, they’re working now on something called “virtual reality.” That is, you will not be able to tell the difference between the real world and the electronic world. And, they’re working on now—would you believe?—virtual adultery so that you can actually interact with the machine in a disgraceful way.

### III. Days of Social Plagues

The days of Noah were days of secular philosophy. They were days of scientific progress. The days of Noah are here again. Now, here’s the third mark of the day of Noah: they were days of social plagues. They had not reached utopia. They had not taken this scientific knowledge and turned it into good. Notice in Genesis chapter 6, beginning in verse 11: *“The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.”* (Genesis 6:11–13)

The days of Noah were days of great violence, and our day is a day of great violence today. In my lifetime, I have seen wars after wars after wars. Some of you have lived through two world wars, World War I and World War II. But, we live in a day where there are minor wars and rebellions and upheavals everywhere, skyjacking and kidnapping and guerrilla warfare, and needless murder and assault. Our murder rate soars. Organized crime, in some ways, is a bigger business than the United States government. And, people are filled today with violence and a spirit of revenge like never before in recent times.

But, it was true in the days of Noah. Look, if you will, in Genesis chapter 4 and verse 23: *“And Lamech said unto his wives, Adah and Zillah, Hear my voice; ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech: for I have slain a man to my wounding”—that is, “I got in a fight. I killed him. He wounded me”—“and a young man to my hurt. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold.”* (Genesis 4:23–24) Here was a man who was eaten up with a spirit of revenge, and he’s picked out and put in the Bible as typical of many who are so filled with the spirit of violence and revenge.

Did you know that since 1960 there has been a 560 percent increase in violent crime? Just since 1960—560 percent. Most of us live behind closed, bolted, and locked doors at night. The social engineers have done their work, and they’ve told us that if we would relax about sex and not get so uptight about it, we could do something about sex crimes. And yet, violent crimes against women today are epidemic. We’ve been told that

we are too tough on criminals; we should relax and go easy on them. And now, we don't have enough space to warehouse the criminals. We've been told that our churches are too old-fashioned, that we have to modernize and liberalize and rationalize and compromise. And, these churches have compromised themselves right out of business. We've been told we don't need prayer in the schools, that we should take the Ten Commandments off the walls and as a substitute we can put in values clarification and substitute "Thus saith the mind of man" for "Thus saith the Word of God." And, we've reared a generation of young people with refined intellects and undisciplined emotions.

Think of the mayhem that's in the schools. It's almost laughable, if it weren't so sad, that they're putting metal detectors in the doors of the schools. Very frankly, friend, when I went to school, that couldn't even be conceived of. Since 1990, there has been a two hundred percent increase in teen suicide. And now, we've got a group of people telling us we need to legalize drugs. God have mercy!

Friend, this day was a day—in Noah's day—it was a day when society was coming unraveled. It was a day of a multiplicity of marriages. There was a plague of divorce in Noah's day. Look in Genesis chapter 6, verses 1 and 2: *"And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose."* (Genesis 6:1–2) Bible commentators tell us that when Jesus said they were *"marrying and giving in marriage,"* (Matthew 24:38) they were not talking about regular marriage—one man for one woman 'til death to them part—but a multiplicity of wives. We know that Lamech, this man that we mentioned before, had introduced polygamy into society. Look in Genesis chapter 4 and verse 19: *"And Lamech took unto him two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah."* (Genesis 4:19) Now, God wants one man for one woman 'til death do them part. Again, when I was a youngster, divorce was rare, and it was a mark of shame. We're seeing now so much juvenile crime, and much of it roots in broken homes.

Think, today—we're talking about social plagues—think, today, of the crime against the unborn little babies. Now, we have something called "partial birth abortion," where a baby is all but delivered, the head alone remains in the birth canal, and scissors are put into the base of the skull of that child, and then a catheter sucks the brains out of that head to collapse it so that this child, ninety percent born, is then born dead—dead on arrival.

Senator Bob Smith of New Hampshire recently said this—and listen: "Unfortunately, the dirty little secret is that large amounts of cash are changing hands. Abortion clinics and wholesalers are making a killing, literally, off of the sale of human baby parts." They don't want these little babies dismembered in the womb. They want them partially born so they can get the whole parts. And now, there's an industry selling baby parts.

Representative Joe Pitts of Pennsylvania said—and I quote: “Now we know why the partial abortion procedure was developed: to give this industry whole baby parts.” It’s about as macabre as it can be, that little babies are being murdered. And, we have laws, in so-called “God-blessed America,” that allow such a thing. Are you surprised?

Let me tell you what a professor at Princeton—Ivy League Princeton... This professor’s name is Peter Singer. He, by the way, is the founding philosopher of the animal rights movement. And, Peter Singer says it’s not all that bad to kill a baby, especially if the baby is disabled or malformed. And, I quote him: “Killing a disabled infant is not morally equivalent to killing a person.” So, if a little baby is malformed, it does not have the status of a person. And then, again—and I’m quoting, and I’m not just quoting some yahoo from off the wall, though he is a yahoo. I’m quoting a professor of bioethics at the University Center for Human Values at Princeton University—he said this: “The life of a newborn baby is of less value than the life of a pig, a dog, or a chimpanzee.”

Now, that’s the world in which we’re living. Can you believe—I mean, can you believe—these things? You would say, “Pastor, surely that is not true.” But friend, these things are true.

#### **IV. Days of Sexual Perversion**

What were the days of Noah like? They were days of social plagues. God says the world has become corrupt. And then, number four, the days of Noah were days of sexual perversion. Notice Genesis chapter 6 and verse 5: “*And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth*”—now, watch this—“*and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*” (Genesis 6:5) Well, this verse doesn’t mention what that evil was, how sick that imagination was, but Jesus gives us further insight. You might want to put in your margin, or even turn with me now to, Luke chapter 17, because I want you to see in Luke chapter 17 Jesus, again, is speaking of the days of Noah, but He does something very interesting: He links the days of Noah with the days of Lot, and He shows us in the days of Noah there had been a sexual revolution and they were days of great sexual perversion.

Luke 17, verses 26 and following: Jesus said, “*And as it was in the days of [Noah], so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise*”—now, underscore this—“*Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.*” (Luke 17:26–29) And, Jesus now links the days of Noah

with the days of Lot. You know, if you know the Bible, that Lot was an inhabitant of the city of Sodom. The city of Sodom is the city we get the name *sodomy* from, which speaks of sexual perversion, the perversion of the Sodomites.

How does God feel about this sin? Well, if you can read black print on white paper, you don't have to guess. Put these verses in your margin. Leviticus 20, verse 13: *"If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them."* (Leviticus 20:13) Now, that was the Old Testament economy under a theocracy. The death penalty is not allowed for this sin today, but it gives God's heart and God's mind about the matter. God says it is an abomination.

Now, we live in a time when there's an epidemic that is bringing so many precious lives to a conclusion in the United States and, actually, is eating the heart out of Africa today. Well, these vile diseases, are they the judgment of God? Well, it's really the built-in result of these sins. Put these scriptures down. Romans 1, verse 27: *"And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly"*—now, notice this next sentence—*"and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet"* (Romans 1:27)—that is, "fitting." The New American Standard says, "the due penalty of their error."

You know, sometimes people ask this question: "Is AIDS, for example, the judgment of God?" Well, you have to be careful when you answer that because some little children have AIDS, some hemophiliacs get AIDS. There are many ways to contract AIDS, but primarily, if we would go back to God's plan concerning marriage, the AIDS epidemic would evaporate overnight. I mean, that's it. The answer is so clear. They say it's not preventable. It's clearly preventable. Just put one man with one woman 'til death do them part. That's God's plan. I mean, when everything else fails, just go back and read the directions.

"But," you say, "pastor, what about little babies?"

¶ Well, if a man steps off of a ten-story building—willingly does it—and he hits the bottom, that's the due recompense of his error. Now, what if he has a little baby in his arms when he steps off? Will the innocent baby die also? Yes, because the innocent often suffer along with the guilty.¶

Yes, we know that the innocent people suffer. When God judges the world, He's going to do it with a lot more specificity. God does not really have to judge this sin. God just leaves people to themselves. When people begin to say, "This is all right; not only is it all right, it is to be approved," here's what God does: Romans 1, verse 24—I just read verse 27, but read verse 24: *"Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between*

*themselves.*” (Romans 1:24) God just gave them up. Romans 1, verse 26: *“For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature.”* (Romans 1:26) And then, Romans 1, verse 28: *“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind”* (Romans 1:28)—that is, a mind that cannot think straight. So, what does God do when people begin to justify this kind of violence? God just says, “All right, I give you up. I give you over.” The judgment is built into these sins.

“Pastor Rogers, are people born this way?” God would never cripple somebody and then blame them for limping. Well, you say, “But where do these urges come from?” They come out of the heart, which is wicked and sinful—the same urges that urge people toward incest, the same urges that urge people toward adultery, the same urges that urge people toward violence, the same urges that urge people toward drunkenness, the same urges that urge people toward kleptomania. “Yes,” people say, “I feel this way.” Of course they do! You say, “I was born this way.” Yes, we’re born sinners. We need to be born again. That’s what it’s all about.

My heart goes out to parents who have precious children who have gotten into this lifestyle because Hollywood has so glamorized it and television now has tried to normalize it. And, if you say anything, do you know what they’ll tell you about television? They say, “If you don’t like it, turn it off.” You know what that’s like? That’s saying, “If you don’t like the crime on the streets, stay inside.” That’s like saying, “If you don’t like the pollution in the air, don’t breathe.” Friend, the streets belong to us, the air belongs to us, and the airwaves belong to us. They get the idea that they’re there to pollute the airwaves. They have no more right to pollute the airwaves than they have to pollute the air that I breathe. But, what has happened in Noah’s day, Jesus said, “As it was in the days of Lot, it’s going to be in those days when I come again.” And, this sin had been made fashionable.

## **V. Days of Selfish Prosperity**

Now, let me give you the next mark of Noah’s day: they were days of selfish prosperity. Some think that surely God must be pleased with America because of the prosperity that we have in this nation. But, not every place is prosperous. America is prosperous, but not every place is prosperous. America is an island of prosperity and perversion ensconced in an ocean of need.

It was exactly the same in the days of Lot and in the days of Noah. Put this scripture down: Ezekiel chapter 16, beginning in verse 49. Ezekiel says to Israel, *“Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took*



*them away as I saw good.*” (Ezekiel 16:49–50) Now, notice how he describes Sodom. They were proud. I mean, sin that used to cower and hide now struts. But, he says, not only “pride,” but “fulness of bread.” They had more than they needed. And “abundance of idleness”—they had a short work week. Hardly needed to work at all in Sodom.

I can imagine two men of Sodom walking down the street. One of them says to the other, “You know, God teaches that the lifestyle of Sodom is wicked and vile. Do you think God is going to judge us because of the way we’re living?” “Well, I don’t think He’s going to judge us. Look how prosperous we are.” If they had a stock market, he would have said, “Look at the Dow Jones. Look at the NASDAQ. Look how we are doing. Surely God is smiling upon us.” But, the Bible teaches that at the very zenith, the very height, of their prosperity is when the fire and the brimstone came. And, God left Sodom with its smoking ruins, 2 Peter tells us, “*as an [example] unto those that after should live ungodly.*” (2 Peter 2:6)

May I tell you something, friend? God wants me to tell you not to let a soaring economy lull you to sleep and think that everything is all right. It is not! It is not! “As it was in the days of Noah—as it was in the days of Lot—so shall it be.” (Matthew 24:37)

## **VI. Days of Solemn Preaching**

Now, let me give you the sixth mark of Noah’s day, as it was in the days of Noah: those were days of solemn preaching. God never sends judgment without first sending warning. In Genesis chapter 6 and verse 13: “*And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.*” (Genesis 6:13) God sent a preemptive warning. Before God sends judgment, God always sends warning. Noah not only built the ark; he preached.

Put in your margin “2 Peter chapter 2 and verse 5.” The Bible says, “*And [God] spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person*”—now, listen to this next phrase—“*a preacher of righteousness.*” (2 Peter 2:5) Noah was a preacher. He preached with the wrath of God in the foreground and the ring of hammers in the background. A contemporary—a near contemporary—was a man named Enoch. And, Jude verse 14 tells us that, “*Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints.*” (Jude 1:14) But, the preaching of these ministers in that day did not penetrate their hearts. Why? They were marrying and giving in marriage, eating and drinking. Their technology, their art, their culture, their entertainment—they had eaten of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, and they saw themselves as rich and increased with goods and had need of nothing.

Can you imagine what the newspaper columnists of our day would have done had they gone out to interview Noah? Can you imagine him being interviewed today? What

a field day they would have had! Can you imagine the political cartoons that would be drawn about this narrow-minded fundamentalist called Noah? Can you imagine what the liberal clergy would have said about Noah? “Well, if Noah had heard anything about a flood, I can assure you it would not have been literal water.” That’s what they would have said. Our generation has been warned. There has been so much faithful preaching. And, the last days are days that are going to be marked by solemn preaching. Noah was a preacher of righteousness. And, God sent me here to warn you that the days of Noah are upon us.

## **VII. Days of Sudden Panic**

Now, the last of these seven signs: they were days of sudden panic—just when everything seemed to be going fine. Jesus said, “*eating...drinking, marrying and giving in marriage*” (Matthew 24:38); that is, the round of life went on. But, Genesis chapter 6, verse 17: “*And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh [upon the earth].*” (Genesis 6:17)

Now folks, I don’t know how that day began. Maybe that day was bright and fair. Maybe the clouds began to gather. I don’t know what happened. But, I know that it came suddenly; it came cataclysmically. Perhaps the wind picked up and began to moan like a funeral dirge across the earth. And then, God had said to Noah, “*Noah, come[—come] thou and [thy family] into the ark.*” (Genesis 7:1) And, God brought Noah into the ark, and God shut the door. And, God shut Noah in; and God shut others out; and God shut the water out.

Suddenly the earth rocks, the heavens open, and the slough gates of heaven begin to pour great floods of water. And, water belches out of this earth, and the water begins to rise. And, those who’ve been laughing at Noah and those who’ve been mocking Noah now begin to wonder, “What is this?” There’s some indication that up until this time it had not rained, but that the earth was moisturized by a vapor, a canopy of vapor, that came. Those in the valleys begin to run to the high places. Those in the high places are seeking even higher places. After a while, when the water gets up to dangerous proportions, they come and begin to beat upon the door of that ark and say, “Noah, let us in,” but it was too late. God had shut the door. And, God shut the water out, and God shut these people out who laughed and mocked and scoffed. And, God shut His people in.

Can you imagine in that day a little boy, before it began to rain, coming to his father and saying, “Daddy, can I talk with you?” “Yes, Son, what do you want to talk about?” “Daddy, you know crazy Noah, the one everybody’s laughing about, the one that is building a big boat?” “Yes, Son, I know old Noah, crazy Noah. Yes, I know him.” “Well, Daddy, I was over there, and he stopped working on that boat, and he talked to me for a

while, and he said God is going to destroy the world with something called a flood. Daddy, what is a flood?” “Well,” he said, “Son, I’m not sure exactly what a flood is, but don’t worry about it.” “Well, Daddy, Noah says that everybody that’s not in the ark is going to drown, and Daddy, Noah seems very sincere. He seems to know what he’s talking about. Daddy, frankly, I think we ought to go and ask Mr. Noah if we can get on board that boat.” “Now, Son, listen. Excuse me for laughing, Son, but wait a minute, Son. The reason I’m laughing is this: when I was a little boy, I went out there, and old Noah was building his boat back then. You wouldn’t believe it. And Son, the reason I’m laughing—I’m not making fun of you, Son—but I felt just like you did. And, do you know what, Son? I went home, just like you came home to me; I went home to my daddy, and I told my daddy what you’ve told me. Now Son, here’s the funny part: My daddy, your granddaddy, said that old coot had told him the same story. I mean, your daddy, your granddaddy, were frightened for a while about that old man Noah. Son, don’t you worry. Noah is a religious fanatic. Pay no attention to Noah.” And, as it was, so shall it be.

## Conclusion

Look at me. I’m preaching to you the Word of God. I’m telling you there’s an Ark of Safety—His name is Jesus. And, if you will come to Him, put your faith in Him, I promise you on the authority of the Word of God, He will change you, He will transform you, He will give you *“joy unspeakable and full of glory.”* (1 Peter 1:8)

You say, “What if it costs me?” Well, when Noah drove that last nail into the ark, he may have had nothing left, but when he came out of the ark, he had inherited the earth. He went in a minority; he came out a majority. I’m telling you, folks, it pays to serve Jesus. And, if you’re not saved, you need to get saved—I mean *saved*, not just be a church member. You need to be born again. Jesus is the Ark of Safety, and if you’ll put your faith in Him, He will save you. Jesus may come this afternoon. As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be—eating, drinking, marrying, giving in marriage—and then the day came. (Matthew 24:37–38) †

# The Days of Noah

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: August 7, 1983**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 24:36–38**

## Outline

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## Introduction

Now, Jesus said the time of His coming is a sealed mystery known to the Father alone. Even the angels of Heaven do not know. And, any man who says he knows when Jesus Christ is coming is lying, and he has almost crossed the threshold of the gospel, if he has not already done so. That day and that hour no one knows. But, on the other hand, there's another side to that coin. Jesus is coming as a thief in the night, but the Bible says to those of us who are saved, *"But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief"* (1 Thessalonians 5:4).

Those of us who are saved may not know the time or the hour, but we shall know the season and the age in which we live. And, we can read the signs of the times. Now, the Lord Jesus gave us a great clue. The Lord Jesus said, "As it was in the days of Noah even so shall it be in the coming of the Son of man" (Matthew 24:37; Luke 17:26). As it was, so shall it be. As it was, so shall it be.

So, we're going to look at the days of Noah today. And, I want you to take your Bible now and go back to Genesis chapter 6, and we're going to see what the days of Noah were, because, as it was, so shall it be. I want to mention today for our Bible study and our message from the Word of God the seven marks of Noah's age, the seven signs of Noah's time, the seven things that were true in his day that indeed are true in our day and tell us

that Jesus Christ is coming soon. And, I believe that the Holy Spirit is writing in boxcar letters across the horizon, “Be prepared for the coming of the Lord.” The coming of the Lord draws nigh. “As it was in the days of Noah, even so shall it be in the coming of the Son of man.”

Now, what are these marks?

## **I. The Mark of Advancement**

Well, first of all, there is the mark of advancement and achievement. Look, if you will, please, in Genesis chapter 6, verse 1: “*And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them...*” (Genesis 6:1). Skip down to verse 4: “*There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them,*”—now, watch this phrase—“*the same became mighty men...*”—“*mighty men*”—“*...men of renown*” (Genesis 6:4)—that is, men who had the ability to make a record for themselves. And, indeed they did. The days of Noah were days of advancement and days of achievement.

### **A. An Explosion of People**

There was, for example, a population explosion. Verse 1 says that, “*men began to multiply upon the face of the earth.*” It was a vast population explosion. Up until this time people were reproducing, perhaps, at a small number. But now, suddenly the earth is just filled with people. People began to multiply. Great, vast numbers of people were upon the face of the earth.

Does that remind you of our day? I want to tell you, we are in the middle of an unprecedented population explosion. Did you know that 200,000 babies are born every day on Planet Earth? Two hundred thousand are born every day. Did you know that next year at this time Mother Earth will have 75 million more inhabitants—75 million more people living on the globe? And, if our Lord tarries, and we reach the end of this century, we will be gaining a billion new inhabitants every five years. Now, there are only a few more than four billion on the face of the earth now. And, we will be gaining a billion every five years if our Lord tarries. Can you imagine the problems, the crowding? Already half the world is going to bed hungry. And, our world will be facing unprecedented problems in these last days.

### **B. An Explosion of Knowledge**

And so, there was an explosion of people. But, not only that; an explosion of knowledge. And, I want you to go back to Genesis chapter 4 for a minute and look with me in verse 22: “*And Zillah, she also bare Tubalcain,*”—now, watch this—“*an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron*” (Genesis 4:22). Now, don’t get the idea that these people who lived back in

Noah's day were ignoramuses, that they had not yet arrived. They knew how to go down into Mother Earth and more. They knew how to build their furnaces and make brass. They knew how to build their foundries and make tools and machinery. These people had a high level of civilization way back here in Noah's day.

Now, if you don't believe what I'm saying is true, you think of Noah's ark. Think of the ark, friend—the engineering marvel of Noah's ark. Noah's ark that Noah built was over 450 feet long. A football field is only 300 feet long, 150 feet wide. Now, the ark was three stories high. And, can you imagine a ship this size that had to weather a storm like that storm, the worst storm that the world has ever known? And, Noah's ark rode it out, and not one drop of water came through.

Now, imagine that. Do you think you could build one? Of course you could not! If you were given such an assignment, you would call all of the engineers and all of the scientists together, and say, "How do build the ship?" They built it in Noah day, but Noah didn't build it by himself—not a ship of that size. Nor did just his sons help. They couldn't do it by themselves. There were many people who helped him to build it. That's an interesting thing, but dear friends, many of the people who worked on the ark perished in the flood.

We just put some new flooring down here on this platform a few days ago, and a man was laying this wood up here on the platform. I said, "Did it ever occur to you that some of those carpenters who worked on Noah's ark drowned in the flood?" Wouldn't it be a shame for a man to help build a church building and die and go to Hell? Wouldn't it be a shame? Wouldn't it be a shame to work in the church, or do anything else, and then die and go to Hell?

But, what I'm trying to say is that the days of Noah were days of achievement, days of advancement, days of technological know-how. Now, compare that to our day. And, think of the vast knowledge explosion that we're having. You know, Daniel said, "In the last days men shall rush to and fro and knowledge shall increase" (Daniel 12:4). The same thing is happening in our day. Our world is crammed with scientists. The microchip, the computer, is doing unbelievable things, and now computers are building what they call the computer's computer. And, they are actually trying to build a computer that not only can compute but that can think. And, they say—many people—that they will be able to do it—a computer that can read.

Why, some of you here, some of you older folks, can remember the horse and buggy days! And, now we've unlocked the secret of the atom and sent a man to the moon! And, the space shuttle circles the earth at 17,500 miles an hour. And, now we are dabbling in genetic engineering with all sorts of fascinating and frightening possibilities. As a matter of fact, this sixth chapter of Genesis tends to teach that they produce a hybrid type of race; sort of

monsters they produced upon the face of the earth. And, I wonder if we're not on the brink of producing that same kind of thing in a laboratory now, as we're producing test tube babies, and genetic engineering, and all of this business—playing God, dabbling in areas where we ought not perhaps to trespass.

## II. The Mark of Apostasy

It was a time of advancement. It was a time of achievement. It was a time of ability. In the last days, the Bible says, knowledge shall increase, and men shall rush to and fro. But, the second mark of Noah's day, not only was it a time a achievement; it was a time of apostasy—a time of apostasy. Go back and look, if you will, in Genesis chapter 6, verses 5 and 6: *"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually"* (Genesis 6:5).

Now, look at that word *imagination*. It's a very interesting word. John Phillips says that this word *imagination* comes from a Hebrew root which means, "to mold or to fashion as a potter fashions a vessel." That is, a potter takes clay in his hands, and carefully and skillfully, artfully, and knowing what he's doing, he fashions, he molds, he shapes that clay. Now, Vines says that's the root to this word *imagination*. So, don't get the idea that men back in this day were just daydreaming. When the Bible here speaks of the imaginations of men's hearts, he's talking about carefully fashioned, carefully molded, philosophies—wicked, vile, evil imaginations; the machinations, if you will, of man's mind; the wicked, vile philosophies of his thoughts and his heart. And, they were evil continually, because "as a man thinketh, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). And so, if their philosophy was wrong, you know that their mind, their acts, had to be wrong.

But, what they were doing in this day was trying to squeeze society into their mold. It was like a potter would fashion the pot. What they had done was to turn from the faith. The faith that had been delivered to Adam, and the faith for which the martyred Abel had died, the faith that the prophet Enoch had preached, was fast disappearing from the earth. And, these were days when men were not saying, "Thus saith the Word of God"; they were saying, "Thus saith the mind of men."

Now, as it was, so shall it be. These days in which we are living are days of apostasy. "In the last days, men shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their consciences seared as with a hot iron" (1 Timothy 4:1-2). All you have to do to know that's true right here in Memphis, Tennessee, is to look around. All you have to do is get out a card, write down just exactly how you would like to live, no matter how vile, how wicked, or how immoral, and write down what you

would like to believe, no matter how foolish—and I can find a church in Memphis, Tennessee, where it doesn't make any difference.

### **III. The Mark of Anarchy**

Now, I want to give you a third mark of Noah's day. Not only was it a time of advancement, not only was it a time of apostasy, but they were also days of anarchy. Look, if you will, in chapter 6 and verse 11. Do you have it? Genesis 6:11: *"The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence."* Does it remind you of anything? *"And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them"* (Genesis 6:11–13).

We live in a world that is filled with violence. Some of you remember World War I. Many of us remember World War II. And, some, including myself, see the gathering clouds of World War III. And, there are revolutions, uprisings, bombings—revolutions and guerilla warfare going on all over the face of globe. Only God knows what tomorrow's newspaper may say, as nation invades nation, as nation lifts up sword against nation.

And, there is war all over the face of this globe. It's nothing to pick up the newspaper and hear this person was shot, and this person was stabbed, and this person was raped, and this person was murdered. And, the ladies in our city are afraid to walk even in their own neighborhoods after dark. And, there are places in this city where men are afraid to walk by themselves. I'm not talking about in darkest Africa. I'm talking about right here in America; right here in Memphis, Tennessee. Violence. Violence.

And, communism is creeping onward and onward and onward. And, I want to tell you that violence is perfectly acceptable to the communist if it furthers their end. They are not at all opposed to violence. They are not opposed to peace. They are in favor of peace, in favor of violence, in favor of truth, in favor of lies, in favor of anything that will further communism. And, it is a regime, a bloody regime. And, don't think that we who are Christians are going to escape, either. I want to tell you something, friend, talking about violence. And, this will shock you. I checked this statistic. I wanted to make certain that what I was saying is correct. It first came out at the Lausanne Conference on Evangelism that I attended earlier in the last decade—about 1974 I believe it was, that conference in Lausanne, Switzerland. More people—listen to me—more people have died for the cause of Christ in my lifetime than have been put to death in all of the centuries prior to that time.

Now, we think of those people who died at the stake, and those people who died being fed to the lions, and all that—we think of that as ancient history. But, I want to tell you, in our generation—in our generation—more people have shed their life's blood for the faith



than in all of the centuries and all of the generations from the time of Christ up to this generation. This is an age of unprecedented violence.

And, on top of that, we're doing violence to our own children. Think of the child abuse. And, think of the murders of little babies, the grizzly, horrible, vile, wicked, sinful abortion business. There are more little babies taken than we ever lose in our wars. Little helpless, defenseless babies, murdered, murdered, murdered by their own mothers and by clinicians and people walking around with white jackets, and with an air of authority, knowing it all, talking about a little blob, a little mass—the fetus, they call them. A little baby! A little precious baby!

As it was, so shall it be. Days of violence. Violence stalked the land. As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the day of the coming of the Son of man. They were days of anarchy when a clinched fist was raised in the face of Almighty God.

#### **IV. The Mark of Adultery**

But, I want to say something else about those days. Not only were they days of advancement, and days of apostasy, and days of anarchy; they were also days of adultery—days of adultery. I want you to look, if you will, in Genesis chapter 6 and verse 2: *“That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose”* (Genesis 6:2). They say, “Hey, you! Come over here.”

Now, I want you to notice how polygamy comes into the race. Go back, if you will, to chapter 4, verse 19: *“And Lamech took unto him two wives”* (Genesis 4:19)—*“two wives.”* Now, God had put man in the Garden of Eden, and God had performed the first ceremony, and God's plan was one man to be married to one woman till death do them part. But, here was polygamy, a multiplicity of marriages, that may indicate what Jesus was talking about, in Matthew 24, when He says they were *“marrying and giving in marriage”* (Matthew 24:38).

There is nothing wrong with marriage. “Marriage is honorable, and the bed undefiled” (Hebrews 13:4). But, here are strange things that were happening. Bible expositors are divided about chapter 6, verse 2, the sons of God and the daughters of men. Some see the sons of God as angels, fallen angels, that *“kept not their first estate”* (Jude 1:6), but came down here and somehow cohabitated with men, and produced a race of monsters. Others say, “No, the sons of God were the godly line of Seth, and the daughters of men were the ungodly line of Cain.” But, whatever it was, we're not going to take time to get into it, and I'm not sure that I could explain it if we did. But, whatever it was, it was a joining together of what God had put asunder, and it was a putting asunder of what God had joined together. They were days of sexual abnormality. The sexual revolution was going on in Noah's day.

Now, here's an interesting thing. Jesus linked the days of Noah with the days of Lot. I want you to take your Bibles for a moment, and I want you to turn, if you will, to Luke chapter 17 and verse 26—Luke chapter 17, verse 26. Now, listen to this: *"And as it was in the days of [Noah], so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man."* Now, watch: *"They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all."* Now, notice the next phrase: *"Likewise also"—in the same way also—"as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man be revealed"* (Luke 17:26–30).

Now, Jesus Christ Himself linked the days of Noah and the days of Lot. Now, what were the days of Lot? The days of Lot were days of sexual perversion. Lot lived in Sodom. Sodom was known for its sexual perversion. Today, a sexual pervert is called a Sodomite. And, the Bible says that as God destroyed Noah's world with a flood, God destroyed Sodom with fire and brimstone.

Now, there are those today who will try to explain sodomy. A psychiatrist will try to explain it away. I thank God for a godly psychiatrist. But, they're not all godly. A sociologist may try to explain it away. I thank God for godly sociologists, but they're not all godly. A preacher may try to explain it away. I thank God for a godly preacher, but they are not all godly. But, I want you to forget for a moment what preachers have to say, sociologists have to say, law enforcement people have to say, psychologists have to say, and medical people have to say, and let's see what God says, okay? Let's hear what the Word of God says. I want you to write down Leviticus chapter 20, verse 13. Listen to it: *"If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them"* (Leviticus 20:13).

"Are you saying, Brother Rogers—are you advocating the death penalty for sodomy?" No, this was in the Old Testament economy. This was when there was a theocracy. But, I am trying to show you the mind of God about this matter. God said that it is an abomination. Now, if you don't agree with that, don't write me a letter; don't call me. Get on your knees and take it up with God. Argue with Him. It's the Word of God. I just give you this, and I don't say it, friend. That's black print on white paper. And, it says that God destroyed them in the Noah's day. He destroyed the world with a flood in Noah's day, and Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone. And, the Bible says he left Sodom and Gomorrah as an example to those that after should live ungodly. They flaunted their sins in Lot's day. They flaunted their sin in Noah's day. They were men of renown. They were proud of their wicked, vile imaginations. They boasted in those things.

There are some terrible diseases that have erupted on the scene; some vile, horrible things. “Pastor, are those diseases the judgment of God?” Now, you may be surprised when I say this, but not exactly—not exactly the judgment of God. You see, the judgment of God comes for unsaved people at the end: the Final Judgment. The Bible says, “Judge nothing till the Lord comes” (1 Corinthians 4:5). When the Lord comes, He’s going to judge the world. And then, many, even many so-called moral people who don’t know Jesus are going to be cast into Hell. Not only the immoral, but the moral without Christ.

There is a built-in judgment to sin. I mean, when God created the world, God just created certain laws in the world. And, friend, you don’t break God’s laws; you break your neck. I mean, for example, there’s the law of gravity. If I get on a 10-story building and say, “I’m going to break the law of gravity.” I don’t break the law of gravity; I demonstrate the law of gravity. I break me. God’s law is just written there, you see.

Now, when you think that you’re going to flaunt God’s law as to how the human body is to operate, you think that God is going to give you a license to sin, you’re wrong—you’re wrong. Let me give you a verse of Scripture—Romans chapter 1 and verse 27—listen to this: *“And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves the recompence of their error which was meet”* (Romans 1:27). The Bible says, “which was fitting.” I mean, it’s just built in. I mean, you see, listen, friend. For every kick there’s a kickback.

*You cannot* sow wild oats *and then* pray *for* crop failure. Somehow, somewhere, there is a payday. And, it is not the judgment of God, as we are talking about the Final Judgment of God; it’s just simply the way that the thing operates—like the law of gravity. *“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap”* (Galatians 6:7). I don’t say this with bitterness. My heart goes out to people, whoever they are, wherever they are, who are caught up in sin, and who are suffering.

God help us to have a heart of love and compassion and pity. But, I want to tell you something, friend. As it was in the days of Noah, as it was in the days of Lot, even so shall it be in the day of the coming of the Son of man. And, see what is happening. You see, dear friend, adultery, abnormality, aberration, flaunting the laws of God, a sexual revolution. And, God says, “It’s almost closing time, sirs. It’s almost closing time.”

Now, I want to give you another mark of Noah’s day. But let me just say this practically. Don’t get the idea that God’s a killjoy. Don’t get the idea that God doesn’t want you to have fun. And, don’t get the idea that God doesn’t want you to enjoy sex. God made sex for you. And, “marriage is honorable, and the bed undefiled.” One of the greatest joys that God gave to the human race is the pure use of the pure love of a man for a woman. And, *those who*

*keep God's law concerning sex enjoy more sex and enjoy sex more than those who break God's laws.* I want to tell you something: "The joy of the Lord, it maketh full, and bringeth no sorrow with it." No kickback, you see. "The joy of the Lord, it maketh full, and bringeth no sorrow with it." There's no bad aftertaste to joy—no aftertaste, like there is to sin.

## **V. The Mark of Apathy**

Now, let me give you another mark of Noah's time. Not only was it a time of adultery and abnormality and aberration, sexually, but it was a time of apathy. Look again, if you will, in Genesis chapter 6 and verse 3—and there God says, "*My spirit shall not always strive with man*" (Genesis 6:3). What a frightening verse that is! Look at it. The Lord said, "*My spirit shall not always strive with man.*" That means that God's Spirit had been seeking. Oh, the gentle, precious Holy Spirit of God had been warning, had been wooing, had been speaking, to them. But, their hearts were like stone; their hearts were like steel. They were so proud of their art, their culture, their achievement. They had drunk at the wells of knowledge. They had eaten from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They were so satisfied. They were so filled with themselves. They were materialists. That's what Jesus said about the days of Noah and the days of Lot. What occupied their minds? Marrying, giving in marriage. Buying and selling. Eating and drinking. All of these things, rightly used, are fine, but where is God?

Now, we say that communism is wrong, because it is a form of dialectical materialism. But, I want to tell you that capitalism without God is just the other side of the coin. Both of them are materialistic. I'm a capitalist. I believe in it. I believe that, because it recognizes the right and the ownership of private property, it gives a proper incentive to the work ethic, that if a man won't work, neither should he eat. But, I want to tell you that capitalism and communism without God are both materialism. And, that's what's happening to this world. We stick out our chests. We're talking about how wonderful everything is, how the economy's on the upturn, and the jobless rate is going down, and all that. Friend, it doesn't excite God. What's going to get the attention of God is when our devotion to Jesus Christ is up and our sinfulness goes down. We have a little mini-recession, and we all get on our face and say, "Oh, God!" And then, it turns up, and we forget God and go merrily on our way. And, the booze begins to flow. God have mercy on us!

I want to tell you, this was an apathetic crowd. God's Holy Spirit spoke, but they would not listen. The Bible says they married, they gave in marriage, they ate, they drank, and they knew not until the flood came. That is, they were mocking, laughing, dancing, amusing

their way right into oblivion, and they didn't even know it. So apathetic! Does it remind you of any age? I tell you, dear friend, this is a day and age of apathy.

## **VI. The Mark of Announcement**

I must hurry on. I want to mention the next mark of Noah's time. It was a time of announcement, admonition, alarm, for God had given them warning. Look, if you will, please, here, for God says, in chapter 6, verse 13, *"And...said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come"* (Genesis 6:13). Verse 17: *"And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth"* (Genesis 6:17). God warned, and God used Noah as His preacher. The Bible says that Noah was a preacher of righteousness. Enoch was a prophet of God, the father of Methuselah.

By the way, do you know why Methuselah lived as long as he lived—969 years? Because his name means, "When he is gone, it shall be sent." God warned. When Methuselah dies, the flood is coming. And, the flood came—you can study that in your Bible—the day Methuselah died. Nine hundred and sixty-nine years he lived. Why? Because of the love and the longsuffering of God. "God is longsuffering and not willing that any should perish" (2 Peter 3:9). God kept extending his life, but nonetheless, God gave a warning, and one day the flood came. And, the Bible says, "Likewise the day of the Lord shall come" (Matthew 24:37; Luke 17:26).

Why hasn't Jesus yet come? The love and the longsuffering of God. God is warning. God is sending His prophets. God is sending His preacher. You leave me out of it. I'm telling you there are other preachers across the world who are preaching the gospel of Jesus as it has never been preached, on radio, on television, on satellite, by billboard, by books, and yet this is a generation that goes merrily on its way, for the most part. Days of apathy. Somebody said, "The problem in America is apathy. But, who cares?"

## **VII. The Mark of Annihilation**

Next: Days, not only of announcement, but days of annihilation. Look again in verse 17: *"And, behold, I, even I, [will] bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh"* (Genesis 6:17). Now, friend, listen to me. God is not in the business of saving civilization, contrary to popular opinion. He's not in the business of saving the whole world. He's not going to save the world. "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leads to life" (Matthew 7:14). God is taking out of this world a people for his name: the Master's minority, a faithful few, the little flock (Luke 12:32). And, He's bringing them into the ark of faith. God is going to judge this world, as surely as I'm standing here.

## **Conclusion**

Now, I know if they'd have gone out to hear Noah preach, do you know what the newspapers would have done? Well, number one, they would have drawn a classic political cartoon of old crazy Noah. And, I'll tell you, when they described Noah, I'll tell you exactly how they would have described him. Number one: they would have called him a fundamentalist. Sure, they would have. I'll tell you what else they would have done. They would have said he was a bigot because he says the ark is the only way. And, they would have said, "Noah is a bigot." And then, they would have said that he is not for social progress, and he is bad for everything, and so forth. And, they would have found all kinds of problems for old crazy Noah. But, God destroyed that world with a flood. And, I don't have time to mention that, except I want to say this: that Noah went into that ark a minority; he came out a majority. He may have spent all on that ark, but when he came out, he owned the world. It pays to serve Jesus.

# It's Not Over Yet—The Christ of Christmas Is Coming Again

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: December 12, 1993**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 24:36–42**

## Outline

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- I. Mark # 1: A Disastrous Breakdown in Sexual Morals
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- III. Mark # 3: A Devilish Breakout of Secular Philosophy
- IV. Mark # 4: A Dangerous Breakup of the Social Fabric
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Conclusion

## Introduction

**P**raise the Lord. Be finding Matthew chapter 24. We begin in verse 36, in just a moment. And when you've found it—Matthew chapter 24, beginning in verse 36—look up here, and I want to tell you something. The title of the message is this: "It's Not Over Yet—The Christ of Christmas is Coming Again." That's what it's all about. "It's Not Over Yet." *You know, in sports, when our team is behind, we say, "It's not over till..."—what? "Till the fat lady sings."* But friend, I want to tell you, "It's not over 'til the trumpet sounds." Isn't that right? Till Jesus comes. You see, the birth of Christ is a part of it. There is the cross. There is the crown that follows the cradle. And we're looking forward to the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now some people are going to miss the Second Coming of Christ. And do you know why they're going to miss it? They're going to miss it because of the same reason that some missed His first coming. His first coming was so clearly and plainly prophesied. The angel said that Mary would conceive in her womb a child. She did. The angel said He would be the Son of the Highest. He was. The Bible said very clearly and plainly that His name would be called Jesus. It was called Jesus. All of these prophecies of the angel were, actually, literally fulfilled. Were they not? Of course they were. And that same angel, that same day, said He would rule upon the throne of David. That same angel said that. Now why should we take the first part of that literally and not take the last part of that literally? It doesn't make any sense.

Christ is coming back to this Earth just as literally as He came the first time. And yet, His Second Coming will be so far different. The first time He came, there was no room for Him in the manger. When He comes again, He's coming to inherit the world. When He came the first time, He came to a crucifixion. When He comes again, He's coming to a coronation. When He came the first time, He came to a tree. When He comes again, He's sitting upon a throne. When He came the first time, He stood before Pilate to be judged. When He comes again, Pilate will stand before Him to be judged. He came the first time in shame. He comes again in splendor. He came the first time to redeem, and thank God He did. He's coming again to reign as King of kings and Lord and lords. And the One who came as a humble servant is coming back again as the Holy Sovereign, the Lord of lords and the King of kings. It's not over yet. The Christ of Christmas is coming again.

Now the question comes to us: "When will He come?" Look in the Scripture, if you will—verse 36: *"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left... Watch, therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come"* (Matthew 24:36–42).

Now what is our Lord saying? The Lord says if we try to set a date for the Second Coming of Jesus, it is next to blasphemy, because that's a day known only by the Lord God Almighty. Not even the angels know that date. But He said, "I'm going to tell you what the conditions are going to be like when my Son comes again, when Jesus comes again. It's going to be like the conditions that existed in Noah's time before the flood." We have three chapters in the Bible that tell us what the conditions were like in Noah's day, just before the flood, and they are very easy to read. In Genesis chapter 4 and 5, and then, those days climax in Genesis chapter 6.

Now turn there for just a moment—Genesis chapter 6—and let's just look at the days of Noah. Because, our Lord said, "If you want to know what the days are going to be like when I come again, they're going to be like the days of Noah."

**History is like a broken phonograph record: It just keeps repeating itself.** I've been fascinated by the Hubble telescope. I've been watching the astronauts. I can't take my eyes off of that. But friend, let me tell you something: There's something that fascinates me more than the Hubble telescope, and it is God's Word. Because, we can see far more through this than they'll ever see through that. They're trying to discover,



somehow, the origin of everything. Friend, we have a book that tells us not only of the origin, but the destiny of everything. Thank God for the Word of God. And those of us who are Christians, we don't have to be stumbling in darkness. We hold in our hands the Word of God. There is no excuse whatsoever for ignorance. For, Jesus said, "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be" (Matthew 24:37).

May I give you five signs of the days of Noah? And I want you to ask yourself, as you put your Bible in one hand and your newspapers in the other hand, if we indeed are not living in the last days of Noah or days as those days were. Here are the marks:

## **I. Mark # 1: A Disastrous Breakdown in Sexual Morals**

Mark number 1: a disastrous breakdown in sexual morals. Look in Genesis chapter 6, if you would, and verses 1 and 2: "*And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth*"—and, by the way, there was a population explosion—"and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all whom they chose" (Genesis 6:1–2). And Jesus, in the Scripture that I read to you, said it was a day of marrying and giving in marriage. Exegetes and commentators say that this does not speak of normal marriage. It speaks of one person marrying over and over again—a multiplicity of marriages.

Go back, if you would, please, to look in Genesis chapter 4, and verse 19: "*And Lamech took unto him two wives*" (Genesis 4:19). He wasn't satisfied with God's plan: one man for one woman "til death do them part." Here was a man who already is casting aside God's laws. And as you read "the days of Noah," you're going to read that men were living, looking at women, lusting after women, choosing whom they would. Immorality was rampant. Sex was blatant.

When I was a boy, divorce was unusual and a mark of shame. In our day, the divorce rate has exploded. In the last 50 years, it has doubled, tripled, and quadrupled, and then doubled again. We have children being raised today never knowing what a godly home is. Many people today don't even take the benefit of marriage before they bring children into the world, and we wonder why we're having so much crime on the streets. There was a sexual revolution in the days of Noah. It was a time of disastrous breakdown in sexual morals.

Now I want you to put this verse in your margin, and it is the book of Luke chapter 17, beginning in verse 26. And here's what I want to show you. Listen carefully. Jesus said that the days of Noah and the days of Lot are linked together. Now who was Lot? Lot was a man who lived in Sodom. Now listen to this Scripture—Luke 17, verse 26: "*And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.*" Now we've already heard that in Matthew, but now listen to this: "*They did eat, they*

*drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Also...*—are you listening?—*“Also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all”* (Luke 17:26–29).

Now what was Sodom known for? Sodom was known for the sin of sodomy. That’s why we call it *sodomy*. What does God feel about that? Leviticus chapter 20, verse 13: *“If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them”* (Leviticus 20:13). In the Old Testament economy, this was a sin, a crime so heinous that it was worthy of capital punishment. People ask about the vile diseases that we are battling today. There’s a big debate. Are these vile diseases? Are they the judgment of God? Let me tell you what they are. They are the built-in result of transgressing God’s law.

Now let me read to you from Romans chapter 1 and verse 26: *“For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections”*—that’s what God said: He said, in the Old Testament, *an abomination*; in the New Testament, He says, *vile affection*—*“for even their women did exchange the natural use for that which is against nature...”*—listen—*“against nature:”*—verse 27—*“and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working that which is unseemly”*—now, listen to this—*“and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error”*—that payback of their error—*“which was [fitting]”* (Romans 1:26–27). The New American Standard says: *“the due penalty of their error.”*

Now you say, “Has God judged them?” They have judged themselves. This is a built-in kickback of sinning against nature. Someone says, “Well, it can’t be the judgment of God, because little children sometimes get AIDS.” We had a man here, not so long ago, who went to the Mississippi River Bridge with a baby in his arms and jumped off the bridge. Because the baby was innocent, does that mean what the man did was right? I mean, people are somehow so foolish in their reasoning. Oh, my dear friend, the tragedy of sins like this, that not only affect and infect the perpetrator, but other people who indeed are innocent.

How does God deal with a generation that will not deal with this kind of sin? It frightens me to say this, but God leaves them alone. Romans 1, verse 24: *“Wherefore, God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves”* (Romans 1:24). God just says, “All right, go ahead.” Verse 26: *“For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections”* (Romans 1:26). Romans chapter 1, verse 28: *“And even as they did not like to retain*

*God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind” (Romans 1:28).*

We have a generation today that has a reprobate mind. The filth on television, the stench, is unimaginable. Do you know what they tell us? Do you know what they have the gall to tell us? Do you know what they say? They say, “If you don’t like it, turn it off.” Have you ever heard that? Sure. “If you don’t like it, switch the channel.” There is a problem, my friend. The airways do not belong to them; they belong to us. That’s like saying, “If you don’t like crime, don’t go outside. Stay in your house, if you don’t like what’s going on in the streets.” That’s like saying, “If you don’t like cigarette smoke, don’t breathe.” They think that somehow they have a right to pollute the airways and tell us, “If you don’t like it, don’t watch it.” It doesn’t belong to them; it belongs to us.

But God says, “If that’s what this generation wants, help yourself.” God gave them up. God gave them over. Is God judging us? Friend, we are judging ourselves and receiving the due recompense, as the Word of God says. What were the days of Noah like? They were days of a disastrous breakdown of sexual morals.

## **II. Mark # 2: A Dramatic Breakthrough in Scientific Progress**

Secondly, they were days of a dramatic breakthrough in scientific progress. Look, if you will, in Genesis chapter 6, and verse 4: *“There were giants in the earth in those days”—*now, that doesn’t mean, I don’t believe, that these were men who were 10-foot tall. It speaks of a strange breed of men. The Bible calls them *men of renown*—*“There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bore children to them, the same became mighty men who were of old, men of renown”* (Genesis 6:4). These moral pygmies were intellectual giants, and there was a breakthrough in Noah’s time of scientific knowledge. And they began to find the secrets that were in nature and unfold them.

Don’t get the idea that they were plowing with sticks, back in those days. Go back, if you will, to chapter 4, and look, if you will, in verse 17: *“And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bore Enoch: and he builded a city”* (Genesis 4:17). Look, if you will, in verse 22: *“And Zillah, she also bore Tubal-cain, an instructor of every craftsman in bronze and iron”* (Genesis 4:22). The Iron Age was here a long time before the flood. There was an industrial revolution. There were craftsmen with tools and skills. And there was a veritable explosion of knowledge.

Use your mind, my friend. Noah built the ark. Can you imagine that ark, in that day? 450-foot long—longer than a football field. That ark, it was 450 x 150 x 45-foot tall. It had a cubic capacity of 3 million cubic feet. It was built to the same proportions as a modern ocean liner. Noah had to have the technological knowledge to build that ark to withstand the most severe storm the Earth has ever known.

That was back in the days of Noah. There was an explosion of knowledge, in those days. There is in this day. We've come from the horse and buggy to man walking on the moon. We have unleashed the power of the atom. We've pushed back the frontiers of knowledge in an incredible way. And now one of the most horrifying prospects is facing us; and that is genetic engineering, with unimaginable and grotesque horrors. The late, great Dr. Vance Havner said this: "Scientifically, we're in graduate school, but morally and spiritually, we are in kindergarten." **Civilization is like a chimpanzee playing with matches in a room full of dynamite. Some fanatic may push a button and bury millions in a furnace of molten steel.** A disastrous breakdown in sexual morals; a dramatic breakthrough in scientific progress. Are we there?

### **III. Mark # 3: A Devilish Breakout of Secular Philosophy**

Here's the third sign: There was a devilish breakout of secular philosophy. Look, now, in chapter 6, verses 5 and 6: "*And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth*"—now watch this—"*and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*" (Genesis 6:5–6).

Now here is a breakout of secular philosophy. Now look at the word *imagination*. Do you see it? That does not mean *daydreams*. John Phillips, who's spoken from this pulpit, said this: that the word *imagination* comes from a Hebrew root relating to pottery. And the word means "to fashion something as a potter would." Men espoused filthy causes. They made fashionable vile sins. **Like a potter fashioning a vessel, they tried to pour society into their mold.** In Noah's day, their imaginations, their philosophies, took the place of the Word of God. They were substituting *Thus saith the mind of man* for *Thus saith the Word of God*.

We have many who are doing that today, even in pulpits across America. I was reading about some entomologists down in Florida who are doing some crossbreeding, and they bred a termite with a praying mantis. And now what they have is a bug that says its prayers before it devours your house. Jesus spoke of hypocrites like that, who, for a pretense, made long prayers and then devoured widows' houses. We live in a day where there's a breakout of secular philosophy. You look at our day and our age: Secularism has taken over in the arts, in the sciences, in philosophy, in education.

### **IV. Mark # 4: A Dangerous Breakup of the Social Fabric**

Let me give you the fourth mark of Noah's day: Not only was there a devilish breakout of secular philosophy, but there was a dangerous breakup of the social fabric. Look in verse 11. Look at it: "*The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence*" (Genesis 6:11). Corrupt. We in the Mid-South are watching our society

grow corrupt. We have gone from being the *Bible belt* to the *gambling girdle* of America. Right here, in the Mid-South. And the government seems to be in favor of gambling. The only way they can take those millions of dollars out of Mississippi is to have millions of people lose. That's the only way they can do it. The only way one person can win in the lottery is for millions to lose. And for the government to be in that business makes the government in the business of producing losers. Corrupt.

Gambling is not like legitimate business, which is *win-win*. Gambling is illegitimate business. It is *win-lose*. Don't you see the difference? Oh, how we had people to pull the veil over our faces today!

Look again, in verse 11. Look at it. It's so clear. It's so plain. The Bible says that there was violence in that day (Genesis 6:11). We have entered the age of violence. Even in our generation we've seen two World Wars, and some of you are living who remember World War I. Many others remember World War II. And now it looks like we're looking down the face of a loaded canon. All around our world there are countless minor wars. The implosion of the *evil empire* did not stop it: rebellions, and uprisings, and violent upheavals. And the crime rate is rising on our streets at an alarming speed. And there are kidnappings, and guerrilla warfare, and needless murders, and assaults. Read what's happening in the murder rate in our own city. Citizens are afraid to walk in their own neighborhoods after dark. Great sums of money are being drained away by organized crime, and violence is the order of the day. "From the White House to the schoolhouse," they're saying.

What can we do? "*As it was in the days of Noah*" (Matthew 24:37). Go back to Genesis chapter 4, and look in verse 23—Genesis 4, verse 23: "*And Lamech said unto his wives*"—this man with a multiplicity of wives said unto his wives—"*Adah and Zillah, Hear my voice; ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech; for I have slain a man who wounded me, and a young man for hurting me. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold*" (Genesis 4:23–24). "*Seventy and sevenfold*" (Genesis 4:24). What's he saying? "I am going to be a mass murderer." That's what he's saying. I'm going to do it. And the Bible says that this was the spirit, the age of Noah. As it was, so shall it be. This man, this violent thug, the first one recorded in history: not only was he violent, but he knew how to brag about it. I wonder if they had rap music in that day?

Noah's day was an age of violence, murder, unprovoked slayings, and atrocious crimes. Ours is a sadistic age. Little children in America now have to be walked to school by their parents. And the moms and dads turn the child over to the teacher, but then, they wonder what's going to happen in the classroom. We live in our homes with our doors bolted and shut, and bars on the windows, and alarm systems. And while the

criminals are on the streets unincarcerated, the people are locked behind their own doors, locked up. Many of our women are afraid of being attacked in broad daylight.

Now these people who fashion these philosophies—you know, these imaginations—they told us we need to listen to them. They told us if we would just relax about sex, then we wouldn't have any more sex crimes. That's a joke. Then, they told us we've been too tough on criminals. We need to go easier on the criminals. The rate of violent crime has exploded. They told us that our churches are too old-fashioned, that we've got to modernize, and liberalize, and rationalize, and compromise. We've about compromised ourselves out of business. They told us, in our schools, that we needed to boot out the Ten Commandments, Bible reading and prayer, and bring in *values clarification*. We've raised a generation of young rebels with refined intellects and undisciplined emotions. And violence and suicide are both growing exponentially in our schools. And now—God have mercy on us—one of our national leaders tells us we need to legalize drugs: that will lower the crime rate. I can tell you something else that will lower the crime rate. Legalize murder, and that won't be a crime anymore. It would go right down, wouldn't it?

How foolish we are! How silly we are! You legalize drugs, and we'll have a generation of young people gagging, and choking, and strangling on that forbidden fruit. The problem is we have forgotten the Word of God. Society is in pandemonium. Do you know what the Bible says? The Bible says, if a man refuses to work, he ought not to eat (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Do you know what the Bible says? The Bible says that women ought to dress in modest apparel, and take care of their children (1 Timothy 2:9). Do you know what the Bible says? The Bible says don't steal (Exodus 20:15). Do you know what the Bible says? The Bible says, don't get drunk—period (Ephesians 5:18). Do you know what the Bible says? The Bible says you should sleep with one woman, your own wife. That's what the Bible says. And we wonder why we're in a mess like we're in. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure it out. There was, friend, in Noah's day, a dangerous breakup of the social fabric. As it was, so shall it be (Matthew 24:37).

## **V. Mark # 5: A Divine Breaking of Sudden Judgment**

Now here's the last of these five signs that I want to give to you: There was a divine breaking of sudden judgment. Look, if you will, in chapter 6 and verse 3: *"And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years"* (Genesis 6:3). That means that God had been striving with them. That means that God had been warning them. That means that God had tried to penetrate their hard hearts, but their hearts were too hard. I mean, after all, they had eaten of the fruit of the tree of knowledge. They had their technology. They

had their art. They had their culture. They had their entertainment. They were rich, and increased with goods, and had need of nothing, in their own eyes.

We are standing on the brink of judgment, and, while we have a form of godliness, we deny the power thereof. We have been chloroformed with a false religion, and modern Americans are willing to dance, and laugh, and mock, and amuse themselves, in the face of judgment. God's Holy Spirit spoke then, but He would not continue to be mocked. Chapter 6 and verse 13: *"And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence"* (Genesis 6:13). Verse 17: *"And behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth"* (Genesis 6:17). Who believes in capital punishment? God does. God does. "I, even I, will bring a flood upon all the earth."

But before God brings judgment, God always brings warning. Noah was more than a boat builder. Noah was a preacher of God's Word. In 2 Peter chapter 2 and verse 5, the Bible calls Noah *"a preacher of righteousness"* (2 Peter 2:5). And not only was there Noah, that preacher of righteousness, but there was the prophet Enoch. Jude, verse 14: *"And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints"* (Jude 1:14). God said to Noah, "Noah, build an ark." And in obedience, Noah built the ark.

Had the newspaper people gone out there, that day, to interview Noah, what a time they would have had. You can be certain they would have called him a calamity howler. You can be certain they would have called him a fundamentalist. They would have called him a sensationalist. They would have called him a bigot. Make no doubt about it. I know what they would have said about Noah. Noah would have found himself in the political cartoons of his day. He would even have found himself in the funny papers. But that generation had been warned. Never has there been a generation that has heard more Bible preaching than this generation, and never has there been a generation that's done less with it.

Always, before God sends judgment, God sends a warning. I wonder, the day of the flood, I wonder: Did that day dawn bright and fair like this morning? Or, I wonder: Were the storm clouds rolling and boiling on the horizon? I don't know. But I know this: that the flood came. Noah's in the ark. A man turns up his face and sees those dark clouds, and a splotch of water hits him on the face. And then, another drop, and then, another drop, and then, torrents of rain. And then, the earth rocks, and great fissures open up in the earth, and the water that's in the belly of the earth begins to bubble up and ooze up. The waters begin to rise. Those in the valleys head for the mountains. The water continues to rise, and those on the mountaintops begin to try to make their way to the ark. But the door is shut. The age of grace has passed for that generation. They have

been warned. The door is shut. There was a sudden breaking of sovereign judgment, and God judged them.

I've often thought about Noah. Have you ever thought about the time he spent on that ark? The money, the labor, the ridicule? Can you imagine somebody building an ocean liner out in the middle of the desert? The ridicule that he got? But listen, friend. When Noah drove that last nail into that ark, it may have been the last thing that he had on this earth. But when Noah came out of the ark, he had inherited a new world. When Noah and his family went into that ark, they went into that ark a minority. When they came out, they came out the majority. And everything that Noah lost, he received back. Indescribably, he received it all back. *"Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth"* (Matthew 5:5).

Jesus Christ is our ark of safety. You listen to me. The Bible does not teach that we're going to save this world. This world is condemned. Water, the first time; fire, the second time. Even Pentecost did not save Jerusalem. We're not trying to save civilization from wreckage. We're trying to save men from the wreckage of civilization. We're trying to bring men, women, boys, and girls into the ark of safety—Jesus Christ. That ark was a picture of Jesus. And as the floodwaters and the rains beat upon that ark, Noah was safe, because he was on the inside. And everybody here, this morning, is either on the inside or the outside of the Lord Jesus Christ. And God sent me here to tell you to come on the inside—to come on in. There's room for you. And whosoever will may come. I've preached as best as I know how. I have told you, "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be" (Matthew 24:37). We've been warned, but we've been invited.

## Conclusion

Come to Jesus. Friend, Christmas is not over yet. It's not over until Jesus comes. And those little dimpled feet that lay in the straw in Bethlehem's manger will be those nail-pierced feet that will touch the Mount of Olives, when He comes in a blaze of His glory. *"Even so, come, Lord Jesus"* (Revelation 22:20). Could this be the year that Jesus will come? "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be" (Matthew 24:37).

Father, I pray that many will come to Jesus, today, and be saved. In His wonderful name. Amen.



# The Days of Noah and the End of the Age

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: March 21, 1999**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 24:36–42**

## Outline

Introduction

I. Sexual Perversion

II. Scientific Progress

III. Secular Philosophy

IV. Social Plagues

V. Sudden Pandemonium

Conclusion

## Introduction

**T**ake God's Word and turn to Matthew chapter 24. We're talking about "The Days of Noah and the End of the Age." One of the most blessed truths that I know of is this: that Jesus Christ may come again at any moment. We're not waiting for any scripture to be fulfilled. And just as surely as He came the first time, He's coming the second time. Many missed the glories of His first coming because they did not believe the Word of God and were not prepared. And many will miss His Second Coming for the same reason. However, His Second Coming will be so far different from His first coming.

The first time He came, there was no room for Him in the manger. When He comes again, bless God, He is coming to inherit the earth. When He came the first time—and we'll see it in the Passion Play—He came to a crucifixion. Thank God, hallelujah, when He comes again, He is coming to a coronation. When He came the first time, He hung on a tree. When He comes the second time, He will sit upon His throne. We see a scene in the Passion Play where Jesus the Messiah stands before Pilate. When He comes again, Pilate will stand before Jesus. He came the first time, and they mocked Him, and He stood before them in shame. When He comes again, He will come in dazzling splendor. And I can hardly wait. He came the first time to redeem us. And, thank God, He did. But He is coming the second time to rule over us—to rule and to reign. He came the first time as a humble servant. He is coming again as the holy sovereign, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the blessed and only Potentate (1

Timothy 6:15).

Now Jesus Christ Himself, in Matthew chapter 24, spoke of the course of events that would lead to the end of the age. And then He climaxes this passage, beginning in verse 36, speaking of His coming, and He said, *“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.”* If anybody tells you they have a date that they will say, “This is specifically when Jesus Christ is coming again,” they have crossed over—or at least they’re very near—the borderline of blasphemy. No one knows the day, the hour, when Jesus will come again. But we can know the times and the seasons. Notice that this is conjoined by the word, *“But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”* Now *“the Son of man”* is just Jesus’ terminology for Himself. It speaks of His humanity. *“For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come”* (Matthew 24:36–42).

Now the only hope for this old, sin-cursed world is the Second Coming of Jesus. And we know that He is coming. We don’t know exactly when He is coming, but we know that the days in which He comes will be like the days of Noah. So Jesus is saying, “If you want to know what the days will be like”—not the day, but the days—“study the flood. See what it was like in the days of Noah”—that is, the days before the flood. “See what conditions existed then, and compare them, and see if you may be living in the last days.”

Now, take your Bibles and go back to Genesis 4, and we’re going to look at the days of Noah. In Genesis 4, 5 and 6 we have the days of Noah. And I want to give you, perhaps, five signs of the days of Noah, five conditions that were in the days of Noah, that, in my estimation, greatly parallel the days that are with us today, because history is like a broken phonograph record: it just seems to keep repeating itself. And so here are the five marks of Noah’s day. We’re talking about the days of Noah and the end of the age. And I want you to see how the days of Noah, the times of Noah, so exactly parallel our day today so as to warn us to be ready for the soon coming of our Lord.

## **I. Sexual Perversion**

The first mark of Noah’s day is what I want to call sexual perversion—sexual perversion. Chapter 6, if you will, verses 1 and 2: *“And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw*

*the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose*” (Genesis 6:1–2). And verse 5: *“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth”* (Genesis 6:5).

Now there was a breakdown in the basic laws of marriage. Jesus said, in the scripture that I read, that they would be marrying and giving in marriage. That, commentators tell us, speaks not of simply marriage, but a multiplicity of marriages, many people having more than one marriage. We know, for example, that there was a man named Lamech who introduced polygamy into society. Look, if you will, in chapter 4 and verse 19: *“And Lamech took unto him two wives”* (Genesis 4:19). Now Jesus said very clearly, in the Gospels, that God’s plan was one man for one woman until death do them part (Matthew 19:4–6; Mark 10:6–9). But here we see in the days of Noah times of sexual immorality, sexual perversion. The restraints had been removed from society. And in Noah’s day the Bible says wickedness was great. That was, this immorality was rampant; sex was blatant.

When I was a boy, divorce was very, very unusual. If someone had a divorce, it was always accompanied with a sense of shame. But not in today’s society. We’ve seen, in our day, the divorce rate has exploded. And in the past fifty years, divorce has doubled, then tripled, and quadrupled, and doubled again, and our land is being flooded with a generation of children that have not know what it is to grow up in a home, a basic home, where one man and one woman are married and stay married all of their life like the home that I had the joy and the privilege of growing up in. And this is one of the great contributors to what we call juvenile delinquency. And a juvenile delinquent, so many times, is just a child trying to act like his parents. Crime comes out of broken homes. Not always, but many times.

Now I want you to see something else. And, by the way, since 1960, there has been a 400 percent increase in illegitimate births. Now if I had said ten percent, it would have been alarming, but since 1960, 400 percent. *There are no illegitimate children; just illegitimate* parents. Now the days of Noah were days of sexual perversion. Not only perversion of God’s laws concerning marriage, but perversion of God’s basic laws concerning sex.

Put in your margin Luke chapter 17, and read verses 26 and following. Here Jesus is linking the days of Noah with the days of Lot. Now, listen to it very carefully—verse 26: *“And as it was in the days of [Noah], so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.”* Now, watch this—verse 28: *“Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot*

*went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed*" (Luke 17:26–30).

Now we're talking about sexual perversion, and Jesus says, "As it was in the days of [Noah]," and then Jesus links the days of Noah with the days of Lot. What were the days of Lot? The days of Lot were the days that were marked with the sin of sodomy, homosexuality. "Pastor Rogers, is that a sin?" Yes. "Don't you know that it's politically incorrect for you to say that?" Yes. "Do you know that it is biblically right for you to say that?" Yes. I want you to hear what the Bible says. Leviticus chapter 20, verse 13: "*If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them*" (Leviticus 20:13). In God's economy—not in today's economy, but in God's economy—in Old Testament law, the sin of sodomy was a sin adjudicated by God as worthy of death. And God calls it abomination.

I was reading in today's newspaper about the number of deaths in sub-Saharan Africa. So many of these deaths are attributed to AIDS. And AIDS is attributable, in a large degree, to sodomy and homosexuality. It is a built-in result of these sins—the sin of sexual perversion. Whether it be heterosexual perversion, or homosexual perversion, sexually transmitted diseases are a built-in judgment.

I want you to listen again to the Book of Romans 1, verse 27. Here God describes the sin of sexual perversion. Listen to it. This is the Word of God. Hear the Word of God: "*And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet*" (Romans 1:27)—receiving in themselves the payback, that recompense of their error, which is fitting. The New American Standard says, "the due penalty of their error."

Now it's so obvious that God links these sexual diseases with sin. Somebody says, "Now, wait a minute, Pastor Rogers. AIDS cannot be the judgment of God, because sometimes little children get AIDS; sometimes hemophiliacs get AIDS; sometimes surgeons may come in contact with the disease. Are you trying to tell me that God is judging their sin?" No, what they're receiving in their bodies is the kickback that sometimes comes from sin and infects other people. The Bible says that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children to "*the third and fourth generation of them that hate me*" (Exodus 20:5; Deuteronomy 5:9).

If a man decides that he is going to commit suicide, and he steps off a building to commit suicide, he receives in himself what he has done. Now if he picks up a little child, and puts that child in his arm, and steps off the same building, the child will die. The child is innocent, but the child still is suffering from that man's awful, vile decision.

What does God do with this sin—this sin of sexual perversion? Does God step in and straighten everybody out? No, God gives a warning. God’s Word is clear and plain, black print on white paper. God says it is an abomination. God says it is unseemly. But men in Noah’s day, and men in our day, flaunt the laws of Almighty God. So how does God deal with them? Well, I’ll tell you what God does. God leaves them alone. God leaves them alone. Romans 1, verse 24: *“Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves”* (Romans 1:24). God just gave them up. He says, “All right, there you go!” Romans 1, verse 26: *“For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections:”—*God calls it *“vile affections”*—*“for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature”* (Romans 1:26). So here in two verses we have God saying *“God gave them up”*—Romans 1:24 and Romans 1:26. And then Romans 1:28 says, *“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind”* (Romans 1:28). Now, what is *“a reprobate mind”*? That is a mind that is unable to distinguish right from wrong.

We live in a sex-saturated society. My wife is in Georgia today. She was over there for a women’s conference, and she stayed to visit with our Gayle and Mike and our grandchildren. So I was at home last night. So I said, “Well, I’ll just turn on television. I’ll watch television a little bit.” Folks, I’ll tell you, I, just sitting there with that thing in my hand, I am amazed, I am grieved at the filth, the debauchery, the inane, vapid, vile garbage that is being pumped into the living rooms of America’s society. And you know what they’ll tell you? They will tell you, “Hey, preacher, if you don’t like it, turn it off.” That doesn’t work!

Let me tell you why. That’s like saying, “There’s crime in the streets, and if you don’t like it, stay in your house”—same philosophy. Friend, the airwaves don’t belong to the pornographers; they belong to the people. Or that’s like people who want to pollute the air with their cigarette smoke. They say, “Hey, if you don’t like it, don’t breathe”—“don’t breathe.”

By the way, I was walking through the Atlanta airport the other day. It’s an interesting thing. If you smoke, I know you want to quit, so I hope you won’t think I’m making fun of you too much. I know you want to quit. Sure, you do. I was walking through them. They have a room now where they put everybody in there where they can smoke together. Have you seen that room? It was the funniest thing. I walked past there, and all these people in there, and that room was just blue with smoke. And up there on the back wall was the Marlboro man on a horse, out of doors. That man’s suntan, with that white hat on, I thought, “Is that not a joke? There’s that guy out there in the wide-open spaces, and all of those people in there treating themselves with cancer.” It was an amazing,

amazing thing.

But those kinds of people say, “Look, I have a right to pollute the air.” They don’t have a right to pollute my air. They don’t have a right to pollute your air. And people don’t have a right to pollute the airwaves. That belongs to society together. What were the days of Noah like? They were days of sexual perversion.

## II. Scientific Progress

Number two: not only were they days of sexual perversion, but the days of Noah were days of scientific progress. Great inventions were being made. There was a great advance in knowledge. The Bible teaches us that in the days of Noah there were men of renown. Secrets were being wrested from the earth. Look, if you will, in chapter 4 and verse 17: “*And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he builded a city*” (Genesis 4:17). Don’t get the idea that these people were rural hicks. There’s nothing wrong with being rural. And if you’re rural, I’m not calling you a hick. Don’t write me a letter. But don’t get the idea that these were just agrarian people out there. They had great metropolitan areas. Look, if you will, in verse 22: “*And Zillah, she also bare Tubalcain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron*” (Genesis 4:22). There was an industrial revolution. There were new and cunning divisions. And man, who was driven from the paradise of Eden, now is trying to create his own paradise with fire and wit and wisdom.

Just think of the technological advance that there had to be in order to build the ark. You couldn’t build an ark. Noah built an ark. Those who have studied tell us that the ark is about the proportion of today’s modern seagoing vessels—ships, great ships. The ark was 450 feet long. That’s longer than a football field: 150 yards by 45 yards. It had a capacity of three million feet. That ark had to withstand the greatest storm this world has ever known. It was a great engineering feat. Can you imagine the stresses and the strains that were upon this ship? Noah built that ship.

Now there was a great technological advance in the days of Noah. And we’re seeing that in these last days in our own society. We’ve come from the horse-and-buggy days—some of you who are in this building tonight remember the horse-and-buggy days—to the splitting of the atom, man walking on the moon. We’ve pushed back the frontiers of science to where we’re afraid of what we know. We’re talking about genetic engineering. We’re talking about cloning human beings. We’re talking about all kinds of strange and esoteric devices. And we no longer can be amazed at anything that happens. A science called virtual reality is coming upon us. Our children are becoming—some of them—road kill on an information superhighway. The late, great Dr. Vance Havner said this: “Scientifically, we’re in the graduate school. But morally and

spiritually, we're in kindergarten." And then Dr. Havner said, "Civilization is like a chimpanzee playing with matches in a roomful of dynamite." And then he said, "Some fanatic may push a button and bury millions in a furnace of molten steel."

### III. Secular Philosophy

What were the days of Noah? The same as our days. They were days of sexual perversion. Our day is a day of sexual perversion. They were days of scientific progress. Our day is a day of scientific progress. Number three: they were days of secular philosophy. Look in chapter 6—Genesis 6, verses 5 and 6—and listen to it: *"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth,"*—now, watch this—*"and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him in his heart"* (Genesis 6:5–6).

Now the faith that Abel had died for, shed his blood for, the faith that was delivered to Adam, has been receding from the earth. The word *imaginations* here is a very interesting word. Our own Dr. John Philips, who's a member of this church and a great Bible scholar, said this: that the word *imaginations* comes from a Hebrew root relating to pottery. And he said, "You can look at this verse and read it this way: what they were doing was molding society into their form." He said—and I quote—"To fashion, as a potter. Men fashioned wicked philosophies and espoused filthy causes, made fashionable vile sins and endeavored to pour society into their mold."

What they had done in the days of Noah is to substitute the mind of man for the Word of God. And we know that that is true in today's society. We live in a day today that is called postmodern; that is, people don't even argue today about what is right or what is wrong. Everybody is right, and everybody is wrong, because we're all supposed to create our own truth. In Noah's day, secularism had taken over the arts and the sciences, philosophy and education.

And so, what were the days of Noah? The days of Noah were days of sexual perversion. The days of Noah were days of scientific progress. The days of Noah were days of secular philosophy. Now the only acceptable bigotry today is against Christians; to discredit Bible Christians. You can be bigoted against a Bible Christian and be politically correct today. *"As it was in the days of [Noah], so shall it be"* (Luke 17:26).

### IV. Social Plagues

Sign number four: the days of Noah were days of social plagues. Look, if you will, in chapter 6 and verse 11: *"The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was*

*filled with violence*” (Genesis 6:11). We live in a day of violence. Our children are given violent toys to play with. Violence, gore, and blood fill the television screens. Our world is a swamp of discontent where the mosquitoes of hate are breeding. And you read the newspaper about skyjackings and kidnappings and guerilla warfare and needless murders and assaults on the streets of our cities. These things are daily occurrences. And even in our fair city of Memphis people are afraid to walk on the streets at nighttime. And vast amounts of money are being drained out of society by legalized crime, as well as illegal crime. I say, “Illegalize crime.” I’m about to get off on a tangent. All right, look, if you will, here in Genesis chapter 4 and verse 23. We’re talking about the days of Noah: *“And Lamech said unto his wives, Adah and Zillah, Hear my voice; ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech: for I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt.”* That is, “I got in a battle. I killed him, but he wounded me.” And then he says, with a sense of vengeance, in verse 24, *“If Cain shall be avenged seven-fold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold”* (Genesis 4:23–24). Lamech was going to go on a crime spree. He was going to get vengeance. He is filled with violence, and he is becoming a violent thug. And the thing about Lamech here: not only did he commit murder, but he is bragging about it. He is violent. He is filled with violence. And he is filled with pride over his violence.

The days of Noah were days of violence, murder, unprovoked slayings, atrocious crimes. And I read about the anniversary of the Jonesboro massacre in the newspaper today. What a heartache! Ours is a sadistic age. Our people are living behind locked doors and barred windows while the criminals are on the streets. People are locking themselves behind iron bars. Since 1960, there has been a 560 percent increase in violent crime. Now if I said violent crime had doubled, that would be shocking. But we listen to these statistics, and we somehow have become almost numb to them.

These secular philosophies that we’ve just talked about, they’ve done a good job on us. They told us that if we would relax about sex and wouldn’t get upright about it, things would be better. And yet sex crimes are on an increase. They told us that we’ve been too tough on criminals and we need to go easy on them. And the rate of violent crime exploded. They told us that churches are too old-fashioned, that we must modernize and liberalize and rationalize and compromise. And now those churches are closed. They told us that in our schools we have to kick out God and the Ten Commandments, and bring in values clarification. And now we have to put policeman in the halls of our schools. They told us that we need to legalize drugs in order to deal with them. Those same people would tell us we need to put out fire with gasoline, I’m sure.

Now we need to go back and read the Bible. The days of Noah—the days of Noah—were days, folks, of social panic.



## V. Sudden Pandemonium

Last of all, what were the days of Noah like? They were days of sudden pandemonium. Look, if you will, in Genesis chapter 6 and verse 3: *“And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he is also flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years”* (Genesis 6:3). God’s Holy Spirit had tried to penetrate their heart. God had spoken to them. God had given them His Word. He had warned them and warned them, and Noah preached for 120 years with the wrath of God in the foreground, the ring of hammers in the background. These people married, giving in marriage. They ate, they drank, they prided themselves in their technology, their art, their culture, their entertainment. They had no need of God, and yet the flood came. They mocked the idea of Noah. They mocked the idea of the flood.

Look, if you will, in verse 13 of this same chapter: *“And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth”* (Genesis 6:13). Now God is a God of love, but God did bring judgment. The Bible says, in 2 Peter chapter 2, verse 5, the Lord *“spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly”* (2 Peter 2:5). Noah warned them. They would not listen. I can imagine if Dan Rather had gone out to interview old Noah, what a day they would have had! They would have talked about Noah as a religious fanatic. He would have been—he, Noah, and his boat. They would have had political cartoons in the prominent newspapers. There would be jokes about Noah in the funny papers. Preachers who preached about the flood coming would have been called a calamity howler.

Not this Sunday, but last week, or two weeks ago, there was an article by our local religion editor, who talked about warning people about the Second Coming as something that is ludicrous, something that is funny. To talk about the Second Coming of Jesus is to be known as a fundamentalist, a sensationalist, a bigot. And yet the Bible says the flood came.

Now God is a God of mercy, but friend, *the* raging water *of God’s* wrath *is furiously pounding against the* dam *of His* mercy. The flood of God’s wrath is coming upon this world. *“As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the day of the coming of the Son of man”* (Luke 17:26) Look in verse 17: *“And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die”* (Genesis 6:17).

Now I don’t know what it was like the day the flood came. I don’t know whether that day dawned bright and fair. But I do know that there came a time when the earth cracked open and great water belched out of the earth. I do know that there was a time

when the heavens were loosed and the rain began to come. God had called Noah into the ark. In chapter 7 and verse 1, He says, “Noah, come into the ark” (Genesis 7:1). And God shut Noah in. And God shut these other people out. And for those people, the day of grace had passed, and the Day of Judgment had come.

And it’s so much like our day. Put this scripture down—2 Peter chapter 3, verses 3 through 7: *“Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the father fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.”* That is, “Why hasn’t Jesus come? Our fathers and our grandfathers, they’re in the grave, and preachers have been preaching about the Second Coming of Jesus.” And then Peter goes on to say, *“For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.”* What he’s saying is, the God who made heaven and earth, and divided the land from the water, then is the same God that sent the flood. And then he makes an application to those folks living in Memphis, Tennessee in 1999: *“But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word...”*—the same word of God that created the heavens to begin with—*“by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men”* (2 Peter 3:3–7).

God has promised He will never destroy the world with water again, but He has promised that He will destroy it with fire. And this world is reserved with fire. And, actually, the Greek scholars tell us that this word *“reserved unto fire”* literally means, “stored with fire.” “As it was, so shall it be.” God is not fickle. God is not forgetful. God is faithful.

## Conclusion

Now, let me just close the message by giving you a little word of encouragement. I want you to think of the time and the money and the labor that Noah spent building this ark. The Bible tells us very little about it, but you know it was a monumental task. Think of the ridicule that Noah must have endured. And when he drove the last nail in that ark and went into that ark, he may have gone in penniless. I know he left everything that he owned outside that ark. But when he came out of that ark, he inherited a new world. When he went in, he went in a pauper; when he came out, he was very wealthy. When he went into the ark, he went in a minority; when he came out, he came out the majority. And I’m telling you, folks, that everything that we spend to get out the gospel we will receive back with multiplied interest. The Bible says, *“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth”* (Matthew 5:5).

# God, Give Us Faithful Men

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: June 5, 1994**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 25:21**

*“His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”*

MATTHEW 25:21

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## Introduction

I want you to take God’s Word tonight, if you will, and be finding the Gospel of Matthew—Matthew chapter 25 and verse 21. Tonight, we’re talking about faithfulness. The title of the message: “God Give Us Faithful Men.” Now, what do we mean by *faithfulness*? Well, we mean integrity. We mean loyalty. We mean steadfastness. We mean dependability, fidelity. All of these things are *faithfulness*. When our Lord comes, I want Him to say, in the words of Matthew chapter 25, verse 21, “*His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.*” (Matthew 25:21)

I heard about a dog that had his tail cut off, and they buried the dog’s tail and

thought they were done with it. But the dog found it and dug it up and brought it back in his mouth. They were horrified, took it away from him, and buried it deeper. He dug it up again and did that three times in a row. He was faithful to the end.

I want to ask you a question. Are you faithful? I mean, can you be counted on? Do you know what Proverbs says in Proverbs chapter 25 and verse 19? *“Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint.”* (Proverbs 25:19) That’s Proverbs 25 and verse 19. Today there is a serious lack of genuine integrity and faithfulness among men. Men’s words seem to mean little today, whether it’s a marriage contract, or a business contract, or a treaty between nations.

I was reading in a news magazine about a Gallup report. They surveyed and found out something that was appalling. It was sickening. Forty percent—that’s almost fifty percent of Americans—admit to calling in sick when they’re not sick, shortchanging a customer, pilfering, stealing on the job, cheating in examinations in school. And then Mr. Gallup said, “It is my view as a survey researcher that we are facing in this nation a moral crisis of the first dimension. The great problems of our time, I believe, are moral and spiritual rather than political and economical.” That is a mouthful. That is true. We are facing a crisis. God give us faithful men!

My wife and I many years ago visited Yellowstone National Park. We were fortunate to stay in the old lodge just outside the geyser known as Old Faithful, and just as far about from our room as I am from you, Bob Sorrell, or maybe just a little further, was that geyser. Every sixty-five minutes—you could set your watch by it—it would spew water 170 feet in the air. Now there were other geysers there in the park that were more spectacular, but everybody loved this one. You know why? It could be counted on. It was given the name Old Faithful. God give us faithful men!

I want to give you a verse—1 Corinthians chapter 4 and verse 2: *“Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”* (1 Corinthians 4:2) Now, friend, that’s not just a desire. That is a requirement. What God is saying is this: Faithfulness is the basic, rudimentary, fundamental ingredient of character. You will not know God’s blessing apart from faithfulness. Put this verse down—Psalm 31, verse 23: *“O love the LORD, all ye his saints: for the LORD preserveth the faithful.”* (Psalm 31:23) Do you want God to watch out over you and take care of you? God preserveth the faithful.

Friend, faithfulness is God’s requirement for your stewardship. Faithfulness is God’s measurement for your blessing. One day, I say, you are going to stand before God, I’m going to stand before God, and the reward, or the lack of it, is going to be according to our faithfulness. I want to hear Jesus say to me, “Adrian, well done, thou good and faithful servant.” (Matthew 25:21; Matthew 25:23) All the men here tonight, I want to ask you this question: Are you a faithful man? Are you faithful to your wife? Are you faithful to your children? Are you faithful to your employer? Are you faithful to your

government? Can you be counted on? Do you have integrity?

## I. What Are Some Areas of Faithfulness?

Well, let's check up. Let's talk about some areas of faithfulness.

### A. Faithful to Your Family

Let's go back to the family. Are you faithful to your family? The Marines, Brother Bill, have a motto: *semper fidelis*—"always faithful." That ought to be the motto of every married man: "always faithful." Adultery is the ultimate act of unfaithfulness. When you marry a woman, you make a solemn vow to keep yourself to her and her alone. But you don't have to commit the physical act of adultery to be unfaithful. Some have love affairs with their work, with sports, and other things.

Kids need a dad who will be faithful. You know, one of the major problems that I've found in talking with teenagers is they have bitterness. They have resentment. Much of that resentment is directed not toward the mother, but toward the father; and it is directed to the father over the matter of broken promises, a dad that does not keep his word. Be careful what you tell your children. In a weak moment to get them out of the way, we'll promise them anything. They'll ask, "Can we do this? Can we do that, Daddy, next week?" "Yes, sure, fine." And then you forget. But they don't forget. They don't forget when they grow up. As a matter of fact, be very careful, because what you say we might do, they hear that as saying we will do. "Can we go fishing next week?" "Well, we might do it." They start packing the fishing gear right there. They are waiting, believing in Dad, and then one promise after another promise after another promise is broken.

Maybe as dads, if you want to restore your relationship to your teenage son, maybe one of the best things you could do is to go back and search those times when you have broken your promises to that boy and go to him and say, "I remember, and thus and thus and thus and thus a time I promised you something, and I didn't do it. I've asked God to forgive me, and I want you to forgive me." And then ask him this question—and I've asked my own sons this question, and my daughters: "Have I ever made a promise to you that I've failed to keep? If so, I want you to tell me, because I want to repent. I want you to believe that your dad is a faithful man." We need to be faithful with our family.

### B. Faithful to Your Finances

We need to be faithful with our finances. Listen to this verse. Men, listen to it. Luke 16, verses 10 through 13. Jesus said, "*He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.*" Now, listen to what Jesus said as He follows that statement. That statement is the premise. And now, listen

to the therefore: *“If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon,”*—now, what is that? What is unrighteous mammon? Money, finances. *“If you’ve not been faithful in finances”*—*“who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man’s, who shall give you that which is your own? No servant can love two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”* (Luke 16:10–13) Mammon, again, means “finances, money.” You just can’t do it. One God is enough for everybody. What Jesus Christ is saying is how you handle your money is an indication of how you would handle spiritual treasure.

Did you know that God may be withholding a blessing from you that He wants to give you because He’s first tried you with money—God has given you money—and you haven’t been faithful with that money, and therefore God cannot give you spiritual blessings? Listen to it. The Bible says in this verse—listen to it—*“If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?”* What are the true riches? That is spiritual power. That is insight into the Word of God. That is answered prayer. That is fellowship with Jesus Christ. That is *“joy unspeakable and full of glory.”* (1 Peter 1:8) If you have those things, you are truly rich. But God gave you money, and you weren’t faithful with that. So, why should God give you the true riches?

Do you know what most of us think? Here’s what most of us think. Most of us have it 180 degrees wrong. Most of us think, “You know, if I’ll just get right with God; if I’ll live like God wants me to live; if I get right spiritually, then God will bless me materially.” That’s what most of us think. Most of us think that if we’ll get right with God spiritually, God will bless us materially. But the Bible says, “If you are not right with that which is material, I can’t bless you spiritually.” We just get it backwards. God gives us a test. God gives us money. God gives us things. God may be withholding a blessing from you, sir, because you’ve not been faithful in the earning, the giving, the saving, and the spending of your money. Are you faithful?

Let me tell you what the Bible says you ought to do if you’re a member of Bellevue Baptist Church. First Corinthians chapter 16, and verse 2: *“Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.”* (1 Corinthians 16:2) That was Paul’s instruction to a church at Corinth, telling them how to bring their money to God’s house on God’s day, that God’s work will be done in God’s way, upon the first day of the week. *“Lay by him in store.”* It is not emotional; it is methodical. You are to give proportionately, as God has prospered you.

### C. Faithful to Your Friends

We need some men who will be faithful to the family. We need some men who will be faithful in finances. I'll tell you something else that's needed today: some men who are faithful to their friends. Did you know that if you have friends, you are exceedingly blessed? The Bible says in Proverbs chapter 17 and verse 17, "*A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.*" (Proverbs 17:17) Proverbs chapter 18 and verse 24: "*A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.*" (Proverbs 18:24) Do you have friends? Your friends will fail. Your friends will stumble. Your friends will forget. Your friends will sometimes do you wrong. But if you have a friend, thank God, be a friend to your friend. Be a faithful friend.

One man got up late at night. He was thinking about his friend and he wrote these words. And I want you to listen. He took the idea from 1 Corinthians 13 that speaks of love, and here's what he wrote to his friend: "During the past few months, I have read and reread the thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians. I hope I have not violated these verses by writing them into friendship, but I think you will see the message that I see in them."

Now as I read what he wrote to his friend, I want you to think about your friend and see if this is the kind of a friend you are, sir, to your friend: "Friendship is slow to lose patience. It looks for a way of being constructive. It is not possessive. It is neither eager to impress others, nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own importance. Friendship has good manners and does not pursue selfish advantage at the other's expense. It is not touchy. It does not keep account of slights or gloat over the mistakes of the other. A friend does not make himself big by making the other small. On the contrary, it is glad. Friendship is glad when truth prevails. It knows no limits to its endurance, no end to its trust, no failing of its hope, and in this it can outlast anything. True friendship stands when all else has fallen." Do you want to be that kind of a friend? Are you a faithful person? Then that same man who wrote these words said, "Here is a creed to my friend. I owe you loyalty, even to my hurt. But I do not owe you my agreement. I owe you tolerance and encouragement and recognition of your gifts. I owe you a part of me. I owe you a part of me: my time, my thoughts, my possessions, and my vulnerability. I owe you serious consideration of your admonishment of me. I owe you forgiveness. A friend who truly forgives doesn't need to forget." I want to be that kind of a friend. I want to have that kind of a friend.

I want to ask you a question. If I were to ask you tonight to sit down and write letters to five people—write five people that you know that you could count on, five people that you say this is a faithful man, write a letter to five people—would anybody write you a letter? Are you known as a faithful man? Fidelity, dependability, integrity—it is missing.

#### D. Faithful to the Fellowship

We need to be faithful to the family, faithful in our finances, faithful to our friends. I'll tell you something else that we need to be faithful to: to the fellowship, to the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I'm talking specifically to those of you who are members of Bellevue Baptist Church. You need to be faithful to this particular church. Romans 12, verse 5: "*So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.*" (Romans 12:5) I belong to you, and you belong to me. And don't say, "It's none of your business, Pastor, what I do." It is plenty of my business. And it is plenty of your business what I do. We are members one to another, and we owe to one another a fearful loyalty. The Bible teaches that we are to be faithful to the fellowship, and that means the attendance of the fellowship. Hebrews 10:25 says we are not to forsake "*the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.*" (Hebrews 10:25)

Do you know what is happening in America today? Something that I have not seen in years past as I have been a pastor. There are people today who claim to be Christians, who know and love the Lord Jesus Christ, who do not belong to and are not faithful to a local fellowship. Such a thing was unheard of, un-thought of, in the Bible. To be a Christian meant that you were faithful to the fellowship that you attended when the gathering gathered together; that you were there. If you stopped attending, they assumed that you were lost; that you were an apostate; that you went back on God.

Now people say, "Well, I believe in Christianity, but I am not necessarily a member of a local church. But I'm a member of the universal church." That's like saying, "Well, I believe in football." I say, "What team do you play for?" "Well, I'm just a part of the NFL." "And you're not part of any team?" I mean, it's foolish. We need to be faithful to the church.

Very frankly, some of you deacons are not as faithful as you ought to be. Some of our teachers are not as faithful as they ought to be. Some of our committee people are not as faithful as they ought to be. And the average member is not as faithful as they ought to be. We have joined the cult of the comfortable and we come when it pleases us. If something interrupts us, we say, "Oh well, it's all right." Friend, I believe we ought to be in the house of God on a regular basis, bringing our prayers, and our tithe, and our Bible, and our love, and our influence to the house of God faithfully week after week after week. What do we have, what do we do, that is more important than being a part of the blood-bought Body of the Lord Jesus Christ, the local, visible expression of the Body of Christ? And the Bible says we are not to forsake "*the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.*"

Let me tell you what you say when you come to church. You say two things. You say, number one, "God is important to me." I'll tell you what else you say: you say to your brothers and sisters in Christ, "You are important to me." It is very important. You



don't just simply go to impress. You go to bless one another. The Bible says we are to exhort one another, and so much the more, as we see the day approaching. (Hebrews 10:25)

### **E. Faithful to the Faith**

Again, here is something that you need to be faithful to. You need to be faithful not only to the fellowship, but faithful to the faith—I mean, to the Word of God. There is a battle today for the Bible. In 2 Timothy chapter 1, verses 13 and 14, the Apostle Paul had to tell Timothy, *“Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Jesus Christ. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.”* (2 Timothy 1:13–14) I see a generation of young people today—not necessarily in this church, because I think our young people are a cut above the average—but as I go in and out among people, there is no conviction. They don't know the great truths of the Word of God. They don't stand for the faith that was once for all delivered unto the saints. (Jude 1:3)

And whose responsibility is it? You say, “Well, Pastor, it's yours to stand in the pulpit and teach us.” No, it is yours, mister, as a dad to instill that faith into your children, and to be faithful to the faith, and to teach these young people what the Word of God says, and to make certain you know and you can pass it onto your son. Read Deuteronomy chapter 6 and see what God commands of the fathers when you get home.

*Now, you think about it. We're only one generation away from paganism. It's like running a race, a relay race. If you drop the baton, then the race is over. Friend, we've got to pass it on to this next generation. Give us some men who are faithful to the faith.*

William Booth founded the Salvation Army. Do you know what William Booth said that the chief danger of the twentieth century would be? He said it would be religion without the Holy Spirit, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, and heaven without hell. That's what is being preached today in pulpits across America.

## **II. Why Should You Be Faithful?**

Now, why should we be faithful? I mean, what is the motivation? Let me give you some reasons why you ought to be a faithful man—faithful to your family, faithful with your finances, faithful to your friends, faithful to the fellowship, faithful to the faith. Why?

### **A. Jesus Christ Is Faithful to Us**

Well, number one, friend: Jesus Christ is faithful to us. I mean He is faithful to us.

#### **1. Faithful in Failure**

For example, which of us has not sinned? Who has not failed and stumbled? But thank God for 1 John 1, verse 9: *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* (1 John 1:9) How I need that verse! I

needed it this week. I failed big time. You say, “What did you do, Pastor?” I’m not going to tell you. Maybe I ought to tell you, because your imagination would be worse. But, oh, just simply say, “My God, I’m sorry. I failed,” and to have the precious blood of Jesus to cleanse. And He’s never failed to do it. All my Christian life He has been faithful to me. I love it when Bernita sings that song, “He Has Been Faithful to Me.” Faithful in failure.

## **2. Faithful in Temptation**

Why, He’s been faithful in temptation. Are you tempted? I am every day! But thank God for 1 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 13, that says, *“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may able to bear it.”* (1 Corinthians 10:13) Thank God for that! I wouldn’t, I couldn’t make it. I couldn’t stand. I would fall. I would fail were it not for the faithfulness of God to help me in time of temptation.

## **3. Faithful to Keep Us from Falling**

Friend, He is faithful to keep us from falling. Listen to 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, verses 23 and 24: *“And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he who calleth you, who also will do it.”* (1 Thessalonians 5:23–24) We don’t keep saved by holding on to God. We are kept because He holds on to us. He preserves us faithful to the end.

I hear people sometimes get up in a testimony meeting, and they talk about walking with the Lord, and then they end their testimony something like this: “And, brethren, pray for us that we’ll hold out faithful to the end.” Well, I think I know what they mean, but I always kind of smile a little bit when they say that. I kind of picture Noah’s Ark and eight pegs out there sticking out of Noah’s Ark, and Noah and his wife and his family holding on to those slimy pegs, the boat rocking like this. Rather than being on the inside of the ark, they’re out there holding on to the ark. And Noah says, “Mrs. Noah, Honey, pray for me that I’ll hold out faithful to the end.” He never would have made it. But, friend, thank God that God said, “Noah, come into the ark.” When he came in, God shut the door. And God that shut the water out shut Noah in. He may have fallen down inside that ark, but he never fell out of it. Friend, faithful is He who calls you.

See, it’s not that we hold onto Him—though we ought to—but something even better is that He holds on to us. One of these days, as we preached this morning, our Lord is going to step out of the glory. One of these days, Jesus is coming. We look for His coming, and we long for His coming. Do you know what He said to the Philadelphian church? Revelation chapter 2, verse 10: *“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”* (Revelation 2:10)

You know, I'm along in my ministry right now where my great goal is to finish well. You know, it doesn't matter how far ahead you may be in a race—if you quit running, you'll lose it, no matter how far ahead you are. Here is the grizzled old warrior, the Apostle Paul. He is in prison. He has been preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. They can't make him let up, back up, or shut up, so they put him in prison. And he's writing to his son in the ministry, young Timothy. And this is what he says to Timothy in 2 Timothy chapter 4, beginning in verse 6: *"I am now ready to be offered,"*—what he means here is, "I'm ready to be a sacrificial lamb; I'm ready to be offered"—*"and the time of my departure is at hand."* That is, "I'm getting ready to leave this world." And then he says, *"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."* (2 Timothy 4:6–8)

I want you to see the old Apostle Paul now. His eyesight is gone. He is probably having to dictate this letter to a stenographer, an amanuensis, as they call them. And then they say, "Well, Paul, do you want to sign? And Paul takes his palsied hand and he says, "You see what big letters I'm writing with. But it's me, Paul." Then there comes a knock at the door. "Paul, the time has come. Hate to tell you this, Paul, but we're going to cut off your head. The executioner has got his ax sharpened. Come with me, Paul. We're going to take that last walk." And he unlocks that cell door. Out comes Paul, the greatest Christian who ever lived.

You know, I don't know how to picture Paul. I picture him in my mind sort of a balding man, little bald pate, a little horseshoe hair cut, little spindly legs, kind of humpbacked, squinty eyes, his body all scarred. He has been shipwrecked. He has fought with wild beasts. He has been stoned and left for dead. He has rotted in jail. He has fasted. He's walking out there, and they lead him out, and there's that old block there. They're going to execute him. There's that lethal weapon. That ax is going to take off his head. They lead him down to the Tiber River that will soon drink his blood. Paul is just kind of humming. The guard says, "Are you singing?" "Yeah, I didn't know you were listening. I was just humming a little song, one that Jim Whitmire taught me." "Well, what's the name of it? Never heard that, Paul." "Oh, it's just a little tune: 'It Will Be Worth It All When We See Jesus.'" And they say, "Well, all right, Paul, kneel down. Are you afraid?" "Oh, no, I'm not afraid. I die daily." "What?" "Yeah, I've been doing this for a long time. I die daily. Listen man. I'm wanting to go and be with Jesus." "Well, Paul, you're strange." "Paul, do you have any last words?" "Oh, yes, brother, I've got some last words." "What are they?" "Jesus Christ is Lord." Down comes that ax, and off goes that head.

The next scene is in heaven. There are Paul and Jesus. "Welcome home, Son!

Good to see you, Paul!" "Lord Jesus, before you say anything, I want to tell you, Lord, thank you for saving me. Thank you, Lord, every time I sinned, you forgave me. Thank you, Lord, that you kept me by your grace. Thank you, Lord, that you delivered me out of temptation. Thank you, Lord. And, Lord, I want to tell you something else. I've made mistakes. I've failed. But, Lord, I was faithful to the fight. I was faithful to the faith. And I was faithful to the finish." And I can hear Jesus as He says to him, "Paul, well done, good and faithful servant."

Don't you want Him to say that to you? I do. I want Him to say, "Adrian, you have been my man. You have been faithful." Why should we be faithful? Because He is faithful. He is faithful.

### **III. How Should You Be Faithful?**

Let me just talk to you for a little bit about how to be faithful, and I'll be finished.

#### **A. Be Faithful in the Small Things**

First of all, you need to be faithful in the small things. Here is what separates people. Listen to this verse in Luke chapter 16 and verse 10: "*He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.*" (Luke 16:10) All big things are made of little things. Your body, for example, has various members, and these members have various parts, and these parts have smaller components, cells, and these cells are made up of molecules. Everything that is big is made of something that is small. The ocean, vast as the ocean is, the ocean is made up of drops, and the drops are made up of molecules, and the molecules are made up of atoms. You can't have anything big without having something small. Time—all of the millions and billions of years that may have been or ever will be—is made up of the ages, and the ages are made up of the years, and the years are made up of the days, and the days are made up of the hours, and the hours of the minutes, and the minutes of the seconds and the microseconds. If you'll be faithful in the small things, the big things will take care of themselves.

Learn to be faithful in life. Do you know what the big things in life are made out of? Little acts, little words, little thoughts. You can't have the much without having the little. If I would say anything to you preacher boys who are here today, be faithful in the small things. Use integrity in the small things. Wilbur Chapman, mightily used of God, said this: "The rule that governs my life is this: Anything that dims my vision of Christ, or takes away my taste for Bible study, or cramps my prayer life, or makes Christian work difficult, is wrong for me, and I must as a Christian turn away from it."

Do you know what we need to do as dads, men? We need to train our children to be faithful in little things. And, moms and dads, I want to say this: When you bring them to

church on Sunday morning, teach them to bring their pennies to give to Jesus. I mean it costs us more money to give them an envelope than it does what we get back in it. But you teach them. You say, “You moneygrubber! You want the money from those little kiddies?” You bet I do! I want them to bring those pennies to Jesus. And I’ll tell you why. You teach that boy or girl to bring his pennies to Jesus Christ on Sunday morning, one day he may give a million, two million, dollars to the cause of Christ, because he learned to be faithful in that which is least so he can learn to be faithful in that which is much.

You see, you take the men in the Bible that have been used of God—they’ve been faithful in small things. People come to Bellevue Baptist Church, and they look around and say, “Wow!” I had a country preacher stand up here the other day and say, “You could stack a lot of hay in here.” Friend, I want you to know I pastored a church, if we had a crowd like is in the choir tonight, I would have said that was one of the biggest crowds we had all year. I got just as much joy pastoring that church as I do pastoring this church. There are no small churches. You be faithful in that which people call small.

David, before he went out against Goliath, slew a lion and he slew a bear. And that’s the way he knew he could take care of Goliath. He said, “The God that helped me with that lion, and God that helped with that bear, is the God that’s going to help me with you, and I’m going to make you a foot shorter at the top.” (1 Samuel 17:36) Listen. David was a man who knew how to be faithful keeping his father’s sheep, in the small things, and therefore he could be king over Israel. Most of us are going to fail not in the big thing; we’re going to fail in the small thing.

A man was an executive in a company. They were going to move him up and make him one of the chief executives. And the board had already talked about it. It was a monumental advancement. The owner of this company just happened to be behind this man in the cafeteria line at the company cafeteria and he saw that man take a pat of butter—a pat of butter, you know what that is, a little square of butter; I think probably about three cents on the register—put it on his tray, and put a slice of bread on top of it so the cashier wouldn’t see it. He didn’t know that the CEO was right behind him, but he saw that. The CEO went back to the board and said, “We’ve got the wrong man. He doesn’t have integrity.” And for three cents he lost multiplied thousands and thousands of dollars.

Now if humans would do that, how much more would the heavenly Father, who wants to advance you and bless you, say, “I can’t bless him: He doesn’t have integrity in the small things.” God give us faithful men!

## **B. Be Faithful in the Secret Things**

Be faithful in the small things. And be faithful in the secret things. What you are in secret

is what you are—nothing more or nothing less. I’m talking to some men—you travel a lot, you go into these motels, and now in almost every motel there’s a television. In that television are these R-rated and X-rated films. Nobody is in there but you. Oh, no, I’m wrong. Jesus is in that room. Jesus is in that room! And, friend, what you are in that room when your wife is not there and your children are not there and your boss is not there, that is what you are. And you don’t have to keep on making up your mind whether or not you’re going to watch that filth. Say, “My mind is settled. I have made a covenant with my eyes. I will not do it. My heart is fixed. I will live for God.” Be faithful, friend, in the small things. Be faithful in the secret things. And thy Father which seeth in secret will reward thee openly. (Matthew 6:4, 6, 18)

I was just looking the other night on television at the Sistine Chapel. It’s been cleaned and refurbished. Michelangelo painted the Sistine Chapel. And I read somewhere of an account of Michelangelo who was up there in a corner painting over a place no one else could see, and they said, “Hey, forget that. Nobody else can see it.” He said, “I know it’s there.” Do you paint the corners of your life that nobody else can see?

### C. Be Faithful in the Sacred Things

And be faithful, dear friend, in the sacred things: the small things, the secret things, the sacred things. Be faithful to meet with God.

## Conclusion

Do you know how you have faithfulness? Not by resolution, not by gritting your teeth; the Bible says in Galatians chapter 5 and verse 22, “*The fruit of the Spirit*”—now your Bible says—“*is...faith*” (Galatians 5:22)—but that could be translated, “The fruit of the Spirit is “faithfulness.” Just abide in Him. Come to Him. Be committed to Him. Surrender to Him. Yield to Him. And God will make you faithful. God give us faithful men!

# Roll Call at the Cross

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: March 16, 1986**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 27**

*"Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children."*

MATTHEW 27:25

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Self-Righteousness Crucified Jesus
- II. Hypocrisy Crucified Jesus
- III. Cowardliness Crucified Jesus
- IV. Ignorance Crucified Jesus
- V. Hardness Crucified Jesus
- VI. Indifference Crucified Jesus
- VII. Skepticism and Cynicism Crucified Jesus

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take God's Word and turn to Matthew chapter 27? Just leave your Bibles open there and let me say a word before we look into that chapter. In a sense, we're going to deal with that entire chapter in these few moments. We have been selecting a verse here and a verse there. And, that chapter deals with what I call "the dirtiest deed ever done," and that deed was the crucifixion of the very Son of God. And, I believe the twenty-seventh chapter of the Gospel of Matthew is one that every Christian ought to read with frequency to emblazon into his heart and to etch upon his mind and soul and consciousness the agony that Jesus went through. But, I want to tell you, if you had the imagination of a poet, the mind of a philosopher, the hand of an artist, and the tongue of a great singer, then you could not imagine, describe, or depict the horror and tragedy that was enacted on that hill that we call Calvary, the place where Jesus, the Son of God and the Mighty Maker, died for man the creature's sin.

I want to use for a title for my message this morning "The Roll Call at the Cross" because I want us to see who crucified Jesus. Now, who did crucify Jesus? "Well," you say, "pastor, the Jews crucified Jesus." Well, let me remind you that His apostles were Jews. The disciples were Jews. "Well," you say, "the Romans crucified Jesus." Well, the Roman soldiers were carrying out orders. "Well," you say, "we crucified Jesus." Now

you're getting closer to the truth. The truth of the matter is that we all had a part in the crucifixion of Jesus. We sing that song: "Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?" And that's a good question to ask.

Dr. R. G. Lee went to Israel for the first time—to the Holy Land. He went to that place so many of us love to go, that place called Calvary. When he stood there, the person who was giving the lecture asked this question: he said, "Have any of you ever been here before?" And, Dr. Lee put up his hand. "Oh," he said, "when were you here before?" He said, "Two thousand years ago." He was there, and I was there. We were there because our sins crucified Jesus. Ours were the hands that slapped Him. Our spit was the spit that defiled His face. Our sins were the nails that nailed Him to that cross. Our hard hearts were the hammers that drove those nails.

Now, I want us to look into the twenty-seventh chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, and I want us to see not only *who*, but more specifically *what* crucified the Lord Jesus. And, as the roll is called at the cross, I want you to listen, I want you to pay attention, because if you listen carefully, you'll hear your name called. For we were there as Jesus was crucified.

## **I. Self-Righteousness Crucified Jesus**

Verses 1 and 2: "*When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death: And when they*"—that is, the chief priest and the elders—"had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor." (Matthew 27:1–2) Now, who were the elders and the scribes? These were the religious people and the self-righteous people who crucified Jesus. What crucified Jesus? Self-righteousness crucified the Son of God. Religion crucified the Son of God. Now, when the Bible says "the scribes, the chief priests, the elders, the Pharisees," these people who, as NewSong says, "pushed Jesus, hounded Jesus, crowded Jesus to the cross," I want to remind you they were very religious and, outwardly, very moral.

Now, what would a church full of Pharisees be like? Have you ever thought about that? What if every member of Bellevue Baptist Church—all sixteen thousand members of our church—were Pharisees? What would our church be like? Well, I'll tell you one thing: you couldn't get them in the building. They'd be here every Sunday, and the building would be packed. Even on Wednesday night there would be an overflow crowd. I'll tell you something else: you wouldn't have to plead for workers. You'd have a church full of workers, and they would be as busy as they could be. I'll tell you something else: if you had a church full of Pharisees, the treasury of this church would be running over with money, because they would all tithe. Do you know how careful they were to tithe? Why, friend, they tithed mint. Any of you ladies have a mint plant outside your door?



You put that mint in your iced tea, and it tastes good, doesn't it? They would tithe the mint, and they would count the leaves: "one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten—and that one goes to God." They would count the leaves on the mint plant. That's how particular they were. You talk about religion! Why, folks, they wouldn't even eat an egg laid on Saturday. If they got a tack in their shoe, they'd pull it out, lest they be accused of carrying a burden on the Sabbath. If they were bitten by a mosquito, they would not slap that mosquito on Saturday, lest they be accused of hunting on the Sabbath. What would a church full of Pharisees be like? They would all attend, they would all give, they would all serve, they would all die and they would all go to hell. I mean, they were religious. But, Jesus said, *"How can ye escape the damnation of hell?"* (Matthew 23:33) Pharisees—it was a religious crowd that crucified Jesus. People talk about getting religion, but I hope you get more than that. Religion never saved anybody.

*Most of the people in America don't need religion. They need to turn from religion to Jesus Christ.* There are a lot of people in this auditorium and in every auditorium who don't think they need to be saved. They hear this Baptist preacher stand up and preach, and they think that the gospel is for the thief. They think the gospel is for the murderer. They think the gospel is for the pervert. They think the gospel is for the drunkard. But, they don't think the gospel is for them because, number one, they are religious and, number two, they're moral. But, I want to tell you, it was a religious and moral crowd that crucified the Lord Jesus, and self-righteousness is a cardinal sin against a holy God. Jesus said, *"Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."* (Matthew 5:20) Self-righteousness crucified Jesus, and if you think that you're going to slip into heaven without being born again, then you're grossly ignorant of two things: number one, you don't know how holy God is; and number two, you don't know how sinful your heart is. Jesus told a self-righteous Pharisee, Nicodemus, *"[You] must be born again."* (John 3:7)

## **II. Hypocrisy Crucified Jesus**

Self-righteousness crucified Jesus, but for that sin Jesus died. I'll tell you what else crucified the Lord Jesus: hypocrisy crucified the Lord Jesus. Look, if you will also now, in verse 3: *"Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself"*—now, this is not repentance towards God; it is remorse. He—*"repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury*

*strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day.” (Matthew 27:3–8)*

Judas was one of those there in the crowd of the cross. Judas was one of those who hounded Jesus to the cross. Judas was one of the twelve disciples, and he was a hypocrite—there’s no doubt about it. Judas, while he pretended to be a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, had a heart that was filled with covetousness. The Bible tells us that he was covetous. The Bible tells us that he was a thief. And yet, he pretended to love the Lord Jesus. He betrayed Jesus with a kiss. And, that tells me something else: that everything hypocritical in the world has crucified the Lord Jesus. And, if this congregation is like any congregation, there are hypocrites in the church and hypocrites in this congregation. Sometimes people say, “Well, there are hypocrites in the Church.” I say, “Do tell. Do tell.” There always have been; there always will be.

The Bible clearly and plainly prophesies hypocrites. Paul said, “In the last days there will be those who will have a form of godliness, but they will deny the power thereof.” (1 Timothy 3:5) And, I want to tell you, friend, a hypocrite does not prove the Bible false; a hypocrite proves the Bible true. How? Because the Bible prophesies it. Now, if there are no hypocrites, then the Bible is not the Word of God. For the Bible clearly and plainly tells us that they shall come. And, a hypocrite does not disprove Christianity; it proves the validity of Christianity.

Why? Well, men only counterfeit that which is real. A hypocrite is a counterfeit Christian. Every counterfeit proves the worthwhileness and the validity of the thing that it counterfeits. Men don’t counterfeit gum wrappers. They counterfeit hundred-dollar bills, fifty-dollar bills. Why? Because it is the counterfeit that proves the worthwhileness and the validity of the real. Every counterfeit Christian you will see, on the face, is a confirmation of the worthwhileness, the validity, and the value of a genuine Christian. Don’t you let some hypocrite—don’t you let some Judas—keep you from the kingdom of heaven. If you let a hypocrite keep you out of heaven, then you’ll spend eternity in hell with that same hypocrite. And, if you can’t stand hypocrites, you’d better get saved. And, don’t let some hypocrite keep you from coming to know the Lord Jesus Christ.

And, the man who says he doesn’t want to be a Christian because of hypocrites, in my estimation, he himself is the biggest hypocrite of all. That’s like a man saying, “I won’t go to a doctor when I am sick because some doctors are quacks”; “I won’t go to a lawyer when I’m in trouble because some lawyers are shysters.” It’s like a man saying, “I’m going to throw away all of my money because some money is counterfeit.” He doesn’t do that in life. He doesn’t do that in ordinary situations. He himself is a dirty rotten hypocrite because he knows what he’s doing is not logical, and he knows it.

### III. Cowardliness Crucified Jesus

What crucified the Lord Jesus? Self-righteousness crucified the Lord Jesus, but for that sin Christ died. What crucified the Lord Jesus? Hypocrisy crucified the Lord Jesus, but for that sin Jesus died. I want mention a third thing that crucified the Lord Jesus. Look, if you will here, in chapter 27 and verse 2: *“And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.”* (Matthew 27:2) Then, look in verse 11: *“And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest.”* (Matthew 27:11) Then, look in verses 24 and following: *“When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children. Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.”* (Matthew 27:24–26)

Now, who was Pilate? Pilate was the Roman governor. Pilate was the one who had been given control and charge over that part of the Roman Empire. Pilate was a ladder-climbing, fence-straddling, pussyfooting politician, and Pilate was put in a dilemma. Pilate knew that Jesus Christ was just. He even tried to wash his hands of it, and said, *“I have nothing to do with the death of this just person: see ye to it.”* (Matthew 27:24) How did Pilate know that Jesus was just? Well, whatever else, Pilate was no fool. You don’t get to be a Roman governor by being a fool. Pilate knew humanity. Pilate knew the minds of men. He knew what motivated men. And, the Bible tells us in verse 18 of this chapter that Pilate *“knew that for envy they had delivered him.”* (Matthew 27:18)

Now, Pilate knew that Jesus was not really guilty. Yes, Pilate knew that the charges against Jesus were trumped up. He knew that it was for envy that they had delivered Him. Furthermore, not only did Pilate know this and the voice of reason tell this, but the voice of conscience had told him this. Pilate said, *“I find no fault in him.”* (John 19:4,6) That is, Pilate not only knew the wrong motives of those who brought Jesus, but Pilate also knew the character of Jesus Christ. He knew purity when he saw it. He knew honesty when he saw it. He knew justice when he saw it. There are enough people that stood before Pilate, the Roman governor. Pilate was no fool. He said, *“I find no fault in him.”* (John 19:4,6)

But, in verse 19, you’re going to find out that God spoke to him another way, also. Pilate’s wife said to him, *“Listen. Don’t have anything to do with the crucifixion of this man. I’ve suffered many things in a dream this night because of him.”* (Matthew 27:19) That is, God especially sent a loved one. God gave that loved one a message from heaven in a dream—a vision, or whatever it was—and she warned Pilate. There was a revelation from heaven. There was a reason in his heart and in his mind. There were

these things, dear friend, that spoke to Pilate. I want to ask you a question: Why didn't Pilate, therefore, come out on the side of Jesus Christ? I'll tell you why: Jesus Christ claimed to be a king. The scribes and the Pharisees knew they had Pilate in a tight place. They had him between a rock and a hard place. They said to Pilate, "Listen, we want Him crucified. If you don't agree to crucify Him, we're going to Caesar, and we're going to tell Caesar that you've lined up with another king. And whosoever calls himself a king is not a friend of Caesar." At that moment, Pilate had to make a decision. This is the reason why I call him a "fence-straddling politician"—because you know what motivated Pilate? You know what caused Pilate to act? It was his job. He had a soft job, and he didn't want to lose it. And, what buttered his bread determined his conduct. Are you listening to me? Pilate was faced with a decision, and furthermore, on top of that, the Bible says he was willing to please the crowd. He didn't want a tumult to be made. He didn't want there to be any uproar. He didn't want there to be any dishevel. He wanted to have it easy. And so, he is a moral coward. He's afraid of what others are going to think. Cowardliness crucified the Lord Jesus Christ.

I'm going to give an invitation at the end of this message. I'm going to ask some of you to get up out of your seat, and I'm going to ask you to come down here openly, publicly, unashamedly, and take a stand for the Lord Jesus Christ. And, at that moment, a battle is going to begin in the mind of some of you. The devil will whisper in your ear, "Don't you go down there and make a fool of yourself. After all, you've got to go back to your family, friends, and job. Don't stand up for the Lord Jesus Christ." But, I want to remind you, friend, that it was cowardliness that crucified the Lord Jesus Christ. And, Jesus said, "*Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.*" (Mark 8:38)

Dear friend, listen, there is no way that you can slip into heaven incognito. There is no way that you can be a moral coward and get into God's glorious heaven. Jesus clearly, plainly, unmistakably, definitely, and unerringly said, "If you deny me, I'll deny you. You confess me; I'll confess you." (Matthew 10:32–33) Poor Pilate! You have to pity Pilate. Pilate thought that he could remain neutral. He thought that he could wash his hands. He thought that he would not decide, but his indecision was the worse decision. Pilate, historians tells us, died a few years later in exile, a suicide. Those lily-white politician hands that he sought to wash white were now moldering in the grave. That gavel that he fondled in his hands was held by somebody else. Those robes adorned somebody else's back. And, I want to ask him, "Pilate, where are your friends now? Pilate, where's your salary now? Pilate, where's your popularity now? Pilate, where's your pain now that you're in the grave?" Jesus stood before Pilate, but I tell you, ladies and gentlemen, the time is coming when Pilate will stand before Jesus. And,

right now Jesus Christ is in your hands, mister. One of these days you're going to be in His hands.

#### **IV. Ignorance Crucified Jesus**

What crucified Jesus? Self-righteousness. What crucified Jesus? Hypocrisy. What crucified Jesus? Cowardliness crucified the Lord Jesus. I want to mention another thing that crucified the Lord Jesus. Look, if you will, in verse 20 of this chapter: *“But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.”* (Matthew 27:20) Now, who was Barabbas? Barabbas was a criminal. The Bible tells us that he was a thief, a rebel. That is, he was a murderer. He was a wicked, vile human being. Now, Pilate is trying to get off the tenterhook; and so, Pilate says, “Listen, I’ll make a deal with you. You’ve got Barabbas here, and you’ve got Jesus here. I’ll just release one of them, and you can choose.”

Now, the chief priests and the scribes began to work that crowd, and they began to say to that crowd, “Listen, when Pilate asks which one is to be released, now you say, ‘Crucify Jesus, and release Barabbas.’ Remember that it’s Barabbas that we want released, and it is Jesus that we want crucified.” Now, the chief priests and the scribes, they’re influential people. I mean, they’re educated people. They’re learned people, and they’re working the crowd, the rabble, those people out there, and they’re giving them the wrong information.

Now the time comes, and Pilate says, “Whither of the two shall I release unto you? Barabbas? What shall I do with Jesus who is called the Christ?” “Crucify Him!” (Matthew 27:21–22) You say, how could they do such a thing? They’ve been told to do it. The chief priests and the scribes had persuaded them to do it. “Well,” you say, “then they’re not to blame. They were ignorant.” Let me tell you something, friend: if they did not know, they should have known. They could have known, they would have known, had they looked to God.

Now, you listen to me. You will never ever come to the judgment bar of God and plead innocent because of ignorance. Ignorance crucified the Son of God—people who did not know, people who were led astray. Yes, it is true that those who deceive them will have the greater damnation. Yes, it is true, in this world of false prophets and Christ-deniers, that those who lead others astray will have the worst damnation. But, I want to tell you, dear friend, that spiritual ignorance is a terrible, horrible, and willful sin against God. Any man can know who wants to know. Jesus said, “If any man will come unto me I will in no wise cast him out.” (John 6:37) If you want to know the truth about Jesus Christ, He, my friend, will speak to you today. What crucified Jesus? Ignorance crucified the Lord Jesus.

## V. Hardness Crucified Jesus

Now, I want you to look again, if you will, in verse 27 of this same chapter: *“Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers.”* (Matthew 27:27) They stripped Him and put on Him a scarlet robe. And, when they had plaited a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand. And, they bowed the knee before Him, and mocked Him, saying, *“Hail, King of the Jews! And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him.”* (Mark 15:18–19) When the idea here is a reed, don’t get the idea of a piece of soft weed, or something like that. It literally is a bamboo club. They beat Him on the head. And, after that, they mocked Him. They took the robe off Him, and put His own raiment on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him.

Do you know what they did to Jesus? They blindfolded Jesus and played blind man’s bluff with Him. They got Him in a circle and spit in His face. And, they would slap Him. They would feed Him with their fist. And then, while He’s blindfolded, they shoved Him to another one, and He would strike Him. And then, they’d shove Him back to another one. And, as He’s stumbling there in the midst of them, they would say to Him, *“Hey, you’re a prophet. Tell us who hit you,”* and they’d hit Him. And, He reels back and forth. They reach out, and they take Him by the beard, and they snatch the beard from His face. Isaiah says they *“plucked off the hair.”* (Isaiah 50:6)

Can you imagine that? When they had finished with the Lord Jesus, beating and mutilating Him, Isaiah says you could not tell He was a human being. It was hard to tell whether He was animal or human. The pictures that we have in Living Pictures, Brother Jim, hanging on the cross, they’re kind. You would not want to see what Jesus looked like after that beating. And, after the blood is streaming down His face, His teeth are loosened, His face is just raw flesh where there used to be a beard. His eyes are swollen shut, and His head is lacerated with a crown of thorns. Why did they do that? Now, it is true that they were commanded to crucify Him, but why the rest of it? I’ll tell you why: they were cruel, hardhearted, and brutal people in whose hearts the milk of human kindness had curdled. They were insensitive, brutal, mean, vicious, and vile. They took joy and pleasure in inflicting pain. Hardness crucified Jesus, and cruelty crucified Jesus.

“Well,” you say, “pastor, there are none like that here today.” I hope not, but I have seen it; and it breaks my heart to see it. And, it’s even hard to admit it, folks: we live in a world of hardhearted people. And, I believe the child molesters, the dope pushers—I believe, dear friend, those whoremongers—I believe there are people today who have hearts so hard that they would enjoy crucifying the Son of God afresh today. These are just the opposite of the self-righteous. But, I want to tell you something: for that sin He died. I care not what sin you may have committed—if you’ll come to Jesus in

repentance and faith, He will forgive you. Hardness crucified the Son of God.

## VI. Indifference Crucified Jesus

But, wait a minute. What else crucified the Son of God? Look, if you will, please, now in verse 36, and look at it here: *“And sitting down they watched him there.”* (Matthew 27:36). Who is “they”? This is the crowd. This is the marching, milling multitude. These are not the ones in the judgment hall. These are not the ones who lacerated His back. These are not even the rabble that cried for His crucifixion, necessarily. These are the passersby. The Bible speaks of them: *“All they that pass by wag their heads at Him.”* (Matthew 27:39; Mark 15:29) And now, they’re sitting there, and they’re just watching Him; they’re looking at Him. Lamentations asks this question: *“Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?”* (Lamentations 1:12) You see, Jesus Christ was crucified outside the city gate on the Damascus road, a thoroughfare. It was a spectacle. They came to see it. After all, it was interesting, if not entertaining, that somebody is going to suffer capital punishment, the Galilean prophet. And so, they sit down, and they are watching Him, just watching Him. What crucified Jesus? Indifference crucified Jesus.

Now, they did not hold the hammer. They did not hold the lash. Sitting down, they watched Him there. They were spectators. They’re very much like some people who will come to church this morning and sit in a comfortable pew, and take a Bible, and follow the scripture, and take a hymnal and sing the song, and just behold the whole thing. You know, for so many people in America, coming to church is a spectator sport. I mean, there are a lot of you who somehow think that you’ve done God a favor by coming and sitting in an auditorium, listening to a preacher, and listening to a choir.

*“Sitting down they watched him there,”* (Matthew 27:36) and they got up and went on their way. Luke tells us that they *“smote their breasts.”* (Luke 23:48) Maybe you’ll get a tear in your eye when the choir sings something. But, I want to tell you, friend, it makes more than a pious gesture to save a soul. There was a crowd—indifferent, never took a stand. Jesus Christ said, *“He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.”* (Luke 11:23)

I want to read some words that were written, really, about another city, but I’m going to insert the name Memphis in this:

*When Jesus came to Golgotha, they hanged Him on a tree,  
They drove great nails through hands and feet, and made a Calvary;  
They crowned Him with a crown of thorns, red were His wounds and deep,  
For those were crude and cruel days, and human flesh was cheap.*

*When Jesus came to [Memphis], they simply passed Him by.  
They would not hurt a hair of Him, they only let Him die;  
For men had grown more tender, and they would not give Him pain,*

*They only just passed down the street, and left Him in the rain.  
Still Jesus cried, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do,"  
And still it rained the winter rain that drenched Him through and through;  
The crowds went home and left the streets without a soul to see,  
And Jesus crouched against a wall, and cried for Calvary.*

—G. STUDDERT-KENNEDY

Do you know what the writer of that poem was saying? That Jesus Christ had rather have you out and out against Him than to be so indifferent that you try to remain neutral, just indifferent. Jesus leaned against the wall and cried for Calvary. *"Sitting down they watched him there."* (Matthew 27:36) Are you going to be, mister, a man that will come into this service this morning, listen to this sermon, listen to this music, hear this preacher, and watch and behold, and go out and not be changed? Indifference crucified the Son of God.

## **VII. Skepticism and Cynicism Crucified Jesus**

One other thing I want to mention this morning. Look, if you will, in verses 39 and following: *"And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross."* (Matthew 27:39–40) Notice what they do: *"Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days"* (Matthew 27:40)—they misapplied His word. *"If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross"* (Matthew 27:40)—they minimized His death. Notice these people: *"Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel"—friend, just underscore that word if. That's the word that will send your soul to hell—"If he be the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth."* (Matthew 27:41–44)

Skepticism crucified Jesus. Cynicism, skepticism, crucified Jesus. These were the skeptics. "He says He's the Son of God. He claims to be a miracle worker. Then let Him come down from the cross. Let Him prove it. Do a miracle. Do something, and convince us. We want to see." And, Jesus did no miracle for that crowd. Friend, they were asking the wrong question anyway. They shouldn't say, "If you're the Son of God, come down from the cross." They should have gone and stood before that empty tomb and said, "If you're the Son of God, come out," amen? But, they were cynics. Do you know what a cynic is? *A cynic is somebody who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing.*

"Well," you say, "pastor, they can't help it. Are you trying to tell me that a man is a



sinner because he's a skeptic?" No, I'm telling you, mister, he's a skeptic because he's a sinner. I'm telling you that the problem is in his dirty, rotten heart. And, the Bible says, "[Beware]...lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief." (Hebrews 3:12) It never comes out of the head; it comes out of the heart. Skepticism, cynicism, crucified the Lord Jesus, but for that sin He died.

## Conclusion

Now, we've had a roll call at the cross, and if you've been honest, I think you'll have to agree that you crucified Jesus. I crucified Jesus. Our sins were the nails and our hard hearts the hammers that drove those nails. Self-righteousness crucified Jesus. Hypocrisy crucified Jesus. Cowardliness crucified Jesus. Ignorance crucified Jesus. Hardheartedness crucified Jesus. Indifference crucified Jesus. Skepticism and cynicism crucified Jesus. But, for those sins He died. I want you to look in verses 21 and following for just a moment: *"The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas. Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified."* (Matthew 27:21–22)

Imagine a Roman dungeon keeper. He walks down a long narrow corridor of the Roman jail with a flickering torch in his hand. He comes to a tightly barred door now because this is where a very important prisoner is. He unbolts the double locks. He pushes the door open and thrusts the torch inside. Back in the corner of that cell, like a quivering animal, is a man on a mat of straw. His face is the very mirror of evil. The guard says to him, "Barabbas, get up! Let's go!" Barabbas, who is a hard man, begins to weep. He begins to plead. And, he crouches further back in the corner. He says, "Please, no! I don't want to go!" And, the guard, with a look of disgust and a tone of sarcasm in his voice, says, "Barabbas, quit sniveling! Get up! You're not going to die! You're the luckiest man I've ever seen! I don't understand it, Barabbas, but if there was ever a man that deserved to die, it's you. But, there's a man named Jesus who is taking your place. Come here, Barabbas! I want to show you something." And, he takes Barabbas outside, and they look through a window. And, he says, "You see over there on that hill? You see over there on the place of a skull? Do you see, there, crosses: one, two, three? Barabbas, do you see the middle cross? Do you see it? Barabbas, take a good look at it because that's the one we made for you. You see the One on that cross? He's taking your place. He died as your substitute."

My friend, I want to tell you, He took the place of every man, woman, boy, and girl who ever lived—for you. Ignorance—for that sin He died. Hardheartedness—for that sin He died. Cowardliness—for that sin He died. Hypocrisy—for that sin He died. Skepticism—for that sin He died. And, *"though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as*

*white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” (Isaiah 1:18)*  
And, *your sin will be pardoned by Christ or punished in hell, but it will never be overlooked.*†

# Seven Attitudes That Crucified Christ

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: August 6, 2000**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 27:1**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Self-Righteousness Crucified Jesus
- II. Hypocrisy Crucified Jesus
- III. Cowardliness Crucified Jesus
- IV. Ignorance Crucified Jesus
- V. Hardheartedness Crucified Jesus
- VI. Indifference Crucified Jesus
- VII. Skepticism Crucified Jesus

Conclusion

## Introduction

Turn to the Gospel of Matthew 27. It's the first book in the New Testament—toward the end of that book, Matthew 27. Tonight, as we think about our Lord's Supper, we're going to think about the cross. We're going to think about the attitudes that were in the hearts and minds of people who nailed Jesus on that hellish machine that we call the cross. Matthew 27, verse 1, says, *"When the morning was come, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death"* (Matthew 27:1). And I want to say without stutter, stammer, apology, or equivocation, the dirtiest deed that was ever done was the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. And the greatest tragedy ever enacted was enacted upon that hill called Calvary. And yet that dirty deed and that tragedy was allowed, even planned, prophesied, by Almighty God for our redemption.

What a day that was when the Son of God—think of it, the very Son of God!—God the Son hung on the cross, when darkness veiled the glowing face of the sun, when demons howled in glee, when the earth quaked, shook, rocked and reeled! Jesus died upon that cross. As we come to the Lord's Table tonight, I want you to think one more time about Calvary. It's easy to become blasé about Calvary. It's easy to see the three crosses there on our church property, and think how beautiful they are, and fail to understand the

ignominious shame, the heartache, the utter despair, the blackness of midnight within the heart of the Son of God.

Consider the anticipation of the cross. Jesus was born in the shadow of the cross. Jesus knew that He had come to die. And even as Jesus was in Joseph's carpenter shop, every crossbeam in that carpenter's shop would remind Him of a rugged cross upon which He would die. If outside that carpenter's shop a rose happened to grow, every thorn on that rosebush would remind Him of that crown of thorns. Jesus lived in the shadow of the cross. A prophetic psalm speaks of Jesus with these words: *"I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up"* (Psalm 88:15).

People wish they knew the future. You ought to thank God that you don't know the future. Suppose you knew that in a year and a half you're grandson, your child, your wife, your husband, would be killed in an automobile accident—no ifs, ands, and buts about it—how would you live the next year and a half, anticipating that time? Jesus lived His life knowing that He would die upon the cross.

Consider the sufferings in Gethsemane. Few things move my heart like Gethsemane, where Jesus, the Son of God, actually pled with the Father, and said, *"Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me"* (Matthew 26:39). Don't get the idea that Calvary was a charade, that Jesus was a superman, that He swaggered to the cross. Does it offend you for me to tell you that Jesus shrank from the cross? He did not want to die. It was not the physical death, but it was Jesus taking my sin, your sin, our sin, upon Him and becoming sin Himself. So great was His suffering in Gethsemane that His sweat literally was drops of blood as the minute capillaries ruptured because of the great duress and stress on the body of our Lord Jesus Christ. He almost died prematurely before He ever got to the cross in Gethsemane. Thank God that He prayed, because He loved you that much, *"Father...not my will, but thine, be done"* (Luke 22:42).

Consider the indecencies that Jesus suffered there as they scourged the Lord Jesus Christ. Few men could walk away from a scourging. Do you wonder that He stumbled under the cross? They stripped Him. They stretched Him up until His back was smooth as silk. A psychopathic, barrel-chested lector, dungeon keeper, probably a volunteer for the task, because he enjoyed the pleasure of scourging those who were scourged; a whip like a cat o' nine tails—bits of bone, lead, and glass embedded in the thongs—wrapped around the body of Jesus. These were cruel and experienced men. They knew how to whip a man within inches of death, how to flay the skin from the ribs and the back without disemboweling the person who is being whipped. The shock, the loss of blood, the pain, was incredible.

Consider what they did to the Lord Jesus Christ as they put upon His head a crown of thorns, long spikes that pierced the nerves there in the temple area, a very sensitive area, then they beat that crown further down as they smote Him with clubs, battered His face. They actually, with their fists, played blind man's bluff with Him, blindfolded Him, shoved Him from one Roman soldier to another, who would hit Him with their fists in the face. Then they reached up and snatched the beard from His face. Isaiah tells us that His face was so marred that, rather than looking like a human being, He looked like some kind of an animal. You could not tell that His visage was that of a human (Isaiah 52:14). The artists have been kind that have painted Jesus on the cross. They stripped Him of His clothing. The pure One, the modest One, is hanging naked on a cross: no loincloth like we see in our depictions of the crucifixion; not crucified on a green hill far away but on a garbage heap outside Jerusalem. There the Son of God is stretched on that cross. Experienced hands mercilessly twist His arms out of joint. Those searing nails are put through His wrists and through His feet. They knew where to strike the median nerve. They knew where to send the most pain. And every nerve in those arms and in those feet became a pathway for pain to travel. And then Jesus is lifted up between heaven and earth. There with flies in the gaping wound, there in shock, there in dehydration, Jesus is suffering upon that cross.

But even deeper than those physical sufferings and that shame and mockery is the fact that Jesus suffered alone on that cross. His disciples had forsaken Him. The crowd was jeering Him, the demons were baying at Him like hounds from hell, but then God the Father had to turn His back upon God the Son. And Jesus had to cry out from that cross, "*My God, my God,*"—He doesn't call Him this time Father, but "*my God*"—"why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34). Why? Because He's now become the sin bearer, and God had to treat Him as He would treat us. And God would forsake us, so He must forsake His Son.

If there were ever a time when God would have been tempted to have been lenient, it would have been when His Son was upon that cross. But the Bible tells us, in Romans 8, that God "spared not His own Son, but offered Him up freely for us all" (Romans 8:32). Jesus baptized His soul in hell for us. Jesus, *on that* cross, suffered *in a finite period of time what we would suffer in an infinite period of time, because He, being infinite, suffered in a finite way what we, being finite, would suffer in an infinite way.* The sins of the world were distilled upon Jesus. The eternities were compressed upon Jesus.

Never take the cross lightly. Never be blasé about your redemption. Never cease to love Him. Never cease to praise Him. Never be ashamed of Him. Don't let anybody put you to shame about someone who loves you that much. Always be bold for your faith as you march under His bloodstained banner.

They put Him to death. But who crucified Jesus? “Well,” you say, “the Roman soldiers crucified Jesus.” Well, they drove the nails. You say, “Pilate crucified Jesus.” Well, he allowed them to do it. You say, “Well, the Jews crucified Jesus.” Well, they hounded Pilate to put Him to death. But the truth of the matter is that we all crucified Jesus. He died for our sins. And what we’re going to do tonight is we’re going to look at some attitudes that crucified Jesus, and find out that these attitudes, perhaps, are in our own hearts. The twenty-seventh chapter of the Gospel of Matthew tells of many who were there at the crucifixion. And as we look at those who crucified the Lord Jesus Christ, we’ll see ourselves. As we look at the roll call of the cross, and see who was there, I believe that you’ll find out that you were there when they crucified our Lord. I want to mention some attitudes that crucified Jesus.

## I. Self-Righteousness Crucified Jesus

For example, self-righteousness crucified Jesus. Look in verses 1 and 2: *“When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death: and when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor”* (Matthew 27:1–2). The chief priests, the elders—these were the religious leaders—scribes, Pharisees, priests, they crucified Jesus.

This world doesn’t need religion. Religion can be one of the cruelest things in the world. This world needs Jesus. There’s a difference. Christianity is a vital relationship with Jesus Christ. Have you ever thought about what a church full of Pharisees would be like? They’d all be here on Sunday. They would all tithe. They would all work. They would all go to hell.

Self-righteousness crucified the Lord Jesus. There may be some self-righteous people in this congregation tonight. You think you’re going to heaven, because you’re religious. May I tell you again, it was a religious crowd that crucified Jesus Christ—a self-righteous crowd. I’ve said it many times: *The worst form of badness is human goodness when human goodness becomes a substitute for the new birth.*

## II. Hypocrisy Crucified Jesus

Self-righteousness crucified Jesus. I’ll tell you what else crucified Jesus. Hypocrisy crucified Jesus. Continue to read: *“Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and bought again thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself”* (Matthew 27:3–5).

There’s no doubt about it: Judas was a first-class hypocrite. Have you ever heard people say that they don’t go to church because of hypocrisy? This morning, on the radio, I listened

to a story concerning someone who said they refused to go to church anymore because of hypocrites. Judas was a hypocrite, but there were eleven other disciples that were not hypocrites. There have always been hypocrites. There always will be. But I want you to know that *I'd rather spend a few years with some of the hypocrites in church than spend all eternity with all of the hypocrites in hell.* I'm not going to let any hypocrite keep me from Jesus Christ.

Judas was a covetous man. He loved silver more than he loved Jesus. He sold Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. Verse 5 tells us that his sin destroyed him. *"He cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself."* That's only part of the story. Acts 1 tells the rest of the story: *"Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out"* (Acts 1:18). How do you put all of that together? He hanged himself, and then he fell headlong, and his bowels gushed out.

What happened is that, I believe, that Judas, in anguish of soul and despair of mind, understanding what he had done, in remorse, and yet not in repentance, as he cast that filthy money back into the temple, went out and found some scraggly limb, perhaps hanging over a cliff, and with trembling fingers formed a hangman's noose, put that noose around his neck to try to get away from the torment, and stepped over that precipice, and stepped from the hell within him to the hell beyond him, and he hung himself. And that body is there hanging, dangling from that limb, one day, two days, three days, longer. The skin begins to crack. The gases build up. He's like an overripe melon. After a while somebody comes and sees that disgusting thing hanging from the tree and with a sword cuts it down. He falls down headlong, hits the ground, and splits open, and his bowels gush out.

You say, "Pastor, that's not a pretty scene." No, I don't mean for it to be pretty. Sin is not pretty. Judas, where are your friends now? Judas, where's your silver now? Judas, where's your inordinate ambition now? Judas was a hypocrite. Maybe there are some hypocrites here tonight. You know that you've never been saved. You know that your heart is not right with God. When are you going to stop playing the game? If you don't, you're going to join Judas in hell.

### **III. Cowardliness Crucified Jesus**

Self-righteousness crucified Jesus. Hypocrisy crucified Jesus. But let's continue the roll call. Cowardliness crucified Jesus. Look, if you will, in verse 11 now: *"And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest. And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered*

*nothing. Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?” (Matthew 27:11–13). And then skip on down to verse 24: “When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children. Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified” (Matthew 27:24–26).*

Now, why did Pilate do that? Well, the people had threatened Pilate. They said, “Pilate, if you don’t allow us to crucify Jesus, we’re going to report to Caesar that you have cozied up to a man who claims to be king, and there is no king but Caesar.” And Pilate was a fence-straddling politician. Whatever buttered his bread determined his conduct. He had a soft job, a cushy job, and he was afraid of losing it.

Very frankly, it was fear, it was cowardliness, that caused him to crucify the Lord Jesus. He pretended to be neutral, but you can’t be neutral about Jesus. You can’t just say, “*I find no fault in him*” (John 19:4, 6). If you find no fault in Him, and don’t follow Him, you are doubly at fault. You cannot be neutral to Jesus. *You don’t tip the hat; you bow the knee to the Lord* Jesus. Indecision is the worst decision of all.

Pilate tried to keep his job, but history tells us that he soon lost his job. That gavel that he fondled was in another hand. Those white hands that he’d washed, that fondled that gavel, were clasped in death. The truth of the matter is he most likely died a suicide. That’s what tradition tells us. But it was fearfulness—a fear of losing his position, a fear of what it might cost him—that helped Pilate to crucify the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Revelation 21, verse 8, the Bible tells us of those that will be in hell. And do you know what leads the list? The fearful. “*But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death*” (Revelation 21:8). What a list! What a litany of people! But fear is number one.

There are some of you tonight, I will give an invitation and ask you to come forward and confess and acknowledge Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, but fear—fear of public opinion, fear of the crowd, fear of the loss of face, fear of whatever—will keep you from acknowledging Jesus Christ. Are you a coward? Are you ashamed of Him? Are you trying to keep some position? Some aura of respectability? Cowardliness crucified Jesus. It sent Pilate to hell. It will send you to hell.



#### **IV. Ignorance Crucified Jesus**

I'll tell you what else crucified Jesus: Ignorance crucified Jesus. Look in verse 20: *"But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask for Barabbas, and destroy Jesus"* (Matthew 27:20). Now, here's the multitude, the *hoi polloi*, the rank, the file: they screamed for the blood of Jesus. They pled for the release of Barabbas. Ask them, "Why are you doing this?" "I don't know. Our leaders say we ought to. The chief priests and the elders, they say we ought to. If they say we ought to, then we ought to." That is, out of sheer ignorance. They conformed to public opinion. They conformed to the crowd.

I think, perhaps, the biggest religion in America today is the cult of conformity. You say, "Well, Pastor Rogers, you don't hold them guilty for being ignorant, do you?" Of course I do! Ignorance is not innocence. A person does not know that he still is not innocent, because God is ready to reveal Himself to any hungry heart. And so don't let your ignorance of the fact, to say, "Well, I don't understand it," lead you to think, therefore, that you are excused. If you want to know God, you can know God.

I was witnessing last week to a woman as we were on a train—a precious, young, black woman—and she said, "Well, how can I know these things are true?" And I gave her John 7:16–17, where Jesus said, *"My doctrine is not mine, but his who sent me. If any man will to do his will,"*—that is, God's will—*"he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."* These people did not know, but they should have known.

#### **V. Hardheartedness Crucified Jesus**

What else crucified Jesus? Hardheartedness crucified Jesus. Go down to verse 27 and look at it: *"Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him"* (Matthew 27:27–31).

These soldiers are actually making sport of Jesus. They are brutalizing Jesus. They actually played a game with Him called the game of the kings. You go to Jerusalem, you can go now and see those pavement stones in Pilate's courtyard. Actually the game is there on the floor where they've chiseled out in the floor the part of the game where they play with the prisoners and they taunt them. These were hardhearted men.

Can you hear the story of the cross, and it not move your heart? Can you sit in a building like this, and hear the description that this preacher, or any other preacher, would give of

Jesus dying in agony and blood, and not be moved? Then you're guilty of the crucifixion of Jesus. Hardheartedness. Our sins were the nails that put Him on the cross, and our hard hearts are the hammers that drove those nails. I beg you in the name of Jesus, don't play games in the light of Calvary. Don't make light of the cross. Hardheartedness crucified Jesus.

## **VI. Indifference Crucified Jesus**

I'll tell you another attitude that crucified Jesus—and it was indifference. Look in verse 36. The Bible says, in verse 36, *“And sitting down they watched him there”* (Matthew 27:36). Now he's talking here about the general crowd. They see Him. They sit down. They watch Him there. They're not fighting Jesus. They didn't hold the hammer. They did not supply the nails. They did not spit on Him. They just simply watched Him. They were impressed. The Bible says they even smote their breast (Luke 23:48). But it takes more than a pious gesture to save a soul. They may even have shed a sentimental tear. But they never lined up with the Lord Jesus.

I believe there are more like this than any other group: semi-indifferent. You sing the songs. You sing “Amazing Grace.” You listen to the preaching. You may say, *“Hmm, hmm, hmm,”* but you never come out for Jesus Christ, never stand up for Jesus Christ. Maybe you're impressed. You watch, but you truly, ultimately, are indifferent.

Somebody wrote a poem, and it moved my heart the first time I heard it; still does today. Here's what it says:

*When Jesus came to Golgotha, they hanged Him on a tree  
They drove great nails through His hands and feet, and made a Calvary.  
They crowned Him with a crown of thorns, red were His wounds and deep,  
For those were crude and cruel days, and human flesh was cheap.*

*When Jesus came to Birmingham, they simply passed Him by.  
They would not hurt a hair of Him, they only let Him die;  
For men had grown more tender, and they would not give Him pain,  
They only just passed down the street, and left Him in the rain.*

*Still Jesus cried, “Forgive them, for they know not what they do,”  
And still it rained the winter rain that drenched Him through and through;  
The crowds went home and left the streets without a soul to see,  
And Jesus crouched against a wall, and cried for Calvary.*

—G. A. STUDDERT-KENNEDY

Jesus had rather have you out and out against Him than to be indifferent, to ignore Him.

## **VII. Skepticism Crucified Jesus**

Last of all, I want to say there's another attitude that crucified Jesus—and it is skepticism that crucified Him. Look on down in verse 39: *“And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth”* (Matthew 27:39–44).

This is skepticism. And skepticism today is crucifying Jesus. They misquoted His words, *“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up”* (John 2:19). He was talking about the temple of His body. They mocked His deity: *“If thou be the Son of God...”* They minimized His death: *“Save thyself”*—not coming to grips with the fact that He had come to die.

We live in an age of cynicism and skepticism. Somebody said, “A cynic is somebody who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing.” Skepticism crucified the Lord Jesus. Listen to me. Men are not sinners because they're skeptics; they're skeptics because they're sinners. Unbelief never comes out of the head; it comes out of the heart.

## **Conclusion**

Now these are attitudes that crucified the Lord Jesus Christ. They are all right here in this chapter. And I think many of us would understand that perhaps some of those attitudes are in our own heart: skepticism, hypocrisy, cowardliness, hardness of heart, self-righteousness, whatever it may be. When we come to the Lord's Table tonight, let's ask ourselves, “Are we willing to crucify the Son of God afresh tonight? Are we willing to do that?”

Now the Bible says, when we come to the Lord's Table, we're to examine our hearts (1 Corinthians 11:28). That doesn't mean that we're to see whether or not we're worthy to come. I could tell you, beyond any stutter, stammer, or equivocation, that we're not worthy. None is worthy. We come by grace—by grace. But the Bible says if we take this supper unworthily—it's an adverb—in the wrong manner, we're guilty of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus (1 Corinthians 11:27). That means that we have reenacted Calvary. We're guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord Jesus.

So we're going to take some time. We're going to look and see if any of these attitudes are in our own hearts, and then we're going to deal with them. We're going to understand what the Scripture says: *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9). And then we're going to enjoy a meal with a friend whose name is Jesus.

# Guilty of Love in the First Degree

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: July 18, 1976**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 27:22**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Life's Great Question
    - A. It's a Pertinent Question
    - B. It's a Personal Question
    - C. It's a Pressing Question
  - II. Pilate's Privileges
    - A. He Was Confronted with Jesus
    - B. He Was Convicted Concerning Jesus
      1. The Voice of Conscience
      2. The Voice of a Loved One
      3. The Voice of Jesus Christ Himself
  - III. Pilate's Pressures
    - A. The Pressure of Public Opinion and Popularity
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  - IV. Pilate's Perversity
    - A. He Tried to Ignore Jesus
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    - D. He Tried to Get a Diversion
  - V. Pilate's Pronouncement and Protest
- Conclusion

## Introduction

All right. Take your Bibles, please, if you will, and turn to Matthew chapter 27, verse 22. I want to speak to you this morning on this subject: "Guilty of Love in the First Degree." I heard a gospel song, and I think that was a line, or the title—I don't know. I couldn't tell you anything about the song or its melody, but I could never get that thought out of my mind: Jesus Christ was adjudicated guilty of love in the first degree.

## I. Life's Great Question

Notice, if you will, in Matthew chapter 27, and verse 22, life's great question: *"Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus, who is called Christ? They all say unto*

him, *Let him be crucified*" (Matthew 27:22).

#### A. **It's a Pertinent Question**

A greater question could never be asked: "What shall I do with Jesus?" We're not talking about another priest, another politician, another preacher, or another performer. We're talking about Jesus, the Son of God. Answer this question right, and all is right. Answer this question wrong, friend, and all is wrong.

#### B. **It's a Personal Question**

This question is a pertinent question, for it is about Jesus. This question is also a personal question: "What shall I do?" Now, I know there are some who would like to answer that question for others and others who would like to have someone answer it for them. But, the question is not, "Lord, what wilt Thou have others to do?" Or, not, "Lord, what will others have me to do?" But, "Lord, what shall I do with You?" And, "What do You want me to do for You?" It's a personal question.

#### C. **It's a Pressing Question**

And, not only is it a pertinent question—it's about Jesus—and a personal question, but, my dear friend, it is a pressing question. It's a question I'm going to put before you, right now. And, it's a question that I'm going to demand that you answer before you leave.

And, by the way, you're going to make a decision concerning Jesus before you leave, if you've not already done so. You'll make a decision. Everybody will make a decision. You say, "Not me, Brother Rogers. You won't get me to decide." Well, you just decided not to decide, and that was your decision. You see, everybody's going to make a decision. And, Jesus said: "*He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad*" (Matthew 12:30). And, you'll leave this auditorium, this morning, having made some kind of decision, if you've not already received Christ. You'll either say "yes" or "no." You'll walk under the blood, or you'll walk out over the blood; but, you will be faced, in this message, with Jesus Christ.

Because, you see, in this strange murder trial—and, by the way, it was a strange murder trial, because the murder had not yet taken place—first, they judged Jesus, and then, they murdered Him. In this strange murder trial, God so arranged it that not only was Jesus on trial before Pontius Pilate, but the Lord arranged it so that Pilate was on Scripture passage, you see here that God has given us, in the passage of Scripture that we're going to study, a wonderful lesson. Just as Jesus stood before Pilate, Jesus now stands before you. And, as Jesus was on trial before Pilate, Jesus is on trial before you.

But, not only that—just as Pilate will one day be in Jesus' hands, you, too, will one

day be in Jesus' hands. And, just as Jesus was on trial, we're going to be on trial before the Lord Jesus Christ. The Scripture that I gave to you is a question that Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, asked: "What shall I do with Jesus, who is called the Christ?"

Now, there are three or four things I want you to see, this morning, as we look at this wonderful passage of Scripture. And, by the way, we'll not simply stay in the Gospel of Matthew, but we'll look in all of the Gospels concerning the trial of Jesus Christ.

## **II. Pilate's Privileges**

The first thing I want you to notice are the privileges that Pilate had—the wonderful, glorious privileges that Pilate had.

### **A. He Was Confronted with Jesus**

Pilate was confronted with Jesus Christ. It is not as though Pilate had never heard of Jesus Christ. Pilate came face-to-face with Jesus Christ. And, I suppose, the most uncomfortable fact that Pilate had ever faced was Jesus Christ. And, you, like Pilate, are going to be brought face-to-face, one more time, with Jesus Christ.

Now, when Pilate was brought face-to-face with Jesus Christ, he had to answer the question: "What am I going to do with Jesus?" He had Jesus on his hands. Jesus was inescapable. Jesus was inevitable. Jesus was unavoidable. Pilate had Jesus on his hands. And, the question that came to Pilate is: "What am I going to do with Jesus?"

### **B. He Was Convicted Concerning Jesus**

But, I want you to notice the privileges that Pilate had concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, because not only was he confronted with Jesus, he was also convicted concerning Jesus. There were strong voices that spoke to Pontius Pilate concerning Jesus Christ. And, I want you to notice some of the voices that spoke to Pilate.

#### **1. The Voice of Conscience**

First of all, there was the voice of conscience. Look in Matthew chapter 27 and verse 18. We're talking about the voice of conscience. And, the Bible says (concerning Pilate): "*For he knew that for envy they had delivered him*" (Matthew 27:18). Now, Pilate was no fool. A man doesn't get to be the procurator, the governor, of a province, under Rome, unless he had brains. Pilate was an understanding man. He was a thinking man. He was no fool. Pilate knew that Jesus Christ was on trial for trumped up charges. And, the Bible says there were no *ifs*, *ands*, or *buts*—no *maybes* about it. Pilate knew the reason that the Jews wanted Jesus Christ crucified. (I'm talking about the Jewish religious leaders when I say *the Jews*.) "*He knew that for envy*"—because they were envious—"*they had delivered Jesus Christ*" (Matthew 27:18). He had heard every accusation; he had listened to every witness, and his conscience thundered in his soul. Pilate heard the

voice of conscience.

Pilate knew that every accusation against Jesus Christ was false. And, I tell you, this morning, if you will listen to what your conscience tells you—if you will listen to what your reason tells you—you will have to admit that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. For, Christ is that *“Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world”* (John 1:9). And, any man who will listen to the inner light that God has given him will say that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

## **2. The Voice of a Loved One**

But, not only did he have the voice of reason and the voice of conscience, there was also the voice of a loved one. Pilate’s own wife had spoken to him. Look in Matthew chapter 27 and verse 19: *“When he was seated on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that righteous man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him”* (Matthew 27:19).

Now, not only did God speak to Pilate’s reason, and not only did God speak to Pilate’s conscience, but He also spoke to Pilate’s wife. And, Pilate’s wife spoke to him. You see, God was so good that He sent a messenger. He sent someone—someone that Pilate loved and someone that Pilate trusted—to say, “Be careful. Don’t you be guilty of harming this One called ‘Jesus.’ He is a righteous man. He is a just man.” *“Have thou nothing to do with that righteous man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him”* (Matthew 27:19). And, God has put the prayers and the solemn entreaties of loved ones on your path to blockade your road to Hell.

## **3. The Voice of Jesus Christ Himself**

But now, listen: Pilate heard the voice of conscience. He knew that Jesus was the Son of God. He heard the voice of reason. He knew men. He heard the voice of a loved one. But, there was another voice that spoke to Pilate that day, and it was the voice of Jesus Christ Himself.

Leave Matthew, and go to the Gospel of John with me, for a moment, and look in John chapter 18, and begin in verse 35—John 18, and verse 35: *“Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?”*—now, Pilate, like a good judge, is trying to determine what the charges are against the Lord Jesus Christ—*“what hast thou done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king”*—now, notice this clear declaration—*“To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the*



*truth heareth my voice*" (John 18:35–37).

Jesus Christ gave Pilate a clear declaration. It seems that Pilate asked an honest question. And, you'll find out something about the Lord Jesus Christ: Anytime anybody asked Jesus Christ a trick question, they never got a straight answer from Jesus. When they would try to trap Him, Jesus answered a question with a question. But now, Pilate has asked Jesus a straightforward question: "What have you done? What are the charges against You? Are You a king?" (John 18:35). And, Jesus gives a clear, bold declaration to Pontius Pilate. Pontius Pilate was not without a witness. Pontius Pilate had been spoken to. What privileges he had!

Listen: There was the voice of conscience. There was the voice of reason. There was the voice of a loved one. And, there was the voice of Deity Itself. Jesus Christ spoke to Pontius Pilate. And, Pilate was convicted. I believe, with all of my heart and all of my soul, that Pilate was convicted that Jesus was the Christ.

Now, Jesus is speaking to every one of you, today. And, as I read this Word to you, and as I read the words of Jesus to Pilate, they're just as fresh and just as real to you, as though Jesus Christ were standing in this pulpit, this morning. And, you—every one of you—have heard the voice of conscience. You've heard the voice of reason. You've heard the voice of loved ones. And, you've heard the voice of the Word of God itself.

Pilate had some wonderful privileges; but he had no more privileges than everybody who is sitting in this auditorium, or those of you, dear friend, who are listening to me this morning on television.

### **III. Pilate's Pressures**

But, not only did he have some privileges—listen—Pilate had some pressures. Because, the devil doesn't give up anybody or anything without a fight. And, I want you to notice the pressures that were on Pilate. Because, Pilate struggled to make a decision. And, why was it that Pilate would not adjudicate Jesus Christ innocent? Why was it that he would not do as his wife said and have nothing to do with that righteous man, so far as judging Him?

What were the pressures that were brought to bear on Pilate's soul? May I tell you that I believe that Pilate is so representative of all mankind and that the same pressures that were brought to bear on him are the universal pressures that are brought to bear on every man, when he tries to answer this question: "What must I do with Jesus, who is called the Christ?"

#### **A. The Pressure of Public Opinion and Popularity**

The first pressure that Pilate felt was this: It was the pressure of public opinion and

popularity. Turn to the Gospel of Mark, for a moment. And, we're going to be in all the Gospels, so lick your fingers. And, look, if you will please, in Mark chapter 15 and verse 15; the Bible says: *"And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified"* (Mark 15:15). You just underscore that phrase: *"willing to content the people"* (Mark 15:15). He had to choose between the crowd and Jesus Christ. He had to choose between the pressures of public opinion, popularity, and Jesus Christ. And so, the Bible says, he chose the crowd, and he crucified Jesus Christ (Mark 15:15).

There are some of you high schoolers that, if you stood for Jesus Christ, you know it would go wrong with the crowd. There are some of you businessmen—you run with a dirty-talking, hard-drinking, double-dealing crowd. And, you know that if you took a stand for Jesus Christ, you know that you'd fall out of favor with that crowd. And, you know there's a certain crowd that wants you to conform, that presses you in. And, the same pressure that Pilate felt, so long ago, you're still feeling, this very moment.

## **B. The Pressure of Possessions**

Now, secondly, not only did Pilate feel the pressure of public opinion and popularity, but the second pressure—and it was very real on him—was the possessions that he had. The pressure of possession, and position, and pleasure. Notice in John 19, verse 12. Turn to John 19, verse 12. The Bible says, in John chapter 19 and verse 12: *"And from then on Pilate sought to release him."* That is, Pilate really wanted to let Jesus go. He really did not want Jesus to be crucified. *"From then on Pilate sought to release him; but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend; whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar"* (John 19:12).

Now, Jesus had said that He was a king but His kingdom was not of this world (John 18:36). But, the Jews said to Pilate, "Now Pilate, Caesar is the one who runs everything around here. And, if you let Jesus Christ go unpunished, we're going straight to Caesar, and we're going to report that you have become the friend of another king. And, everybody knows there is but one king, and his name is Caesar." And, of course, it didn't take Pilate long to figure out what would happen. If word got back to Caesar that Pilate had made friends with a man who claimed to be a king, then Pilate would lose his job.

Now, I want you to listen very carefully. Do you see what determined Pilate's conduct? You see, he wanted to release Jesus, but there was a blackmail—there was a threat—hanging over his head. Whatever buttered Pilate's bread determined his conduct. You see, he had a position; he had certain pleasures; and he had certain possessions that he didn't want to lose.

Now, notice how he's being squeezed into a mold. He's been spoken to—there's the voice of conscience; there's the voice of reason; there's the voice of a loved one; and there's the voice of Deity. The Holy Spirit is thundering in his heart, in his mind, and in his soul. He's really convinced, concerning Jesus Christ. There are the privileges. But now, there are the pressures. And, the pressures are getting hard. He wants to please the people. Everybody likes to be liked. And, he wants to please his superior. He wants to keep what he has. He doesn't want to put anything in jeopardy.

You say, "Well, what does that have to do with me? I don't have any king over me. I'm not going to lose my job." No, but you'd be surprised how many... And, some of you may lose your job. Some of you may be working in places you have no business working. And, if you take a stand with Jesus Christ, that might be the end of that job.

But, you know why some men won't give their hearts to Jesus? Let's be frank. Have you ever heard anybody say, "All they want down there, at that church, is money?" Have you ever heard anybody say anything like that? "Money! Money! Money!" The truth of the matter is, I don't preach enough about money. God is convicting me about that, so you can get ready. I don't preach enough about money, because I've got to preach the whole counsel of God, and the Bible has a lot to say about money.

But, did you know that there are some men, who are so mean and so lowdown, that they're afraid if they gave their heart to Jesus Christ it might affect their pocketbook? That's the truth. They think that if they gave their heart to Jesus Christ it might affect their Sunday mornings, when they want to golf, and fish, and drink *embalming fluid* by the six-pack. And, they just have an idea that Jesus would, somehow, take away from them, rather than adding to them. And, there is a pressure—a tremendous pressure—of position, and possessions, that keep some men from coming to Jesus Christ and some women from coming to Jesus Christ.

### **C. The Pressure of Pride and Power**

But, not only was there the pressure of public opinions and popularity, and not only was there the pressure of possessions and position, but there was a third pressure on Pilate, and a very real pressure that people are still feeling, in this day and this age. And, it was something that Pilate probably was not even aware of. But, it was the pressure of pride—the pressure of pride and of power.

Look, go back, again, to John chapter 19, and begin reading in verse 8. And, listen to Pilate, as he talks with Jesus: "*When Pilate, therefore, heard that saying, he was the more afraid*"—now, notice Pilate is really under conviction. His conscience is thundering in his soul. He was more afraid. And now, notice in verse 9—"*And he went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, From where art thou? But Jesus gave him no*

answer” (John 19:8–9). Isn’t that interesting? Before, Jesus gave him a straightforward answer. He asked Jesus a question, and Jesus answered him. But, Pilate didn’t live up to the light that he had. Pilate let these other pressures work on him. And now, he asks Jesus a question. Not an answer—not a word—he got from Jesus Christ.

Doesn’t Jesus want him to know? Listen, my dear friend. Jesus wants anybody to know, and anybody who comes with an honest question is going to get an honest answer. But, notice: He *“went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, From where art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer”* (John 19:9).

Now, I want you to notice, as this man reeks with pride. Look in verse 10. Notice Pilate. Notice him, as he lets his chin jut out. Notice his arrogance. Notice his swagger: *“Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me?”*—“Ha, why,” he’s saying, “don’t you realize whom you are talking to? Don’t you know who I am?”—*“Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above; therefore, he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin. And from then on Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out”* (John 19:19–12).

But, I want you to notice Pilate’s attitude. I want you to notice how arrogant he is. Notice as he swaggers. Notice as he says, “Don’t you know whom you are talking to? Don’t you know what a big man I am? Don’t you know what an important man I am? I have the power to release you.” Jesus said, “The only power you have is the power I let you have” (John 19:11).

Now, this morning, did you know that you have power to crown or crucify Jesus? Did you know that you have the power to say “yes” or “no”? But, don’t let that go to your head. You see, the only power that you have is the power He lets you have. You can, when the invitation is given, say, “I’m the captain of my faith. I’m the one who is running the show around here. Adrian Rogers, the Bible, Jesus Christ, or nobody else is going to tell me what to do.” And, you draw yourself up in your arrogance and sulk right out of this place to your doom, saying, “I’m the one who is running my life.” Me! Big me! That was Pilate’s problem!

Pilate had three pressures—tremendous pressures—that were squeezing him: public opinion, position, and pride. And, many a man has been escorted to Hell by these three enemies. And, pride, most of all, has escorted many to Hell, *bound in the cold steel chains of ego that have been forged on the anvil of a hard heart.*

#### **IV. Pilate’s Perversity**

Now, the third thing I want you to notice: Not only do I want you to see his privileges,

and not only do I want you to see his pressures, but I want you to see his perversity. I want you to see what Pilate tried to do. I want you to see how Pilate tried to evade the issue. I want you to see all of the cunning things that Pilate did to keep from saying “yes” to Jesus Christ.

### **A. He Tried to Ignore Jesus**

You see, Pilate had Jesus on his hands. He had to do something. As I say, you’re going to have to do something with Jesus. Pilate had the inescapable, unavoidable, inevitable Jesus on his hands. And so, I want you to notice three or four things that he tried to do. The first thing that he tried to do was simply to ignore Jesus Christ—just to ignore Him, just to hope that He wouldn’t have to answer the question at all. Look in John chapter 18 and verse 31—very interesting—John chapter 18, verse 31. Here’s what Pilate said, when the Jews brought Jesus to him: He said: *“Take ye him, and judge him according to your law”* (John 18:31). Now, what was he saying, in effect? In effect, he was saying, “Look, don’t bother me with this. You handle that. I’ve got more important things to do.” And, Pilate thought that maybe he could just simply ignore the whole issue.

Maybe you think, “Now look, Adrian Rogers, you just do whatever you want with Jesus, and I’ll do whatever I want with Jesus. Just leave me alone. You just, you do what you want with Him, but you leave me alone. But, friend, I’m presenting Jesus Christ to you. And, as Pilate had Jesus on his hands, you have Jesus on your hands. And, you may think that you have more important things to do, but, one of these days, those things that you think are so important won’t be so important. You may not walk down this aisle, but they’ll roll you down this one or another one at the funeral home, somewhere. And, some preacher, or somebody else, will stand over you and say a few words. And, it won’t matter, then, to you how much money you have in the bank. It really won’t even matter to you whether the part in your hair is straight, dear friend. Somebody else will comb it for you.

But, I tell you what will matter: What you’ve done with Jesus Christ is going to matter, then. Pilate said, “You take Him; you judge Him according to your own law.” So, first of all, Pilate just thought maybe he could ignore Jesus. But, that didn’t work, because the Jews said, “We want the death sentence, and we don’t have the right to execute the death sentence.” And, by the way, this morning, friend, you’re going to execute the death sentence, if you’re not careful. You’re going to crown or crucify Jesus.

### **B. He Tried to Shift the Decision**

All right. Secondly, not only did Pilate try to ignore Jesus, but he also tried to shift the

decision to somebody else. He tried to get somebody else to make the decision. Look in Luke chapter 23, for a moment—Luke chapter 23 and verse 6: *“When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilaean. And as soon as he knew that he belonged to Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time. And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad; for he was desirous to see him for a long time, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him. Then he questioned him in many words; but he answered him nothing. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him. And Herod, with his men of war, treated him with contempt, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe”*—and, notice verse 11—*“and sent him again to Pilate”* (Luke 23:6–11).

You see, Pilate was like a man that had a boomerang, and bought a new one, and killed himself trying to throw the old one away. He just, he couldn’t get rid of Jesus. He said, “Well, now, if Herod is ruling things up in Galilee, and Herod’s in town, send Him over to Herod. Let Herod judge Him. Let somebody else make this decision. I don’t want to make this decision.” Pilate sent Him to Herod, the king of Galilee, and Herod sent Him back.

You see, here is a decision that God has arranged so that it cannot be placed on the shoulders of anyone else. Your wife cannot make it for you. Your parents cannot make it for you. Your pastor cannot make it for you. Sin is a personal matter, and so is salvation. There are some of you who say, “Well, the little wife takes care of the religion in our home.” Well, then, the little wife is going to Heaven, and you’re going to Hell. Nobody can make this decision for you.

### **C. He Tried to Simply Admire Jesus**

The next thing that Pilate tried to do: If he couldn’t ignore Jesus and if he couldn’t shift the decision, he did what some of you are going to try and get away with doing, this morning. He sought simply to admire Jesus.

Look in Luke chapter 23 and verses 14 and 15: Pilate *“said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people; and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things of which ye accuse him. No, nor yet Herod; for I sent you to him, and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done by him”* (Luke 23:14–15).

Now, Pilate tries to say some nice words about Jesus Christ and let it rest at that. “I’ve examined Him. There is nothing wrong with Him. He’s all right. I tip my hat to Him.” You see, what was wrong with Pilate? See, Pilate’s under tremendous pressure. He doesn’t want to take a side with Jesus. But, he doesn’t want to be against Jesus. He just

kind of thinks that he can stay right in the comfortable middle. He thinks that he can say nice things about Jesus. He thinks that he can admire Jesus without acknowledging that Jesus Christ is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He admired Jesus, but he did not stand with Jesus.

I want to tell you something, friend. And, I want to say it with love, but I want to say it with unction: I had rather be a pagan in the heart of some uncivilized country that had never heard the name of Jesus than to be a person who will sit in Bellevue Baptist Church, in an air-conditioned auditorium, on an upholstered seat, under a chandelier, who simply admires Jesus Christ. I mean that. *The greater the light, the greater the judgment. And, the hottest part of Hell is reserved for those who admire Jesus but won't stand with Him.*

Now, if Jesus is a fake, and a fraud, and an impostor, why don't you say so, get out of here, and quit playing church? But, if Jesus Christ is the Lord of lords and the King of kings, why don't you stand with Him and live for Him? Don't you tip your hat to Jesus Christ. Don't you say nice things for Jesus Christ. *Jesus Christ would rather have you out and out against Him than pretending to be on His side, flattering Him, without surrendering to Him.*

#### **D. He Tried to Get a Diversion**

Pilate tried to ignore Him. "You judge Him." Pilate tried to let Herod make the decision. But, Jesus came back. Pilate just simply tried to say nice things about Jesus Christ. But, that was not enough. And then, Pilate thought, well, maybe he could get a diversion.

And so, look, if you will, in Matthew 27. And, I'm reading beginning in verse 15: "*Now at that feast the governor was accustomed to releasing unto the people a prisoner, whom they would. And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas. Therefore, when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus, who is called Christ? For he knew that for envy they had delivered him*" (Matthew 27:15–18).

Old Pilate—you've got to give him credit for trying. Pilate says, "Well, maybe if I can get everybody's mind on Barabbas, they'll forget about Jesus." And so, he's trying some sort of a diversion. He's trying to get everybody else interested: "Let's let the Jesus issue drop for awhile, if we can. Let's everybody think about Barabbas, and forget about this Jesus." So, he brings up another question.

You'd be amazed, dear friend, how many of you are trying the diversion of sex, and liquor, and business, and education, and clothes, and car, and trips, and vacations, and yards, and flowers, and furniture, and everything else. Your mind stays so busy that you

will not allow yourself to think. And, after this, the question: “What must I do with Jesus, who is called the Christ?”

## V. Pilate’s Pronouncement and Protest

Now, we have noticed his privileges. We’ve noticed his pressures. We’ve noticed his perverseness, as he tries to twist and as he tries to, somehow, get himself out. Now, I want you to notice his pronouncement and his protest. I want you to notice—in Matthew chapter 27, verse 24—I want you to notice what he has the audacity to do. Notice in Matthew chapter 27, verse 24: *“When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this righteous person. See ye to it”* (Matthew 27:24). This was his protest, and this was his pronouncement: “I’m innocent. Don’t anybody blame me. You can take Him. You can crucify Him. But, my hands are clean”—this is what he said (Matthew 27:24).

But, I want you to know that oceans of water could not wash away Pilate’s guilt. Now, Pilate did not lay the lash upon Jesus’ back. Pilate did not spit in the face of Jesus. Pilate did not hold the hammer that drove those painful spikes into Jesus’ hands. He simply tried to remain neutral. He did nothing. And, eternity has exposed the utter folly, showing that Pilate’s indecision was the worst decision of all. For, Jesus had already said: *“He that is not with me is against me”* (Matthew 12:30). Pilate could not wash his hands of Jesus Christ.

And, as Pilate stood there with Jesus before him, he failed to realize that he, too, was before Jesus. And, when the gavel sounded that allowed Jesus to be crucified, there was another gavel that sounded in Heaven, and Pilate was condemned. Poor Pilate! He was so foolish! Because, it was not very long, as he sought position, that the gavel that he fondled was held in the hands of someone else. And, it was not long until his royal robes adorned the back of someone else. Pilate sought popularity, but the people rose up against him. He died in exile of suicide. Poor pitiful Pilate!

## Conclusion

Pilate made the worst decision of all. And, the things he sought the most—position and popularity—he lost. But, worse than that, he lost his soul.

Bow your head with me in prayer. Every head bowed; every eye closed. Here’s the question—are you listening? Are you listening? Here’s the question: “What will you do with Jesus, who is called the Christ?” You’ve had some wonderful privileges. You feel some great pressures. You may try to get out of it, but you’re going to make a decision concerning Jesus. The question I ask you is: “What will you do with Jesus?” Neutral you



cannot be. Someday your heart will be asking, "What will He do with me?"

Father, I pray that You will seal this message to our hearts, today. And, I pray that men, women, boys, and girls will say, "I will receive Jesus. I will accept Him. I will confess Him. And, I will live my life in His service." Father, I pray that many, today, will say an everlasting "yes" to Jesus Christ, for we pray in His name. Amen.

# Is Jesus God?

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: October 24, 1999**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 27:22**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. His Attributes
- II. His Adoration
- III. His Admission
- IV. His Abilities
  - A. He Is Able to Save
  - B. He Is Able to Subdue
  - C. He Is Able to Secure

Conclusion

## Introduction

**T**ake your Bibles, please, and turn to Matthew chapter 27, and look in one verse here in just a moment, verse 22. The background is this: Jesus is on trial before Pilate. He's standing before Pilate. One of these days, Pilate will stand before Jesus. Pilate has Jesus on his hands. Shall he allow Jesus to be exonerated or executed? Commended or crucified? And Pilate is a fence-straddling, pussyfooting politician, and whatever buttered his own bread would determine his conduct. But he asked a question. Look at it in verse 22: *"Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified"* (Matthew 27:22).

Now I ask you the same question, because as Jesus Christ was before Pilate, Jesus Christ is now, today, before you. And this question, therefore, is coming to you this morning, and I want you to listen to it carefully. What are you going to do with Jesus? It is a personal question. I'm not asking what somebody else is going to do with Jesus. I am asking you today, what will you do with Jesus? It's a personal question.

And it is a present question. I'm not asking what you will do later on, or what you may have done. I'm asking you right now, today, presently, what will you do with Jesus?

And, furthermore, it's a pressing question. I can tell you that you will do something with Him. You say, "No, I won't." Oh, yes, you will. You will do something with Him. You will accept Him or reject Him. You will crown Him or crucify Him. You will hear Him or ignore Him. But you will do something with Jesus Christ. It is a pressing question.

But here's the thing I really want to put upon your heart. It is a pertinent question. I'm

not asking what you're going to do with some social event. I'm not asking what you're going to do with some political personality. I'm not asking what you're going to do with some idea. I'm asking what will you do with Jesus who is called Christ. That's a pertinent question. Really, who is this Jesus?

You know, small minds, they say, discuss things. Great minds discuss ideas. Very small minds just discuss people. But that's not true with the Lord Jesus Christ. Who is Jesus Christ? Let's discuss Him.

I believe, and the Bible teaches, that Jesus Christ is God. Now, don't miss that. I'm asking, what will you do with Jesus. Jesus is God. Now if Jesus is not God, I want to say that Jesus Christ is an imposter. If Jesus Christ is not God, He is an impersonator. If Jesus Christ is not God, He is an imitator. If Jesus Christ is not God, He is a pretender, because I'm going to show you from the Word of God, beyond any shadow of a doubt, that Jesus Christ Himself claimed to be God the Son, and the Son of God.

Now you can't, therefore, just tip your hat to Jesus and say Jesus was a good man, or Jesus was a prophet. Oh, no. If Jesus Christ is not God, He is a fake, a fraud, an imposter, a deceiver. Now not only that, but He has deceived countless millions. He has blasphemed the Almighty. He has desecrated all that is sacred. He has falsely represented God the Father. He has scandalized the truth of God. And He has invalidated the writing of the prophets—if He is not God. Don't just come along and tip the hat to Jesus. Oh, no. Either you accept Him and bow the knee, or you reject Him. What will you do with Jesus?

One man wrote some high-sounding words, and they sound good; but I want you to listen to them carefully. He said,

*If Jesus Christ is a man,—  
And only a man,—I say  
That of all mankind I cleave to him,  
And to him will I cleave alway.*

*If Jesus Christ is a God,—  
And the only God,—I swear  
I will follow Him through heaven and hell,  
The earth, the sea, and the air!*

—RICHARD WATSON GILDER

Now that's sounds good. But, friend, if Jesus Christ is a man, and only a man, He is a deceiver, a fake, a fraud, an imposter. He is one of three things: Lord, liar, or lunatic; Deity, deceiver, or demented. He's one of the three. And you're going to have to take your pick of those three this morning. And I'm asking you this question again: What will

you do with Jesus Christ?

Now I said at the beginning that Jesus Christ is God, and I want to give you four lines of evidence that show the deity of Jesus Christ. Now this is not incidental. This is the fundamental doctrine of our faith: the deity, the Godhood, of Jesus Christ. Now I want you to get the four reasons that we believe that Jesus is God.

## I. His Attributes

Number one: All of the attributes of God the Father are found in the Lord Jesus. All of the attributes of God the Father are found in the Lord Jesus.

Now I was in my front yard, and a man came up to me with a briefcase to talk with me about religious things. And so I said, “Well, I’ll be happy to talk with you.” I said, “What group do you represent?” He said, “Well, I just want to talk about the Bible.” I said, “Well, everybody has some affinity group. Where do you worship?” He said, “Well, that’s incidental. I just want to talk with you.” I said, “No, I’d just like to know where you’re coming from.” I already knew, but I said, “I’d just like to find out where you’re coming from.” I said, “What do you call yourself?” “Well,” he said, “all right, I’m a Jehovah’s Witness. Does that bother you?” I said, “Not at all. So am I.” He said, “You are?” I said, “Yes. And, by the way, I believe that Jesus is Jehovah.” He said, “Oh, no.” I said, “Oh, yes.” “Oh, yes. Jesus is Jehovah, and I want to share some scriptures.”

Now when I say Jehovah, Jehovah is the name for God in the Old Testament. It is used some 7,000 times. In your King James Version of the Scripture, which I’m preaching from, that word *Jehovah* is translated “LORD.” When pious Jews were transcribing the Scriptures, they would never ever even pronounce that name audibly. When they came to that name, they would just bow their head, shut their eyes, and worship. When they would write the name in the Scripture, they would lay aside the old pen and get a brand new pen just to write that name, Jehovah—Jehovah. Now it was the personal name that God used when He was dealing with His people. It speaks of a covenant-keeping God whose name is Jehovah.

What I propose to show you today—and I want you to listen carefully—is that the Jehovah of the Old Testament and the Jesus of the New Testament are one and the same. Now I want to give you some Scripture. Take your pen. You won’t have time to turn to these, so I suggest that you jot them down, as I have.

First of all, Isaiah 40 and verse 3—here’s a prophecy concerning our Lord: “*The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD...*”—now that is the word *Jehovah*—“*Prepare ye the way of [Jehovah], make straight in the desert a highway for our God*” (Isaiah 40:3). Who’s He talking about? Jehovah, our God.

Now, see how this is fulfilled in the New Testament. Look in Matthew 3, verse 3.

Don't turn to it. Jot it down. *"For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet [Isaiah], saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight"* (Matthew 3:3). John the Baptist, saying of Jesus, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

John was speaking of Jesus. Isaiah was speaking of Jehovah. And the same scripture is used. And, as a matter of fact, the Bible says that Jesus fulfilled this scripture.

Or let me give you another comparison. Isaiah 43, verse 11—God speaks of Himself, and here's what He says: *"I, even I, am the LORD..."*—that's the word *Jehovah*—*"I, even I, am [Jehovah];"*—now, listen to this carefully—*"and beside me there is no saviour"* (Isaiah 43:11). There is no Savior other than Jehovah. Do you have that? That's plain—Isaiah 43, verse 11.

But now listen to Titus 2, verse 13—the Bible says we're to be *"looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ"* (Titus 2:13). Hello. Listen. God says, "I am Jehovah. There is no other Savior." And then we read, in Titus, we're to be *"looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ."* Do you understand what I say—that the Jesus of the New Testament is the Jehovah of the Old Testament?

Let me give you another couple of the verses. Isaiah 44 and verse 6: *"Thus saith [Jehovah] the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God"* (Isaiah 44:6). Now Jehovah, the King of Israel, says, "I am the first and the last."

Then in Revelation chapter 1 and verse 17 John the apostle has a vision of Jesus, and he says, *"And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last"* (Revelation 1:17)—*"I am the first and the last."*

In the Old Testament, Jehovah says, "I am the first and the last." In the New Testament, Jesus says, *"I am the first and the last."*

David, alone, out guiding his sheep, under divine inspiration, picked up his harp and began to sing, in Psalm 23 and verse 1, *"The LORD is my shepherd"* (Psalm 23:1), and actually uses the word again *Jehovah*: *"[Jehovah] is my shepherd."*

What did Jesus say in John chapter 10, verse 11? *"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep"* (John 10:11). Jesus is the Jehovah of the Old Testament. The shepherd God of the Old Testament is the shepherd Savior of the New Testament.

Psalm 24 and verse 10—I love this: *"Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts,"*—"the Jehovah of hosts"—*"he is the King of glory"* (Psalm 24:10).

But then what did the Apostle Paul say in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, verse 8? He speaks of the deity of our Lord, *“which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified”*—listen—*“the Lord of glory”* (1 Corinthians 2:8)—*“the Lord of glory.”*

Psalm 24:10: *“Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts.”* First Corinthians 2:8—Jesus is *“the Lord of glory.”*

Let me give you one more, and we could go on and on comparing the Jesus of the New with the Yahweh, or Jehovah, of the Old Testament. Exodus 20, verses 10 and 11, speaking of the Sabbath: *“But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it”* (Exodus 20:10–11).

Now it is the Sabbath of Jehovah, but in Matthew 12, verse 8, *“For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day”* (Matthew 12:8).

So what I’m trying to show you, folks—are you listening?—when you are witnessing for Jesus, you are Jehovah’s Witness. The Jehovah of the Old Testament and the Jesus of the New Testament are one.

Now I’ve just used the Scriptures. You see, you need to understand the pre-existence of Jesus. Jesus did not have His beginning at Bethlehem. There never was a time when the Lord Jesus was not. Put this scripture down—John 1 and verse 1: *“In the beginning was the Word...”*—it’s the Greek word *logos*—*“In the beginning was the [logos], and the Word was with God, and the Word”*—the *logos*—*“was God”* (John 1:1). Jesus is called the Word of God. And this scripture says He was in the beginning with the Father, and He was God. When He was born at Bethlehem, He was as old as His father and older than His mother—when He was born. There never was a time when He was not. Jesus always has been.

You say, “Well, Pastor Rogers, I don’t understand that.” Well, that doesn’t bother me that you don’t understand it. You can’t understand God. Can the finite understand the infinite?

I understand that Albert Einstein came up with the theory of relativity. It’s so complicated that only twelve men can understand the theory of relativity. I can’t vouch for that, because I’ve never met the other eleven, but it’s that complicated. Somebody asked Mrs. Einstein one time, “Do you understand the theory of relativity?” She said, “No, but I understand Dr. Einstein.” She knew him—she knew him.

Listen. I cannot understand the pre-existence of Jesus, but I believe it. *“In the*

*beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God.*” Listen. The absolute holiness of Jesus Christ is taught, and there’s only one who is absolutely holy, and that is God Himself. Hosea chapter 11 and verse 9—God says, *“For I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee”* (Hosea 11:9). *“I am God, and not man.”* There is no man that is inherently holy; only God.

Jesus Christ—John 8, verse 46—could look at His detractors, His enemies, those who were snipping at Him, and He could say, “Which of you convinces me of sin?” (John 8:46). I wouldn’t ask that to my friends, much less my enemies: “Which of you convinces me of sin?” And the apostles, when they talked about the crucifixion of Jesus, said, in Acts 3, verse 14, *“But ye denied the Holy One and the Just”* (Acts 3:14). His absolute pristine holiness sets Him apart from all other individuals.

Have you ever noticed that in the Bible Jesus never once prayed for forgiveness? Think about it. He never once prayed for forgiveness. He taught us to pray, “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive those who sin against us, our debtors” (Matthew 6:12). He never did. Either that was consummate arrogance, or He was indeed absolutely holy.

## **II. His Adoration**

So what have I talked about? First of all, we’re just giving you some evidence of His deity, and we’re talking about His attributes. But, secondly, let me give you another reason that I believe that Jesus is God. Now, don’t miss this. Folks, this is not incidental. The adoration that He received shows Him to be God. Jesus received adoration. Now, listen to me. Jesus allowed Himself to be worshiped. Now idolatry is the ultimate sin, to worship any other god other than Yahweh Jehovah, and yet Jesus allowed Himself to be worshiped. Jesus Himself knew that only God is to be worshiped.

Now, don’t miss this point. Satan tried to get Jesus to worship him. Satan said to Jesus, “I’ll give you the kingdoms of this world if you will bow down and worship me” (Matthew 4:8–9; Luke 4:5–7). Put this verse down—Luke chapter 4 and verse 8. Here what Jesus Christ Himself said: *“And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve”* (Luke 4:8). Worship is reserved for God Almighty only.

Now Jesus allowed Himself to be worshiped. Matthew 28 and verse 9: *“And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him”* (Matthew 28:9). The same One who said that God, and God only, is to be worshiped—and here He is allowing His disciples to worship Him.

Suppose I were to come over here and bow down in front of Mark and start worshipping Mark. Mark, what would you do? I’ll tell you what you’d do. You’d say,

“Pastor, stop. If you don’t, we’ll both be in trouble: you for doing it, and I will be in trouble for allowing it.”

Look in Revelation chapter 22. You might turn to this one. John is on the island of Patmos. He’s getting a vision from an angel. And the angel is showing John all of these wonderful things, and John is just overwhelmed: *“And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen,”*—now, watch this—*“I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God”* (Revelation 22:8–9). Here’s an angel saying, “Don’t you worship me, John. Get up. I’m just a fellow servant. Worship God. Worship God. Worship God.” Now, friend, listen. If Jesus allowed Himself to be worshiped when He Himself said that God alone is to be worshiped, either He is guilty of ultimate arrogance and inculcating the most despicable sin of idolatry, or else He is God. There are no two ways about it—no two ways about it. The adoration that Jesus receives shows Him to be God.

### III. His Admission

We’ve talked about His attributes. We’ve talked about His adoration. Let’s talk about His own admission. Here’s the third reason: Jesus is shown to be God by His own admission. An interesting thing: Jesus is having a discussion with the Pharisees. They could not accept the fact that He was God in flesh, and so, in John chapter 8, verse 56—jot it down. You can look these up later, but we’ve got a lot of Scripture to cover. Jesus said—*“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.”* Now Abraham had been dead for centuries, and Jesus said, “Look, your father, Abraham, the one that you adore, he rejoiced to see my day.” Verse 57: *“Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?”* And now, watch verse 58. Now if you don’t hear anything else in this message this morning, I want you to get this. This is John chapter 8 and verse 58: *“Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily...”*—now, listen. When Jesus says, “Verily,” you pay attention. When He says, “Verily, verily,” you’d better pay attention—*“Verily, verily...”*—He is saying it for emphasis—*“Verily, verily, I say unto you,”*—now, listen—*“Before Abraham was, I am.”* Don’t miss this. He didn’t say, “Before Abraham was, I was.” He didn’t say, “I got here first.” He is saying, *“Before Abraham was, I am.”* And when He said that, look in verse 59: *“Then took they up stones to cast at him”* (John 8:56–59). They’re ready to stone Him now because He said, *“Before Abraham was, I am.”*

Why did they want to stone Him? Because He said He was I AM. You see, listen. God called Moses to lead the Jews out of Egypt into the Promised Land, and Moses



said, “Well, who shall I say sent me?” (Exodus 3:13). Now you have to understand that the Egyptians worshipped 2,200 different gods—2,200 gods—and so Moses has to go and say, “Which, who, is the true God? Who shall I say sent me?” Put this down—in Exodus chapter 3, verse 14: *“And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you”* (Exodus 3:14). “You want to know my credentials? The I AM sent me. Not I was, not I will be, but I AM.” There never was a time when He was not. There never will be a time when He will not be. He is the great, pre-existent, eternal God. This sacred name for God, I AM—the I AM, the I AM. And they said to Jesus, “Why, you haven’t seen Abraham. You’re not even fifty years old.” He said, “Look. Before Abraham ever got here, I AM.”—“I AM.”

I’m telling you, folks, that the Jehovah of the Old Testament is the Jesus of the New Testament. He Himself claimed to be. Jesus said to Philip—listen—John 14, verses 8 and 9: *“Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?”* (John 14:8–9).

Now, suppose you said to me, “Adrian, show me the President of the United States.” I’ll say, “Well, you’re looking at him. If you’ve seen me, you’ve seen the President.” You’d say, “Mark, you hold him; Jim, you go get the butterfly net.”

I mean, the unmitigated arrogance for him to say, “Philip, if you have seen me, you have seen the Father.” Not somebody like the Father—“You have seen the Father.” By His own admission.

## IV. His Abilities

Last point: He is shown to be God by His abilities—by His abilities, His mighty abilities. I want to just mention three times in the Bible where the Bible mentions His ability, what He is able to do.

### A. He Is Able to Save

First of all, He, because He is God, is able to save. Remember over there in Isaiah, Jehovah said, *“Beside me there is no saviour”* (Isaiah 43:11). But put down Hebrews chapter 7, verse 25, which says, *“Wherefore he”—Jesus—“is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him”* (Hebrews 7:25). I want to tell you today He’s able to save you. There’s no one that He’s not able to save. Anybody who wants to be saved can be saved.

You say, “Well, have I committed the unpardonable sin?” Friend, if you want to be saved, you can be saved. Anybody who wants to be saved hasn’t committed the

unpardonable sin. You say, “Am I one of the elect?” Do you want to be saved? Just come on. Oh, who are the elect? I can put that in fifteen seconds. The elect are the *whosoever wills*. Whosoever will may come. *“He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.”* And, *“Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”* (Romans 10:13). Hallelujah! He’s able to save.

### **B. He Is Able to Subdue**

Not only is He able to save, but He’s able to subdue. Philippians 3, verse 21, speaks of our Lord, *“who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself”* (Philippians 3:21). Friend, one of these days He’s going to make you like Himself. He’s able to subdue all things: every dust, every speck of dust, every mountain, every celestial body must obey His will.

### **C. He Is Able to Secure**

He is able to save. He is able to subdue. And, furthermore, He’s able to secure. He’s able to keep you saved. Second Timothy 1:12—Paul says, *“For the which cause I also suffer these things...”*—Paul, when he had been beaten, put in prison, he said—*“I suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto them against that day”* (2 Timothy 1:12). He is able. He is able. What a mighty God we serve! Every need that you have He’s able to supply.

A missionary was going to the foreign field, and just as the missionary was getting on the ship a man handed the missionary an envelope, a sealed envelope, and said, “Put this in your pocket. Keep it with you. And if anytime overseas you ever come to a place where you don’t know where to turn or what to do, open this envelope.” And the missionary came home after having spent a lifetime on the foreign field. And he came home to give his report to his church, and he told about the trials and the temptations and the persecution and all of the perplexities. Then he reached in his pocket and pulled out that envelope, never opened—never opened.

Thank God. Thank God, friend. There never comes to the child of God a time where he does not have a Savior that he can come to and cling to. And He is able. Do you believe that? I hope you do. Oh, what a mighty Savior we have!

I love Him with all of my heart. To explain Him is impossible. To ignore Him is disastrous. To reject Him is fatal. What a mighty God! Human speech is too limited to describe Him. Your human mind is too finite to comprehend Him. The human heart is too small to contain Him. Jesus Christ is God.

## Conclusion

Now I come back to our text. “What shall I do with Jesus?” What will you do with Jesus? You can crown Him or crucify Him. They said, “*Let him be crucified*” (Matthew 27:22–23). You can accept Him or reject Him. You can love Him or despise Him. You can believe Him or ignore Him. But you cannot be neutral. Pilate tried that, but he could not be neutral.

Jesus is in your hands today. You must do the right thing, because you need Him in life. In life, if there were no heaven and no hell, you need Jesus day by day. He is like blood to your body, air to your lungs. You need Him in life. You need Him in death. You’re going to die. You’ll need Him in death. You’ll need Him at the judgment. You’ll stand before God one day to be judged. What will you say then? “God, have mercy upon me. I didn’t have a chance.” He’ll show you this scene today. What will you say? “God, I didn’t understand.” He’ll replay the message today. Friend, every excuse that you have will falter and fail. And right now Jesus is in your hands. But at the judgment you’ll be in His hands.

I ask you again this question. It is a personal question. It’s a present question. It is a pressing question. It is a pertinent question. What will you do with Jesus? Would you accept Him as your Lord and Savior? If you will, I promise you, on the authority of the Word of God, He will forgive every sin. Secondly, He will come into you to give you strength and power, as He’s done to me for over half a century. Thirdly, He’ll use you as His instrument to live His life through you. Fourthly, when you die, or when He comes, He’ll take you straight to heaven. I promise on the authority of the Word of God.

# Life's Greatest Question

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: Unknown**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 27:22**

*"Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified."*

MATTHEW 27:22

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## Introduction

Would you take God's Word, please, and turn to Matthew chapter 27? In a moment, I'm going to read to you one of the most searching questions in all of the Bible and in all of the world. The title of our message tonight: "Life's Greatest Question." Here's the question—Matthew chapter 27, verse 22: "*Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?*"—"What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" (Matthew 27:22) This, ladies and gentlemen, in my estimation, beyond the shadow of any doubt or peradventure, is the greatest, most pertinent question that I could ask. And I want to tell you about this question.

### A. It's a Personal Question

It's a personal question. I'm asking it to every mother's child in this building. What will you do with Jesus Christ? It's a personal question.

### B. It's a Pressing Question

Not only is it a personal question; it's a pressing question. I'm going to press it upon you tonight, and I'm going to ask you to answer that question tonight. As a matter of fact, I'm going to require you to answer that question tonight. You say, "I'm not going to answer it." Then you've already answered it, because not to answer this question is to do something with Jesus—and it is to ignore Him. Everybody is going to deal with this question tonight.

### C. It's a Pertinent Question

It is a personal question. It is a pressing question. It is a pertinent question because it deals with life and death, heaven or hell. Your eternal destiny hinges upon the way you answer this question: What shall I do with Jesus, who is called Christ?

Now, if you're a Bible student, you'll recognize the setting of this question—that Jesus Christ has finished His earthly ministry, and it is coming to a close. He has been arrested. He is now standing before Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, and the people are clamoring for capital punishment. They are saying that Jesus Christ ought to be crucified. Pilate doesn't really want to crucify Christ so he says, "I'll tell you what I'll do, ladies and gentlemen. I have two prisoners here. You can chose one of them—Christ or Barabbas—and I'll release one of them to you. Which one do you want me to release?" And they said, "Release unto us Barabbas." (Matthew 27:20–21) And then, he

said, “What shall I do then with Jesus who is called the Messiah?” And the people clamored and shouted, and they said, “Let him be crucified.” (Matthew 27:22) Now, at that moment, Jesus Christ was in Pilate’s hands. Are you understanding this? Pilate had to make up his mind what he was going to do with Jesus Christ. Jesus was before Pilate. But now, wait a minute. While Jesus was before Pilate, at that same moment, Pilate was before God. When Pilate was judging Jesus, God was judging Pilate. Jesus was in Pilate’s hands, but at the same time Pilate was in God’s hands.

Pilate is representative of every unsaved man, woman, boy, and girl in this place tonight, and I’m going to ask you to answer this question. Listen to me. You may have come in here and you’re not a Christian. You may have dreamed not at all that you’re going to make a decision, but I will guarantee you that you will make a decision. I am going to press a decision on you tonight, and Jesus Christ is in your hands tonight. Tonight, everybody in this building will walk out, I presume, and everybody will either walk out under the blood or over the blood. You will make a decision concerning Jesus Christ, and as I’ve already said, if you decide not to decide, that will be your decision. Nobody is going to get out of here tonight without answering this question in some way—this personal question, this pressing question, this pertinent question: What will I do with Jesus who is called Christ?

I want to warn you, what you do with Jesus is going to determine what God does with you. While Christ is in your hands tonight, you are in God’s hands; and as you judge Jesus, God will judge you. Now, I want us to look at Pilate because Pilate is representative of lost humanity. Pilate represents every unsaved man, woman, boy, and girl. And God has arranged it that way. Look back at this past trial, when Jesus stood before Pilate to be judged, and I want to remind you that this judgment, this trial, was a mockery of justice. Pilate is confronted here with Jesus, and he’s trying to make up his mind, “*What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?*” (Matthew 27:22)

## **I. The Voices That Confronted Pilate**

There were strong voices that spoke to Pilate, voices that confronted Pilate.

### **A. The Voice of Reason**

First of all, there was the voice of reason. If you’ll look there in verse 18, you’ll see something very interesting in Matthew chapter 27 and verse 18. It says this of Pilate: “*For he knew that for envy they had delivered him.*” (Matthew 27:18) Pilate wasn’t a fool. You don’t get to be the Roman governor by being a fool. Pilate knew men, knew the minds of men. He saw the cunning craftiness of the Jews and of these priests. And the Bible says in verse 18 that Pilate knew that it was because of envy that they had delivered Jesus Christ to the judgment. (Matthew 27:18) I am telling you that Pilate, in

order to have Jesus Christ crucified, had to sin against his reason. He had to sin against common sense. He knew Jesus, and he knew those people.

Now, let me tell you something. Tonight you are going to accept or reject Jesus Christ. Tonight you're going to crown or crucify Jesus Christ. Tonight you are going to confess or deny Jesus Christ. If you reject Jesus Christ, if you crucify Jesus Christ, as Pilate did so long ago, you will sin against reason. It stands to reason that Jesus Christ is one of three persons: Jesus Christ was either the Lord that He said that He was. Or else He was a liar who knew He wasn't God and pretended to be. Or else He was a lunatic who thought He was God and wasn't. Right? He was one of three. He was Lord, liar, or lunatic. He was Deity, deceiver, or deceived. He was one of the three. Each of you here tonight has to make up your mind because Jesus Christ is on trial before you. I ask you, do you believe the man called Jesus was a liar, or do you believe the man called Jesus was a lunatic, or do you believe that the man called Jesus was the Lord? There's no other choice: Lord, liar, lunatic.

## **B. The Voice of Love**

Pilate had the voice of reason that spoke to him. But there was also the voice of love that spoke to him. Look in verse 19: *“When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.”* (Matthew 27:19) Now, what does that mean? Somehow Pilate's wife was in touch with God. Somehow in a dream she had had a message from God, and God sent a message to Pilate's wife and told Pilate's wife this: “Warn your husband, ‘Have absolutely nothing to do with these trumped up charges against Jesus Christ. Don't do it. Don't have any part of this thing. Back away from it, Pilate.’” And she, with a tear-stained face, a voice of concern and a voice of entreaty, spoke to Pilate.

Now listen, not only have you been spoken to by the voice of reason, but you have been spoken to by the voice of love. I daresay there's not a person who's not had a loved one to witness to you. Somewhere, sometime—it may have been your mother, your dad, a friend on the job, a Sunday school teacher—somebody has been sent to you to warn you and to plead with you and to beg with you, “Do not—*do not*—reject Jesus. Do not crucify, or have a part in the crucifixion of, Jesus Christ.” “Well,” you say, “I've never had a loved one to speak to me.” You're going to have one right now because I love you, and I beg you in the name of Jesus—listen to me—have nothing to do with the crucifixion of Jesus. Do not—*do not*—turn Jesus Christ away. And do not turn a deaf ear to the entreaties of Jesus Christ.

† A young man was getting ready to go out on the town; and he had his coat, and he had his things. He was going out to get drunk and to party. His mother had been praying

for him so long. She laid a tract down beside his things there as he got ready to walk out of the house. As he picked up his gloves and his keys, he saw that gospel tract, and it infuriated him. That young man said, "Listen, Mamma. Today, when I got off the bus, somebody handed me a gospel tract. And now I'm getting ready to go out and have a good time, and you hand me a tract." He said, "I'm sick of it. Where can I go where no one will give me one of these things?" And with a broken heart she said, "My son, you can go to hell, and no one will witness to you there."<sup>f</sup>

Some of you have wives who have begged you. Some of you have mothers who have pled for you and prayed for you. Some of you have dads and brothers and sisters. I beg you, dear friend, do not reject the voice of love.

### C. The Voice of Conscience

But not only was there the voice of reason, and not only was there the voice of love; but there was another voice, an inner voice that spoke to Pilate. Pilate examined Jesus Christ, and he said after he examined Jesus Christ, "*I find no fault in this man,*" (Luke 23:4) Luke 23 and verse 4. Pilate saw that Jesus Christ was the sinless Son of God. I want to challenge you. Is there a man, is there a woman, is there a boy, is there a girl, is there anybody in this place or any place who can find fault in Jesus Christ? Absolutely, totally not! He was the sinless Son of God. And the conscience of Pilate, his conscience thundered in his heart that Jesus is the Son of God. He had heard every accusation. He had examined every witness. And the voice of conscience spoke to him.

Would you listen to that conscience in you? Would you listen to that inner light in you? The Bible says Christ is that "*Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world*" (John 1:9)

### D. The Voice of God

And I'm going to say to everybody, before you answer the question of what you'll do with Jesus, the voice of reason will speak to you. And I'm going to tell you, the voice of love has spoken to you. And I'm going to tell you that the voice of conscience has spoken to you. And I'm going to tell you, dear friend, that there's another voice that speaks to everyone here tonight, and that spoke to Pilate so long ago. It was the voice of God Himself. Deity spoke to Pilate. In John chapter 18 and verse 36, Jesus is standing before Pilate, and Pilate said, "Are you a king?" (John 18:33) "*Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.*" (John 18:36–37) Now, at this time, Pilate asked Jesus a question: "Are you a



king? Who are you?” And Jesus gave Pilate a straightforward answer—no equivocation, no stutter, no stammer. Jesus Christ Himself spoke to Pilate with all of the authority and the authenticity of Deity.

And I want to say it humbly, but, my dear friend, Jesus Christ is here tonight. You say, “Where is He?” He’s in me right now, and He’s in His Word. And when I give you this Word, when I preach this book to you tonight, it is as certain, it is as sure as if Jesus Christ were standing in this pulpit. I am only the Western Union boy delivering the message. The message is from heaven. Do you understand that? Everybody in this building has the voices to confront Him that Pilate had to confront Him so long ago. There was the voice of reason. There was the voice of love. There was the voice of conscience. And there is the voice of God Himself. And there’s nobody in this building who can go out and say, “I have not heard from God.” God has spoken, and the same God that spoke to Pilate so long ago is the God that has spoken to you to help you to answer this question, “*What shall I then do with Jesus which is called Christ?*” (Matthew 27:22)

## **II. The Values That Conformed Pilate**

But now, wait a minute. I want you to see not only the voices that confronted Pilate, but I want you to see something else: I want you to see the values that conformed Pilate. Why was it that Pilate delivered Jesus to be crucified? There were several reasons.

### **A. Public Opinion**

Number one: There was public opinion. The Bible says in Mark chapter 15 that Pilate wanted to please the people; he wanted to content the people. (Mark 15:15) He was afraid of what the people would think; and so, Pilate crucified Jesus to please the crowd. You say, “Would anybody here do that tonight?” Of course! There are some of you in this building tonight who are so afraid of public opinion that you’ll not come forward. That’s the reason I ask you to come forward. That’s the reason I ask you to get up out of your seat and come and stand here. Dear friend, I want to tell you this: you’re not going to slip into heaven. You’re not going to bootleg a blessing. You’re not going to somehow please the crowd and please God at the same time. If you are ashamed of Jesus before the crowd, Jesus is going to be ashamed of you before the Father in heaven. (Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26) The Bible says, “*Whosoever believeth in him shall not be ashamed.*” (Romans 10:11)

† I heard a story years and years ago about a young lady in a revival crusade. When the invitation was given, the Spirit of God was moving in that crusade, very much like the Spirit of God has been moving night after night here. She wept and cried. A personal worker went back to her. She was sitting in the back of the auditorium, and the

personal worker said to her, "Would you come to the front and confess Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord?" She said, "Oh, no." She said, "There are too many people here. I can't go up there in front of all of that crowd. Can't I be saved back here?" And the personal worker said, "No, I'm sorry. If you want to be saved, you've got to come to the front." She said, "Then I'll not do it." The next night, the invitation was given. Again her heart was smitten and stricken; and she knew she needed to be saved, and she was convicted that she needed Christ. The same personal worker went back to her and said, "Young lady, won't you come to the front, and won't you confess Christ as your personal Savior?" She said, "No, please, can't I be saved back here?" And they said, "No, you cannot." I know what you're thinking, but you let me finish the story. The third night the same thing happened. She was under deep conviction. That personal worker went to her and said, "Young lady, would you please come to the front and acknowledge Jesus Christ as your personal Savior?" You know what she said? She said, "Oh, yes I will. I'll go anywhere, I'll do anything if I could just have peace with God." He said, "Now you don't have to come to the front. You can be saved back here."

Amen?†

Listen, friend, the Bible says, "*Whosoever believeth in him shall not be ashamed.*" (Romans 10:11) Pilate was willing to please the people. Do you know what the chief cult in America is? It is the cult of conformity. Its god is public opinion. And people are trying to follow what people think. Listen, friend. Listen. This crowd doesn't care whether you go to heaven or hell. I'm talking about the unsaved crowd, the crowd you work with. Don't try to please them. If you please them and displease God, you'll go to hell. And *if you please God, it doesn't matter whom you displease.* So give your heart to Jesus Christ.

## B. Pride

But I'll tell you there was another value that conformed him: not only was it public opinion; it was pride. You see, Pilate was a proud man. In John 19, Jesus has stopped speaking to Pilate because Pilate didn't want to know the truth, so Jesus doesn't speak to Pilate any more. Jesus gave Pilate a clear witness, and Pilate wouldn't listen so Jesus quit speaking to Him. Pilate says in John 19, verse 10: "*Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?*" (John 19:10) And then, Jesus spoke to him and said, "You don't have any power, except the power that's given you of God." (John 19:11) What's wrong with Pilate here? Listen to this. Pilate said, "Don't you know who you're talking to, Jesus? Don't you speak to me? Why, I am the governor. I can set you free. I can crucify you." And it's so plain here that Pilate is an egotist. He's stuffed full of himself, and it is his pride. He won't humble himself. He won't come down from his perch.

There are some of you here tonight, though the voice of reason has spoken to you, and though the voice of love has spoken to you, and though the voice of God has spoken to you, public opinion and pride will keep you from coming to Jesus Christ. You can get an invitation like this in a service like this, and the devil will whisper in the ear of a man, a woman, a businessman, a doctor, a lawyer; he'll say, "Listen, you're respected in this community. Don't you go down there and make a fool of yourself. Don't go down there and make a spectacle of yourself. Don't you humble yourself. You just maintain your dignity." Pilate is saying, "Don't you know who I am?" Many a man has been escorted to hell by ego and chained by the chains of pride forged on the anvil of a hard heart because they will not humble themselves and come to Jesus Christ. Don't you let your abominable pride keep you there in the pew tonight if you need to come forward and give your heart to Jesus Christ. Pilate is in hell tonight because of his pride. So many people say, "I'm just not going to admit my need."

### **C. Position and Possessions**

But I tell you there was a third thing that conformed Pilate: not only was it public opinion and not only was it pride, but it was position and possessions. Now they came to Pilate, and they began to put the pressure on Pilate. And in John 19, verse 12, they said to him, "If you let this man go, you are not a friend of Caesar. He says that he's a king, and *'whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.'*" (John 19:12) They said, "Pilate, listen, we're going to explain it to you, Pilate. We want you to adjudicate Jesus guilty; we want His blood. Now Pilate, you've got a soft job. You have possessions, and you have position. If you let Jesus Christ go un-crucified, we're going straight to Caesar, and we're going to tell Caesar this: that there's another man down here who says He's a king and you took sides with that other man. Now listen, Pilate, if you want to keep your job and you want to keep your possessions, you'd better turn your back on Jesus Christ."

I'm going to tell you something else. I know enough about human nature to know that there are some people in this building tonight who would crucify Jesus for the same reason: position and possessions. Do you know, very frankly, why some people won't come forward in a service like this? They think if they come forward, they'll be expected to join a church; and if they join that church, that church will want some of their money. That's right. It's just that plain. It is just that simple. They say, "You know, if I go down there to that church, they will expect me to give." And the reason that some people reject Jesus Christ is the same reason Pilate rejected Him so long ago. Pilate was a materialist, pure and simple, and what buttered His bread determined his conduct. He had a soft, cushy job, and he wanted to keep it.

Now, I want to tell you, friend, I've preached long enough to know that every time the

question is asked, “What shall I do with Jesus?” there are three things that conform the hearts of men: one, public opinion; number two, pride; number three, position and possession. And these people think of these things, and they try to make a choice. This is what conformed Pilate so long ago.

### **III. The Verdict That Condemned Pilate**

But now, listen. First of all, there were the voices that confronted him. Secondly, there were the values that conformed him. But thirdly, I want you to see the verdict that condemned him. Pilate had Jesus on his hands. Pilate had to do something with Jesus, just like I’m telling you tonight there’s no way that you can get out of making a decision. Pilate had the inescapable, unavoidable, inevitable Jesus Christ on his hands. There is no way you can escape dealing with Jesus any more than Pilate could so long ago. Now, Pilate tried to do the same thing that some of you are going to try to do.

#### **A. He Tried to Ignore Jesus**

First of all, Pilate simply tried to ignore Jesus. In John chapter 18, this is what Pilate said when the Jews brought Jesus to him. Pilate said, “Well, you take Him, and you judge Him according to your law.” (John 18:31) What was Pilate saying? “Don’t bother me with Jesus. I’ve got more important things to do.” They brought Jesus to Pilate. Pilate said, “You take Him; you judge Him.” That is, “I’m not going to have anything to do with Him. I’m simply going to ignore the Lord Jesus Christ.”

#### **B. He Tried to Shift the Decision**

But of course he could not ignore the Lord Jesus Christ, nor can you ignore Jesus Christ. He had to do something. And so, since he couldn’t ignore Jesus, he tried to do something else. He tried to put the decision on somebody else. In Luke chapter 23 and in verses 6 and 7, he found out that Jesus was from Galilee. And Herod was the king of Galilee; and so, Pilate had a great idea. He said, “I’ll just send Him up there to Herod. I’ll let Herod make the decision.” And so, Pilate said, “Take Him up there and let Herod judge Him.” (Luke 23:6–7) You know what Herod did? Herod sent him right back to Pilate.

† Pilate reminds me of a man who bought a new boomerang and killed himself trying to throw the old one away.†

He’s trying to get rid of Jesus, but he can’t do it. He’s trying to get somebody else to make the decision. And some of you will do the same thing. You’ll say, “Well, my priest takes care of that,” or “My pastor takes care of that,” or “My parents take care of that,” or “My wife takes care of the religion in my family. Let somebody else make the decision.” Dear friend, I’m telling you tonight that Pilate could not ignore Jesus, nor can you. Pilate could not shift the decision, nor can you.

### C. He Tried to Simply Admire Jesus

I'll tell you what else Pilate tried to do—and this is what many of you are going to try to do tonight in answer to this question: Pilate, therefore, just simply tried to admire Jesus. He tried to say some nice things about Jesus, as if that would suffice. And in Luke chapter 23, verse 15, Pilate said, *"I find no fault in him."* (Luke 23:15; John 19:4,6) Now listen, friend, don't pat Pilate on the back for that. Don't give Pilate credit for that. I have nothing but utter, utter contempt and disrespect for Pilate who found no fault in Jesus but let Him be crucified.

Now, *it's not enough for you to tip your hat to Jesus. You need to bow your knee to Jesus.* You understand what I'm saying? It's not enough for you to say that Jesus is good. It's not enough for you to say, "Well, I like Jesus." It's not enough for you to say that Jesus is a wonderful man. I'm not asking you tonight to say, "I think Jesus Christ is fine." I'm asking you tonight, are you willing to take your stand for Jesus Christ and die for Him if necessary? He's either Lord or He's not. Now, if He's not Lord, have nothing to do with Him; He's an impostor. If He is Lord, bow before Him. I'd rather be a pagan, never having heard of Jesus Christ, than to say, "I find no fault in Him" and yet not surrender to Him.

### D. He Tried to Remain Neutral

Listen to me, my dear friend. It is not enough to ignore Jesus. It is not enough to shift the decision. It is not enough to admire Jesus. I'll tell you something else Pilate tried to do. You can understand this man was a clever man. You know what else He tried to do? He tried to remain neutral. And all of you remember the story here, Matthew chapter 27—you have your Bibles open there—look again in verse 22: *"Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified"*—now, watch verse 24—*"When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made"*—that is, "a riot was made"—*"he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it."* (Matthew 27:22–24) Now, what Pilate said is, "Look," he said, "I'm going to remain neutral. If you want Him crucified, we'll let Him be crucified. But I want you to know it's not my fault." And this pusillanimous, pussyfooting politician tried to wash his lily-white politician's hands. But I want to tell you an ocean of water could not wash away the stain on Pilate's hand.

Now, it is true that Pilate did not hold the lash that beat the back of Jesus. It is true that Pilate's spit did not defile the face of Jesus. It is true that Pilate did not hold the hammer that drove those nails. But I hold Pilate guilty for the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, for his indecision was the worst decision of all. Let me tell you what Jesus said. Listen to

me. Jesus said, *“He that is not with me is against me.”* (Matthew 12:30; Luke 11:23)

Now, everybody in this building tonight is either with Christ or against Christ. Now, Pilate let his gavel fall, and Pilate said, “Let Him be crucified,” trying to remain neutral. When that gavel fell in Pilate’s judgment hall, another gavel fell in heaven. And when Pilate adjudicated Jesus guilty, God adjudicated Pilate guilty. And I want to tell you something, dear friend: tonight Pilate is in hell. He died in exile, a suicide. And before long, other hands were fondling that gavel that Pilate had. Before long, another shoulder had that robe draped around it. And Pilate tonight is in hell. And eternity will testify that his lack of decision was the worst decision he could make.

Now, I’m going to tell you again—listen; you listen to me—there are some of you tonight who will try to ignore Jesus. There are some of you tonight who will try to shift the decision. There are some of you tonight who will try to flatter Jesus. And there are some of you tonight who will try to remain neutral. But I am telling you—and you listen to me—the question is before you tonight, and you must answer it: What will you do with Jesus, which is called Christ?

#### **IV. Jesus on Trial**

Now, let me take a few more moments, friend, and I want to forget that past trial. I want to put Jesus Christ on trial here tonight. May I do so? I’m going to put Jesus in the prisoner’s dock. And I’ll tell you what I’m going to do. I’m going to impanel all of the people here tonight as a jury, and I’m going to ask you to judge. What will you do with Jesus Christ? Now, as I said, His first trial was a mockery of justice, so I’m going to put Him on trial again.

##### **A. Friendly Witnesses**

And I’m going to let some people testify concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. And every testimony will come directly from the Word of God. Now, Jesus is in the prisoner’s dock. And I’m going to call some witnesses, and I want them to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

##### **1. John the Baptist**

First of all, I call John the Baptist. John, you were the first cousin to the Lord Jesus. As boys you grew up together. John, I want you to tell the jury, what think you of Christ? And I hear rugged John the Baptist say, as he looks at the accused, *“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”* (John 1:29) Thank you, thank you, John the Baptist.

##### **2. Simon Peter**

I want to call the big fisherman. Peter, you’ve never been hesitant to say what you think. Peter, on an occasion, you cursed and swore and denied Him. But in the light of

eternity, Peter, tell us, what think you of Christ? And I hear Simon Peter saying, *“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”* (Matthew 16:16) Thank you for that testimony, Simon Peter. You may step down.

### **3. The Apostle John**

Now I want to call the Apostle John—not John the Baptist, but the Apostle John. John, you’re a mystic; you’re an intellect. I want you to tell the jury, what think you of the accused? And John says, *“We beheld Him, the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”* (John 1:14) Thank you, Apostle John. I want you to step down.

### **4. Thomas**

Thomas, they call you *“doubting Thomas.”* Thomas, you’re not easily persuaded. Thomas, you’re one of these guys who has to see it to believe it. Thomas, you tell everybody, what think you of Christ? I hear Thomas saying, *“My LORD and my God.”* (John 20:28) Thank you, Thomas. You may be seated.

### **5. The Apostle Paul**

I want to call the mightiest intellect this world has ever known, other than Jesus Christ Himself: the Apostle Paul. Paul, you studied under Gamaliel. Paul, you’re a lawyer. You’re a religionist. You’re proficient in many languages. Paul, you tell us what you think of the accused. Paul says, *“He is the firstborn of every creature, the image of the invisible God.”* (Colossians 1:15) Thank you, Paul. Be seated.

### **6. Martha**

Well, we’ve had all men to testify. Let’s bring a woman in. Martha, Martha, He stayed in your home. You were there with Him in moments of fellowship around the table. Martha, tell us what you think, with a woman’s instincts. Martha says, *“I believe...thou art...the Son of God.”* (John 11:27) Thank you, Martha, for that precious testimony.

### **7. An Angel**

I’m going to do something that’s never been done in an earthly court. I’m going to summon to give a testimony now a holy angel. Angel, would you step out of glory? Would you come and tell us who this is? And I see the angel as he bows his head and covers his face with his wing and he says, *“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”* (Luke 2:11) That’s what the angels have to say about Him.

### **8. Almighty God**

And now I want us to get very reverent because in this courtroom tonight, humbly, with a trembling heart and lips, I ask the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Universe, Almighty God, would you tell us what you think of this One? And the Father says, *“Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”* (Mark 1:11)

## **B. Unfriendly Witnesses**

Somebody says, “It’s a one-sided trial. You’ve just had His friends to testify. How about some people on the other side?” All right, let’s have some people on the other side.

### **1. A Pharisee**

I want to call a Pharisee. Pharisee, you tell us, what do you have against this man? The Pharisee sneers, and he curls his lip; and he says, “*This man receiveth sinners.*” (Luke 15:2) Thank God He does—thank God He does.

### **2. Caiaphas**

Caiaphas, you were the high priest. You condemned Him to death. What do you have against Him? “He said, ‘I’m the Son of God.’” (Matthew 26:63–65) Oh, I see, Caiaphas. Be seated.

### **3. Pilate**

Pilate, you signed His death warrant. Tell us what you think of Him. Pilate says, “I, having examined Him, find no fault in Him.” (Luke 23:4; John 18:38; John 19:4,6) Is that right? Then why did you let Him be crucified?

### **4. The Centurion**

There was a centurion. You put a spear in His side. Tell us what you think of Him. And the centurion says, “*Truly this was the Son of God.*” (Matthew 27:54)

### **5. The Dying Thief**

There was a thief who died next to Him on a cross. Dying thief, surely if a man were to tell the truth, he ought to tell it with his dying breath. What do you think of Him? And that thief says, “*This man hath done nothing amiss.*” (Luke 23:41)

### **6. Judas**

Oh, dear friend, I want to call someone from the very pit of hell. Judas, you sold Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. You betrayed Jesus Christ with a kiss. Judas, stand here. Tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Who is this, and what do you think of Him? And I see Judas as he says, “*I have betrayed...innocent blood.*” (Matthew 27:4)

### **7. A Demon**

“Well,” you say, “you’ve called an angel.” Yes, I did. Let me call a demon now. I call a demon up from the very pit of hell. And I say, demon, I bind you and adjure you to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Who is this? And I hear the demon say, “[*We*] know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.” (Mark 1:24) Even the demons confess that Jesus is Lord. My dear friend, the devils in hell believe and tremble. (James 2:19)



## Conclusion

Now listen—listen. I'm going to ask you—you've heard the testimony; you've heard the friends of Jesus testify; you've heard the enemies of Jesus testify; you've heard men testify; you've heard women testify; you've heard voices long ago testify; you've heard this voice tonight testify; you have heard angels and demons; you have heard Almighty God testify—but now I'm going to ask you the question: Are you ready for it? Listen. What do you think of Christ? I'm asking you that question. I'm not asking your neighbor. I'm asking you that question now, not tomorrow. What do you think of Christ? And I'm going to ask you another question: What will you do with Jesus, which is called Christ? And I want to remind you that you will either accept Him or reject Him. Are you listening? You will either crown Him or crucify Him. You will either confess Him or deny Him. You cannot ignore Him. It is not enough to admire Him. You cannot shift the decision. Your pride will tell you, "Don't make that decision." Public opinion will tell you, "Be careful what you do." Possessions and position will say, "Don't risk me." The voice of reason says, "Answer right." The voice of a loved one says, "Answer right." The voice of conscience says, "Answer right." The voice of God says, "Answer right." And answer you will. What will you do with Jesus?

I am telling you tonight, you will do something with Jesus. Everyone here tonight will say "yes" or "no." You will receive Him; you will reject Him. You will honor Him or you will shame Him. You will crown Him or you will crucify Him. You will walk out under the blood or over the blood. But you cannot be neutral. You must do something with Jesus Christ. And if you tell me you will not decide, you just decided not to decide. And that's the worst decision you can make, for *"he that is not with me is against me."* (Matthew 12:30; Luke 11:23) I am telling you, long ago, long ago, Jesus was in Pilate's hands. Tonight, Pilate is in His hands. Tonight, Jesus is in your hands. One of these days soon, you will be in His hands.†

# What Shall I Do with Christ?

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: April 16, 1995**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 27:22**

## Outline

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## Introduction

We're going to ask a question today, the question that Pilate asked, the Roman governor who delivered Jesus up to be crucified. He asked this question two thousand years ago, but the question is as fresh and as pertinent today as it was then. Here is the question: *"Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified"* (Matthew 27:22). "What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" This question is a personal question. You, like Pilate, must answer it. This question is a pertinent question. We're not talking about some other personality. We're not talking about some denomination. We're not talking about some idea. We're talking about one who claims to be the Son of God. And this question is a pressing question. It is before you right now. And before you leave this congregation, if you've not already settled that question, you will make a decision concerning that question. Everybody in this building will answer one way or another; whether vocally or by their actions, they will answer this question: What shall I do with Christ?

Now Pilate had Jesus Christ on his hand, and therefore Jesus Christ was in Pilate's hand at that day. And, today, Jesus Christ is in your hand. But the time came when Pilate was in Jesus' hand, and the time will come when you will be in Jesus' hand. Jesus was standing before Pilate, but at the judgment, Pilate stands before Jesus. Jesus is standing before you today, through the Spirit and through the Word. But, one day, as surely as I stand here, you will stand before the Lord Jesus Christ. And so this question is a very pertinent, a very personal, a very pressing question: What shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?

### I. The Voices That Spoke to Pilate

Now Pilate had to do something with Jesus. He was faced with the inevitable, unavoidable Jesus Christ. And so are you. And I want you to know that Pilate did not make the decision that he made to have Jesus crucified, he didn't make that decision without warning. There were some voices that spoke to Pilate. There were some voices that confronted him.

#### A. The Voice of Reason

For example, there was a voice of reason. The Bible says that Pilate knew that it was for envy that they had delivered Jesus to him (Matthew 27:18; Mark 15:10). Now Pilate was no fool. You don't get to be the Roman governor by being a fool. And the voice of reason told Pilate that this whole thing was a charade. And I'm going to say something to you, sir. If you will use the voice of reason Pilate failed to use, you'll give your heart to Jesus Christ. The voice of reason spoke to Pilate.

## **B. The Voice of Conscience**

I'll tell you something else that spoke to Pilate: not only reason, but conscience. Pilate looked at him, Pilate listened to all of the witnesses, and Pilate said, "I, having examined the evidence, find no fault in Him" (Luke 23:4; John 18:38; John 19:4, 6). His conscience reverberated through him, and he knew indeed, not only by reason, but by conscience, that Jesus Christ was who He claimed to be.

## **C. The Voice of a Loved One**

But another voice spoke to Pilate. His wife somehow was in a touch with God, and his wife had a dream. And she came to Pilate, and she sent word to Pilate and said, "Have nothing to do with this man, because this just man, I've suffered many things in a dream because of Him" (Matthew 27:19). And God, through the voice of a loved one, had spoken to Pilate. And, again, I'm speaking to people, and the voice of reason has spoken to you. The voice of conscience has spoken to you. And the voice of a loved one has spoken to you. Maybe it's your mother, maybe your dad, maybe your wife, maybe your children, maybe your pastor, maybe your Sunday School teacher, but God has sent to you a very special messenger in love to tell you to give your heart to Jesus Christ and to crown Him as Lord of lords and King of kings.

## **D. The Voice of the Lord**

But you know the greatest voice that spoke to Pilate? It was the voice of God. He was face to face with Jesus Christ, and Jesus said, "*Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice*" (John 18:37). Jesus Christ and Pilate were face to face, and Pilate heard. Pilate had his ability. Pilate had his opportunity to give his heart to Jesus Christ. There were voices—voices that confronted him.

# **II. The Values That Controlled Pilate**

But, friend, there were values that controlled him. I mean, it was very difficult for Pilate to give his heart to Christ. It was very difficult for Christ to be real in Pilate's life. There were some values that were squeezing Pilate in. What were they?

## **A. Public Opinion and Popularity**

Well, number one: public opinion. The Bible tells us that Pilate allowed Jesus Christ to be crucified because he wanted the crowd to be content. I mean, in order to give contentment to the crowd, the Bible says, in order to placate them, in order to keep a riot from being made, Pilate said, "Let Him be crucified" (Matthew 27:24–26; Mark 15:15; Luke 23:23–24). Do you understand? It was public opinion that was squeezing Pilate into a mold.

And some of you are afraid that, if you gave your heart to Jesus Christ, you would be laughed at, perhaps on the job, perhaps in your business, perhaps at the university, perhaps at the hospital. People would look down upon you. You'd be out of step with the crowd that you run in.

### **B. Position and Possession**

But there was another pressure that conformed him, another value that conformed him; not only public opinion and popularity, but there was something else. It was position and possession. You see, Pilate had a cushy job. I mean, he had all of the lavish amenities that a Roman governor would have. And the Jewish council said—listen—“Jesus claims to be king, and if you don't allow Jesus Christ to be crucified, we'll send word to Caesar, and Caesar will deal with you. You will lose your position and your possession” (John 19:12). And Pilate made a decision to crucify Jesus Christ, because what buttered his bread determined his conduct. And there are people like that today who still would see that Jesus Christ is crucified before they would give up position and possession.

### **C. Pride**

But I'll tell you the main thing that conformed Pilate: not public opinion, not position, not possession, but pride. Pilate was an egotist, stuffed full of himself. He said to Jesus, “Why don't you talk to me? Don't you know that I have the power to crucify you or to release you?” (Matthew 27:13; Mark 15:4; John 19:10). I mean, the man is reeking with pride. Many a man, many a woman, today has been escorted to hell bound in the cold chains of pride that have been forged on the anvil of a hard heart.

## **III. The Verdict That Condemned Pilate**

But see not only the voices that confronted him; see not only the values that controlled him; but see the verdict that condemned him. Pilate said, after all of these pressures, “All right, I am going to wash my hands of Jesus.” And in a mock ceremony he took a basin of water, washed his lily white, fence-straddling politician's hands, held them up, and said, “*I am innocent of the blood of this just man: see ye to it*” (Matthew 27:24).

And it is true that Pilate did not spit in the face of Jesus. It is true that Pilate's hands were not the hands that jerked the beard from His face. It is true that Pilate did not hold that club that battered and beat and bruised the face of Jesus. It is true that Pilate did not hold the hammer that drove those searing nails into the quivering palms of Jesus Christ. It is true that Pilate did not hold the spear that was rammed into His side. But eternity will show that Pilate's decision not to decide was the worst decision of all, for Jesus Christ said, “*He that is not with me is against me*” (Matthew 12:30; Luke 11:23). And Pilate thought that

by allowing the crowd to decide whether it would be Jesus or Barabbas that somehow he could wash his hands, that somehow he could be neutral of this whole thing. But his decision not to decide was the worst decision that he could make, because he decided against the Lord Jesus and allowed Jesus to be crucified. That first trial was a mockery of justice.

So, today, we're going to put Jesus Christ on trial again. I'm going to empanel this choir and this congregation as a jury. I'm going to put Jesus Christ here in the seat of the accused, and we're going to hear some evidence again. I'm going to ask you to listen to the testimony of people concerning Jesus Christ. The two questions are, "What think ye of Christ?" The second question is, "What shall I do with Jesus who is called the Christ?"

### **A. Friendly Witnesses**

And so we're going to bring some witnesses here this morning, and I'm going to ask them, "What think ye of Christ?" And these witnesses are going to give words to you out of the pages of Holy Scripture. Every testimony will be backed up by the inerrant, infallible Word of God as we go back into time.

#### **1. John the Baptist**

First of all, I want to bring this morning to testify a man called the forerunner of Jesus, a wilderness man, John the Baptist. John the Baptist, you were related by blood to the Lord Jesus Christ in some ways. John, you were the one who baptized Him. John, I want to ask you a question. What think ye of Christ? And I want you to hear that rugged individualist, John the Baptist, as he looks at the One in the prisoner's dock, and this is what John has to say about Him" *"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world"* (John 1:29). Thank you, John. I appreciate that testimony.

#### **2. Simon Peter**

I want to call now the big fisherman, Simon Peter. He was always ready to speak. Surely we can get Simon Peter to give a testimony. Simon Peter, tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. What think ye of Christ? I want you to hear the big fisherman as he says, *"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"* (Matthew 16:16). Thank you, Simon Peter, for that testimony. That's a wonderful a testimony.

#### **3. The Apostle John**

You know whom I'd like to call now? I'd like to call the Apostle John. John, you're a deep thinker. John, you're a mystic. John, you spent three years in the presence of Jesus. What think ye of Christ? I want you to see the beloved Apostle John as he looks into the face of Jesus and he says this: *"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld*

*his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,)* full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). What a wonderful testimony! Thank you, John. You may be seated.

#### **4. The Apostle Paul**

I want to call now one of the greatest intellects the world has ever known, a man who would have the equivalency, if he lived today, of a triple Ph.D., a man conversant in many languages, a world traveler, a scholar, a philosopher. Paul the Apostle, stand before this jury, and tell us what do you think of Christ. I see the Apostle Paul as he says, “[He] is the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15). Thank you, Paul.

#### **5. Mary, the Sister of Martha**

Did I hear someone say we need a woman to testify? Mary, you and Martha had Him in your house many times. Mary, would you tell the jury the truth and the whole truth. What think ye of Christ? Mary looks at Him with loving eyes and says, “I believe you are the Son of God.”

#### **6. An Angel**

I’m going to do something that’s never been done in an earthly trial. I’m going to bring now an angel to testify, a holy angel out of the glory. Angel, with reverence we stand here and ask you, would you testify to this court what think ye of Christ? I hear the angel as he says, “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11). Thank you, holy angel.

### **B. Unfriendly Witnesses**

Do I hear someone in the jury say, “But this trial is all so one-sided. All you’ve brought are His friends. Let’s hear the other side.” That’s good. Let’s hear those who clamored for His blood and wanted Him crucified. Let’s hear what they have to say.

#### **1. The Pharisees**

Pharisees, you hated Him. You wanted Him crucified. Why? “*This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them*” (Luke 15:2). Thank you, Pharisees.

#### **2. Caiaphas**

Caiaphas, you were the high priest. You said He ought to be crucified. Tell us, Caiaphas, why. “He said, I am the Son of God” (Matthew 26:63–65). Oh, thank you, Caiaphas. You may be seated.

#### **3. A Thief**

Let me call a thief. He’s a street person, an insurrectionist, maybe guilty of murder, certainly in that day adjudicated worthy of crucifixion. You were there with Him on the

cross. You beheld how He died. What do you think of Him? Hear that dying thief as he says, *"This man hath done nothing amiss"* (Luke 23:41).

#### **4. Judas**

Judas, Judas, you betrayed Him. You sold Him for thirty pieces of silver. Judas, come up from the pit. Tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. What think ye of Christ? Hear Judas as he says, *"I have betrayed innocent blood"* (Matthew 27:4).

#### **5. The Roman Centurion**

I call one of the Roman soldiers, a centurion. You watched Him die. You placed Him on that hellish cross. You watched as they drove that spear into His side. What think ye of Christ? *"Truly this was the Son of God"* (Matthew 27:54).

#### **6. A Demon**

"But," you say, "after you called an angel, why don't you call a demon?" All right. Filthy demon, tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. What think ye of Christ? *"[We] know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God"* (Mark 1:24). Thank you, demon. Back to the pit where you belong.

### **C. Modern Witnesses**

But somebody says, "But, pastor, these are people who lived so long ago. Don't you have any modern witnesses who can speak?" Yes. Witnesses, will you take the stand, please? I have some here today who would like to tell you what they think of Christ, because, you see, He's not dead. He's alive. I'm going to ask, witness, if you'll take the stand, give your name, and answer the question, What think ye of Christ?

#### **1. Don Bramlett**

Don Bramlett: "My name is Don Bramlett, and I know Jesus is alive today and still changing lives today, because I grew up in a home where my dad was an all-pro linebacker, but he was also a drunk, a reprobate, who mentally and physically abused my mom. We had everything the world would say is success. We had fame, we had fortune, and we had a house that four people lived in, but we didn't have a home. And, you know, I had a mom who was a good lady, who did all the right things, but through a Bible study she learned that doing all the right things wasn't going to get her to heaven. And trusting Jesus was the only way that Mom was going to be able to get to heaven. And after Mom trusted Jesus she immediately started praying for my dad, and then through her prayers two men came by our house and shared the Lord with my dad. And through their visit he started reading his Bible. And when Dad started reading his Bible, he came to a verse of Scripture, John 3:16, that we all know. And he came to the word *whosoever*, and that *whosoever* meant him, and Dad became a Christian that night.



Dad, you know, I immediately saw a changed man. He started coming home at 5:00 sober. He started telling my brother Andy and me how much he loved us. He would hug us and kiss us. And not only that: you know, even today we still hug and kiss each other and tell each other how much we love each other. But, because I wanted to be like my dad so much, I walked the aisle at church, was baptized, but my life had never changed. I didn't have that personal relationship with Jesus. You know, I watched my dad for two years, and he shared a verse of Scripture with me. Second Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he's a new creature. Old things are passed away. Behold, all things become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). And through that verse, I went to bed that night and I trusted Jesus as my personal Savior, and the Lord changed my life. And not only that, you know, now I want to become more like my Heavenly Father, not my earthly father. And, you know, I've had some problems, you know, since then, but I know I have the Problem-solver living inside of me.

The Lord has truly blessed me with a beautiful, loving wife, with two beautiful and wonderful children, two little girls, and if you don't believe me, just ask their grandfather. He'll back me up on that. And, you know, I'd like to close by just reading a quick paragraph. It says—I know this is Easter, but I believe we celebrate Christmas throughout the whole year—it says, 'All I want for Christmas is for my family and me to have a very merry Christmas like the other two Christmases we've had. My dad was out drinking and fighting three years ago. We were all worrying about him and wondering when he would come back. While opening our presents, we were so miserable through those years. Now we have a happy and merry Christmas. After my daddy accepted Jesus in his heart, we have a lot to be thankful for. This is all I want for Christmas, and I've got it.' I wrote that in the eighth grade, and now that's why I know Jesus is alive."

## **2. Ted Minor**

Ted Minor: "My name is Ted Minor, and this is my wife Lily, and we're here to testify of the faithfulness of Jesus Christ and His comfort. I've been saved for twenty-five years, but the supernatural powers of Christ that changed me at thirteen years old was so evident with something that happened to me four and a half years ago. Four and a half years ago, Lily and I lost a little daughter, two-and-a-half-year-old daughter, just out here on the fields, and I'm here to testify that Jesus Christ, that no one could give me the comfort, except He be the Son of God. You know, as I reached over and picked up, as a father would do, as I picked up my little daughter, it was a tragic accident, as I carried her in that van to the hospital, you know, before I even cried out to God, He was there. He was faithful. And as I held my daughter in my hands, I don't know when the life left her, but as I held her in my arms, He was holding me in His arms. And, you know, the days after that, His comfort, not

only His spiritual comfort, His body comfort and the body of Christ, and His faithfulness in His Word, kept us together strong. We had a strong marriage before, but it's got us even stronger."

Lily Minor: "As a mom, that night when I saw Joyce, her eyes were looking for me. She knew she was in trouble, and my arms couldn't reach her. But I know that, even though mine couldn't, Jesus lifted her and carried her home. I thought I would never smile, but God gave me something. He gave me His peace. He gave me His love, His grace that I can't even tell you. Most of all, He gave me His joy, and I was able to smile again. I know that I know that I know, and I can promise you with everything that's in me, Jesus Christ is alive, and He is the Son of God. We know that we'll see Joy again."

Amen. Thank you, witness.

### **3. Ed Rollins**

Ed Rollins: "My name is Ed Rollins, and this is my wife Barbara, and we would like to testify that Jesus Christ is the risen Son of God. It was twenty years ago that I asked God to reveal Himself to me in a personal way, and, well, you see, at the time I was a young man with a new home in Germantown, a new car, two beautiful and healthy children, but I was living a lifestyle in the fast lane and going faster all the time, and had all but had destroyed our marriage. And it was Mother's Day that I was sitting in church, and I asked God to send someone to show me the way. And it was two days later that I was having lunch with a friend in a restaurant at Interstate 240 and Poplar Avenue, and we were discussing how we should live a better life and change our lifestyle.

Nothing really was resolved, and as I was leaving the restaurant I was backing out, and I looked into the restaurant, and I saw a man whom I had never met but I recognized from the newspaper. I pulled my car back in and went in, and I said, 'Pardon me. Are you Adrian Rogers?' And he said, 'Yes, I am.' And I said, 'I need to talk to you personally.' So he was there having lunch with breakfast with his wife Joyce. We went to a separate table. I shared with him my problems. And he gave me his telephone number, and he said, 'Call me in an hour. I'll be home.' I went home and told Barbara what had happened, and I called Dr. Rogers, and he asked me to come to his home. I did, and invited Barbara to go with me. When we got there in his study, he didn't share a bunch of *dos* and *don'ts* of marriage, but what he shared with us was Jesus Christ, and he asked us to pray and to receive Christ into our hearts.

Our lives were dramatically changed, and I learned later that Dr. Rogers was to be at a meeting that morning, and that that morning his friend had forgotten to pick him up, and that he spoke audibly standing there in his kitchen, and said, 'Lord, what would you have me to do today?' and the Lord impressed on him to take Joyce to breakfast, and even where

to take her. Was this a coincidence? No, it was no coincidence. It was just an answer of prayer from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

Barbara Rollins: “I, too, would like to testify about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I know that God is real, that Jesus is the Son of God, and that He died for our sins. And I know that He heals broken hearts and mends broken homes, and I am living proof, and my husband and my children are living proof that Jesus died on the cross for us, and that it was not in vain. And I’d like to take the opportunity to say, thank you, Jesus, for wearing that painful crown of thorns for me and for all those here who love you and know you.”

#### **D. The Supreme Witness**

Now, today, you’ve heard the testimony, the witnesses. You’ve heard the witnesses of Jesus’ friends. You’ve heard the witnesses of His enemies, those who clamored for His death. You’ve heard the witness of those who said, “He lives, and He changes lives.” But now in all reverence, in all humility, I want us to get very quiet and very still, because there’s one more witness I’m going to call today. I’m going to call today the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Universes, the One who sits upon the bench for eternity. I’m going to ask Almighty God, What think ye of Christ? And I want you to hear Him as He says, *“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”* (Matthew 3:17; Mark 1:11; 2 Peter 1:17).

Now, listen to this scripture, if you will, friend, from 1 John. Here’s what God says in His holy Word: *“If we receive the witness of men,”*—and we have—*“the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son”* (1 John 5:9–10). God Almighty out of the glory says, *“This is my beloved Son.”* And God has given us the written record. And God has given us the witness of the Spirit. But, Holy Father, forgive. We don’t want to be impertinent. But, Father, they nailed Him on a cross. They said He was blood-guilty. Father, what do you say? God the Father says, “He was guilty: guilty of love in the first degree, guilty of loving us and taking our guilt upon Himself.” But, God, what evidence do you give? God the Father says, “You want evidence? I will give you evidence. He is shown to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:4). This is the testimony, rock-ribbed evidence. Jesus Christ came out of that tomb living, risen, victorious.

“Pastor, how do you know? How do you know? Perhaps they made up the story. Perhaps His apostles were knaves and liars.” Oh? My friend, a man may live for a lie, but few if any will die for a lie. These seal their testimony with their lives. Men lie to get out of trouble, not to get into trouble. But you could not keep them quiet, because they knew that He had been raised from the grave. And to silence them you might as well have told the sun

not to shine. God says, *"This is my beloved Son."* The evidence that He's not just another religious teacher is that God raised Him from the dead. And the Book of Acts says He was shown alive *"by many infallible proofs"* (Acts 1:3).

## **Conclusion**

Now you've heard the testimony today, and now I'm going to ask the jury to make a decision. I'm going to ask you now to make a solemn decision, because I remind you that Jesus Christ is in your hands, but I also remind you that one day you'll be in His hands. He is before you today, but soon, and perhaps sooner than you realize, you'll be before Him. Now, what can you do with Jesus? Well, you can crown Him or crucify Him. What can you do with Jesus? You can accept Him or reject Him. What can you do with Jesus? You can confess Him or deny Him. But you cannot ignore Him. You are face to face with the unavoidable, inevitable Jesus Christ, and you say, "Well, I will not decide." You just decided not to decide, which was your decision. And Jesus said of your decision, in Matthew 12, verse 30, *"He that is not with me is against me"* (Matthew 12:30). You'll walk out of this building today either under the blood or over the blood. You'll trample His blood beneath your feet, or you'll be under the blood for the forgiveness of sin. Don't try to pull the trick that Pilate tried to pull. It didn't work, and it never will work. The question is, What think ye of Christ? What shall I do with Jesus who is called the Christ?

Would you bow your heads? Imagine the ballot in your hand right now. Every head bowed, every eye closed. Is He guilty? Was He a fake, a fraud, an imposter, a liar, a charlatan, a knave? Guilty? Guilty of blasphemy? Was He guilty? If so, then in your heart and in your mind, mark the ballot: He's guilty. But if not, if you believe the only guilt He was guilty of was love in the first degree, that's His guilt, you believe He's the Son of God, left heaven and came, suffered, bled, and died, was buried, and rose again, if you believe that in your heart and in your mind, mark your ballot that way. Have you done it? Remember the question is not, what will you do with the preacher, not what will you do with the church, not what will you do with the denomination. What will you do with Jesus? Have you decided? Guilty or innocent?

Now, here's the test of your character. Are you willing by faith today to live by that decision? It would be better never to have heard of Him than to believe He's the Son of God and refuse to bow the knee. He's not looking for admiration. Don't try to admire Him. Pilate tried that. Don't tip the hat. You must bow the knee. Would you say right now, "Lord Jesus, come into my heart"? Pray a prayer like this: "Lord Jesus, I believe you're the Son of God. I believe you died on that cross for my sin. And I believe that God raised you from the dead. I

believe it. I believe the testimony that I've heard today. And now, Lord Jesus, I trust you to save me. And I'll not be ashamed of you. I'll confess you as my Lord."

# What Shall I Do with Jesus?

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: April 23, 2000**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 27:22**

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## Introduction

**W**hat a great God we serve! Would you take God's precious Word and find Matthew chapter 27. I want to speak to you today about the greatest question ever asked. And we're going to find that question in a few moments in verse 22, but I want to give you the setting for that question.

You know that Pontius Pilate was the governor of Judea at the time Jesus was adjudicated and judged worthy of death, was sentenced to die upon that cross. And Pilate had Jesus before him, and he had to make a decision concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. And here is the great question that's found there in verse 22. Pilate asked this question: "*What shall I do...with Jesus which is called Christ?*" (Matthew 27:22). I submit to you that no greater question could be asked than that question: What shall I do with Jesus?

Now at that particular time Jesus was before Pilate, being judged by Pilate. There's coming a time when Pilate will stand before Jesus to be judged by Jesus. Pilate had Jesus on his hands and in his hands. Now Pilate is in the hands of Jesus.

Now, what does that have to do with all of us? Well, in a very real sense Pilate represents every man, woman, boy and girl upon the face of the earth who has asked the same question: What will I do with Jesus? As Jesus was before Pilate, Jesus is before you. As Jesus was in Pilate's hands, Jesus is in your hands. But one of these days, as Pilate will stand before Jesus, so will you stand before Jesus.

So I'm going to ask you today to answer that question: What will you do with Jesus? And let me tell you about that question. It is a very, very important question.

First of all, it is a present question. Not just simply what did Pilate do, you're going to answer that question today. What will you do? And it is not only a present question; it is a personal question. Not what is somebody going to do with Jesus, very personally, you're going to decide what you're going to do with the Lord Jesus Christ. And, thirdly, it's a very pertinent question. Your destiny hangs on your answer to this question: What will you do with the Lord Jesus Christ? A very pertinent question. And it is a pressing question: you will answer. You say, "No, I'm not going to answer that question." Oh, yes, you will. You will answer the question one way or the other. You say, "I'm not going to decide." You just decided not to decide, and that was your decision. You're going to answer that question. It is inescapable, unavoidable.

You will answer the question: What will you do with Jesus? Everybody in this room will accept Him, reject Him, confess Him, deny Him, crown Him, crucify Him. Nobody can be neutral today. You will do something with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now I want us to see Pilate's decision. I want us to see the tragic decision that Pilate made, and pray God that you'll not repeat the awful thing that Pilate did.

## I. The Voices That Confronted Pilate

Now, first of all, Pilate has Jesus there in front of him. Jesus is the unavoidable, inescapable, inevitable fact of life. And so here Pilate is faced with Jesus. And I want you to notice the voices that confronted Pilate on that day.

### A. The Voice of Reason

First of all, there was what I want to call the voice of reason. Look, if you will, in verse 18. The Bible says of Pilate, *“For he knew that for envy they had delivered him”* (Matthew 27:18). Now Pilate was reading the hearts and minds of those who brought Jesus before him. They were crying out for the blood of Jesus. They wanted Jesus crucified. These were the religious leaders of that day. But Pilate was no fool. You don’t get to be the governor of Judea under the Romans by being a fool. He knew men, and he knew that for envy they had delivered Jesus. He knew that the charges were trumped up against Jesus.

And so, what voice, first of all, spoke to Pilate? It was the voice of reason. He knew better when he allowed Jesus Christ to be crucified. And the voice of reason had spoken to Pilate. And the voice of reason is speaking to you. If you will be reasonable, if you will do what Pilate did, examine the evidence and listen to the witnesses, you will have to say that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, worthy of all honor, glory, majesty, and praise. And so for a person to crucify Jesus, he must also crucify reason.

You see, C. S. Lewis has taught us this, that Jesus Christ is one of three persons. Here is a tri-dilemma. Here are the three options you have concerning Jesus Christ. We all know that Jesus is a fact of history. Now, who was Jesus? Was He a liar, someone who knew He was not God, but pretended to be, for some knavish reason? Do you believe that Jesus Christ is a liar? Or else, if He were not a liar, was He a lunatic, some mad man who thought He was God, but wasn’t—deranged, guilty of megalomania? Or was He the Lord? Was He who He said He was and claimed to be? Those are your three choices. Choose one: liar, Lord, or lunatic. What does reason tell you? The voice of reason confronted Pilate.

### B. The Voice of a Loved One

But there’s another voice that confronted Pilate, and it was the voice of a loved one. Look in verse 19: *“When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him”* (Matthew 27:19). Now Pilate’s wife was somehow in contact with God, and God had spoken to her, and she went to warn Pilate. Is there anybody who has not had a loved one to speak to them about Jesus Christ—perhaps a



father, a mother, a brother or sister? Is there some man here, you are hell-bound, but your loving wife, with tears, has pled with you to do the right thing concerning Jesus Christ?

### **C. The Voice of Conscience**

You see, there were voices that confronted him: the voice of reason, the voice of a loved one. But I'll tell you another voice that confronted him—and it was the voice of his own conscience. You see, Pilate's conscience thundered within him. He knew that Jesus was innocent. Look in verse 23: *"And the governor said..."*—they were crying out for His blood, by the way—*"And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands"* (Matthew 27:23–24). He felt dirty. He felt grimy. He felt that somehow he was being soiled by this whole thing.

Pilate, in his conscience, knew that what he was doing was wrong, and so do many here today. You've never given your heart to Jesus. Reason says that you should. Loved ones say that you should. And your own conscience reverberates in your soul to tell you that you need to do the right thing with the Lord Jesus.

### **D. The Voice of Jesus Christ Himself**

But there was another voice that spoke to Pilate, and that's the voice that I really want to bear down on—and it was the voice of Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus spoke to Pilate. Put in your margin John chapter 18, verse 37: *"Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice"* (John 18:37). Pilate heard the voice of Jesus.

You say, "Well, Adrian, I may have heard the voice of reason, I may have heard the voice of a loved one, I may have heard the voice of my own conscience, but I've never heard the voice of Jesus." Oh, yes, you have. You just heard it. I read it from the Word of God. It is as much the voice of Jesus Christ as if Jesus Christ were standing here in the flesh speaking to you. You say, "I'm listening to you, Adrian." No, you're not listening to me. I'm just the Western Union boy. I am delivering the message. It is Jesus who is speaking out of the pages of His Word, and you today have to face the voice of Jesus.

## **II. The Values That Conformed Pilate**

There were voices that confronted him. But now, listen. There were values that conformed him. There were certain things, there were certain pressures on Pilate, that warred against his making the right decision. For example, what were some of those

values that conformed him?

### **A. Public Opinion**

Number one: public opinion. Look, if you will, in verse 20: *“But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas...”* (Matthew 27:20). Now there was a multitude, a crowd, that was clamoring for Barabbas, who was a criminal to be released, and for Jesus to be crucified. And Pilate was a pussyfooting politician. He was reading the polls. He wanted to do the thing that the crowds would want.

As a matter of fact, put in your margin Mark chapter 15, verse 15: *“And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified”* (Mark 15:15). Think about that: *“willing to content the people,”* allowed Jesus to be whipped and crucified. Public opinion. Public opinion. That’s what molded this man.

Did you know that when I finish this message this morning I’m going to ask you to make a public decision for Jesus Christ? I’m going to ask you not only to decide in your heart, but I’m going to ask you to do something publicly, outwardly, openly, unashamedly. And at that moment a pressure will come to you, and you’ll wonder, “Well, what will people think? Not only these church people, what will people think where I work, or where I go to school, or in my neighborhood?” And we’re so concerned about public opinion and wanting to please the crowd, that sometimes we crucify Jesus in order to please the crowd.

### **B. Pride**

But I’ll tell you something else that conformed Pilate. And it was this matter of pride. Pilate was a very proud man. We read in John chapter 19 that Pilate *“went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou?”* In other words, “Where did you come from?” *“But Jesus gave him no answer.”* Now, listen to this: *“Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?”* (John 19:9–10). Now, here’s a man so full of himself, Pilate. He’s saying, in effect, “Why are you silent? Don’t you know whom you’re talking to? I am the governor. I can have you crucified. I can set you free.” It’s very obvious that Pilate is an egotist, stuffed full of himself. I love what Jesus said to him. Jesus said, “You don’t have any power, but that which was given you from above” (John 19:11). Thank God for that.

### **C. Position and Possessions**

What was it that was squeezing Pilate? Well, obviously there was pride that was

squeezing him in and molding him. But, you know, the main pressure that Pilate had upon him, it was the pressure of position and possessions. You see, Pilate had a soft job. He was the governor. And whatever buttered his bread determined his conduct. If Pilate did not make the politically correct decision, if he did not do the politically correct thing, he could lose his job.

Put in your margin John 19, verse 12: *“And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him; but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar’s friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar”* (John 19:12). Now Pilate said, “You know, they may go to Rome, or send a message to Rome, and say that I’m consorting with another king. And everybody knows that only Caesar is lord around here. And Caesar may get angry, and I may lose my job, or worse than that.”

And there are some of you, you’re afraid that if you gave your heart to Jesus Christ and did what you know that you ought to do, it may cost you. It may cost you a promotion. It may cost some of you material goods. “Well,” you say, “pastor, a man’s got to live.” No, a man’s got to die. And after that he’s got to face God.

### **III. The Verdict That Condemned Pilate**

But, again, here is Pilate. He’s being molded. He’s being squeezed. There were voices that confronted him, and there were values that controlled him. But now I want you to notice the verdict that condemned him. What he did was he said, “Let him be crucified.” Now, why did he do this? Why did Pilate do this? And how did he do it? Well, we know that he had light. We know there was pressure upon him. But I want you to notice how he kind of fence-straddled, how he pussyfooted, how he tried to get through this thing.

#### **A. He Tried to Ignore Jesus**

First of all, he did what many in this building may try to do—and that was simply to ignore Jesus, just to somehow put Him off, put Him away. Read there in John chapter 18, verse 31: *“Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death”* (John 18:31).

Now, what does all of this mean? They brought Jesus to Pilate. They said, “Look, we want you to put this man to death.” Pilate said, “What’s He done?” “Well, He says, ‘I am the Messiah; I am God.’” Pilate said, “Oh, look. You take Him. You judge Him according to your law.” Now, what was he saying? He was saying, “Don’t bother me with this. I have more important things to do. I am not interested in making a decision concerning this person. You make the decision.”

Pilate thought that perhaps he could ignore Jesus. And perhaps there are some of

you who have already tuned me out. You say, “That’s for all you folks over there. That’s for all you religious people. Don’t bother me with this.” You think that simply ignoring Jesus will answer the solution. That’s what Pilate tried to do. He tried to ignore Jesus. But Jesus was inevitable, unavoidable, inescapable. And the Jesus that you’re trying to ignore one day you will face in the judgment.

### **B. He Tried to Shift the Decision to Someone Else**

Number two: not only did he try to ignore Jesus, but he tried to shift the decision to someone else. When he heard that Jesus was from Galilee, then he said, “Well, Herod rules up there in Galilee. Herod’s the King of Galilee. Just let’s let Herod make the decision.” And so read in Luke 23, verses 6 and 7: *“When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilaean. And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time”* (Luke 23:6–7). Herod was the King of Galilee, and Pilate said, “Well, that’s fine. I’ll just let somebody else decide this.”

May I tell you something? This is a personal question. Sin is personal, and so is your decision, and nobody can make this decision for you; your father, your mother, your rabbi, your priest, some politician—no one can make this decision for you. You cannot shift the decision to somebody else. You have a decision to make. And so, when Pilate sent Jesus to Herod, Herod just sent him right back to Pilate, and Pilate had Jesus on his hands again.

It reminds me of a man who bought a new boomerang and killed himself trying to throw the old one away. Jesus is right back to Pilate. There’s no way that you’re going to shift the decision.

### **C. He Tried to Simply Admire Jesus**

Now, here’s something else he did, and this is the most despicable thing, I believe. He sought simply to admire Jesus. He thought if he could give some platitudes about Jesus, if he could say some nice things about Jesus, then perhaps it would be all right. Luke 23, verses 14 and 15: *“[Pilate] said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him: no, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him”* (Luke 23:14–15).

Now, think about it. Pilate, who allowed Jesus to be crucified, who by his own words could have released Jesus or crucified Jesus, said this: “I find no fault in him.” And yet he allowed Him to be crucified. Do you know what he was doing? He was thinking if he could just say some nice things about Jesus, that would be enough.

Now, look up here and I want to tell you something. It would have been better for Pilate to have found fault in Jesus. Of course, there was none. But it would have been better for him to have fault in Jesus, or even to have thought that he found fault in Jesus, than to find no fault in Him and allow Him to be crucified. It would have been better for him to have been a pagan who'd never heard of Jesus than to say, "I find no fault in Him," and then simply admire Him and then allow Him to be crucified.

Now many try this trick, many try this route, to say nice things about Jesus: "Oh, I believe that Jesus was a great man. Oh, I believe that Jesus was a great teacher." My precious friend, listen to me. *It is not enough for you to tip the hat to Jesus; you must bow the knee to Jesus.* It is not enough for you just to say, "I find no fault in Him," and think that therefore you're all right, because if you find no fault in Him, and yet do not accept Him, acknowledge Him as your Lord and Savior, what kind of a knave are you?

#### **D. He Tried to Remain Neutral**

Now, last of all, the last thing that Pilate did that convicted him so much—and there was the verdict that condemned him—was that he attempted to remain neutral. He thought that he could just simply wash his hands of the whole matter. Look in verses 22 through 24: "*Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water,*"—now, watch this—"and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it" (Matthew 27:22–24).

What he thought was, "Look, I'm washing my hands of this whole affair. I am not saying yes. I'm not saying no. It is your decision. I am neutral." You can't be neutral about Jesus. When Pilate said, "I am neutral," when Pilate said, "I will not make a decision," that was the worst decision that Pilate ever made, because not to decide is to decide not to decide. Jesus said, "*He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad*" (Matthew 12:30). And I'm telling you that an ocean full of water could not have washed the sin from Pilate's hands. And when the gavel fell in Pilate's court, there was another gavel that fell in heaven. And when Pilate allowed Jesus to be condemned, Pilate was condemned. And I'm telling you today that you cannot be neutral concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. You cannot—you cannot.

## **IV. Jesus on Trial**

Now the first trial of the Lord Jesus was a mockery of justice. So I'm going to put Jesus on trial again today. And I have had this chair put up here to represent the Lord Jesus.

He is in the prisoner's dock. And I'm going to take you, this congregation, and impanel you today as a jury. And I'm going to ask you to make a decision that I have already called a pertinent, a personal, a present, and a pressing decision. I'm going to ask you to answer the question in verse 22: "What think ye of Christ?"

### **A. Bible Witnesses**

You're the jury. You're impaneled as a jury. Jesus is in the prisoner's dock, and I'm going to bring some witnesses, first of all, from Bible times, and the words of these witnesses will be taken directly from the Bible, the Word of God. I will not give you chapter and verse in order to save time, but I want you to listen as we call some witnesses and adjure them to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

#### **1. John the Baptist**

The first witness that I call is a man that Jesus said, "No one greater was born of woman than this man" (Matthew 11:11; Luke 7:28). His name is John the Baptist. "Now, John, you baptized Jesus in the river Jordan. You knew Jesus from boyhood. John, would you tell the court and tell the jury what think you of Christ?" Hear John the Baptist as he says, "*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29). Thank you, John, for that testimony. You may be seated.

#### **2. Simon Peter**

Now I would like to call another who often spoke, sometimes thoughtlessly, but I'm going to ask you, Simon Peter, to be very careful. And I want you to tell the courtroom now, who is this? What do you think, Simon Peter, of the One here in the prisoner's dock? I hear Simon Peter as he says, looking into the face of the Lord that he loves, "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*" (Matthew 16:16). Oh, big fisherman, Simon Peter, thank you very much for that and for that honest testimony.

#### **3. John the Apostle**

And now I'm going to call a sort of a mystic, a man who has a pensive and thoughtful spirit, different perhaps from Peter. I call John the Apostle. John, you were with the Lord Jesus. Would you tell us what you think of Him? Hear the Apostle John as he says, "*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and of truth*" (John 1:14). Thank you, John. Be seated.

#### **4. Thomas**

Thomas, you were a follower of His. For a while you had difficulty believing. Thomas, you saw the nail prints in His hands and in His side. Thomas, would you tell the court and tell the jury what you think of Christ? Thomas bows his knee, and he says, "*My*

LORD and my God” (John 20:28). Thank you, Thomas, for that testimony.

### **5. Martha**

Well, we’ve had the testimony of men. Is there not a woman who can testify? Martha, would you come tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth? This man spent many happy days in your home. You observed Him in all sorts of situations. Martha, would you tell the courtroom what you think of Him? Martha says, “I believe that you are the Son of God” (John 11:27). Thank you so much, Martha.

### **6. An Angel**

Well, but these are humans. Is there some other that we might call? Could we summon an angel? Put an angel here under oath. Angel, would you tell us who this is, holy angel? See the angel as he stands and looks into the face of Jesus and says, “*For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord*” (Luke 2:11).

### **7. A Pharisee**

Well, all right, but we’ve only heard from His friends. Can’t we hear from some of His enemies? Can we hear from others why they allowed Him to be crucified? The Pharisees wanted Him crucified. Pharisee, wrap your self-righteous robes around you, and look at Jesus, and tell us why you want Him crucified. “*This man receiveth sinners*” (Luke 15:2). Aren’t you glad He did? “*This man receiveth sinners.*” Is that all you have to say against Him? Pharisee, be gone.

### **8. Caiaphas**

Caiaphas, you were the high priest. You wanted Him crucified. Caiaphas, you tell us why you wanted Him crucified. “He said, ‘I am the Son of God’” (Matthew 26:63–64). Oh, thank you, Caiaphas. Would you be seated.

### **9. The Centurion**

Let’s call the centurion. You helped drive those scalding nails into His quivering palms. Centurion, tell us now. You watched Him die. The centurion says, “*Truly this was the Son of God*” (Matthew 27:54). And yet you helped nail Him to the cross. Be gone.

### **10. Judas**

There was one who betrayed Him, sold Him for thirty pieces of silver, an archfiend, a piece of human trash—no humanity is trash in the eyes of God, but the lowest of the low, Judas, who sold his Lord for thirty pieces of silver. Judas, would you tell us what you think of Him? Judas says, “I have betrayed innocent blood” (Matthew 27:4).

### **11. Pilate**

Pilate, you had Him crucified. Tell us what you think of Him. Pilate says, “*I find no*

*fault in him*” (John 19:4, 6).

## **12.A Demon**

“But wait a minute. You called angels. Why don’t you call a demon?” All right. I summon a filthy, dirty demon from the pit. Demon, I adjure you by God, tell the truth. “[We] know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God” (Mark 1:24). Back to the pit, demon!

## **B. Contemporary Witnesses**

We’ve heard the testimony of His friends. We’ve heard the testimony of His enemies. We’ve heard the testimony of angels. We’ve heard the testimony of demons. But somebody says, “But wait a minute. Those were all from a different time, way back yonder. Aren’t there any contemporary witnesses?” Yes, there are. There are some contemporary witnesses. And I’m going to ask some of them to come right now and share a testimony and tell us today what you think of Jesus, which is called the Christ. Introduce yourself and tell the courtroom what think ye of Christ.

### **1. Paul Kuhlman**

Paul Kuhlman: “Well, my name is Paul Kuhlman, and I was saved January 2, 1977. I was thirty-eight years old, and I was drinking my life away. Sober days were few and far between. And I went to a church service that night. I didn’t go because I wanted to; I went because I was trying to get some points with my wife and my family, because my conduct had been so poor over the Christmas holidays. And during the sermon I recognized my need for the Lord Jesus Christ. But during the invitation I did not go forward, because of pride and because of embarrassment.

When we got home, my wife and family went to bed, and I was in my family room by myself, and I got down on my knees and I prayed a very simple prayer. It went something like this: ‘Lord Jesus, please save me.’ And He did. And I would like to tell you some of the things that He did for me.

You know, the Bible says, ‘*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature*’ (2 Corinthians 5:17), and the first thing that Jesus did for me was He took away bad habits that I had: the drinking habit, the smoking habit, filthy magazines, lewd and horrible language that I always used. And He took those right away from me.

The Lord Jesus gave me a new appearance. I looked like part of me was backward when I got saved, and He began to put some meat on my bones, and He removed the stains and the smells of the habits that I had had. And He put a new countenance on my face and a new spring in my step, and I really did become kind of a new person. I just looked really different.

And the Lord Jesus—you know, I used to hang around with people. Misery loves



company, and I hung around with people that were very miserable—and the Lord Jesus gave me brand new friends, friends that loved me and undergirded me. And some of them are seated right in this auditorium today.

And the Lord Jesus gave me a new relationship with all of my children. And He gave me a new marriage in Christ. My wife and I will celebrate forty-one years in June. And that's one other thing that the Lord Jesus did for me. He gave me a new destiny. Folks, I'm on my way to heaven, and I'm going to be there with the Lord Jesus Christ for eternity.

## **2. Steven Holley**

Steven Holley: "My name is Steven Holley, and this is my wife, Lee. When we first married, I felt like having her would be fulfillment of everything in my heart, the void that was in my heart. It didn't take long to realize that when you put the burden of your total happiness on an individual like your spouse, it wears down, and very quickly. It also didn't take long for Satan, who's very real, to make his way into our life and to wedge himself between us. In a very short period of time I started seeking out selfish desires, and Satan convinced her that it wasn't worth hanging on to someone that was prideful and selfish like I was, so we broke apart.

I'll tell you that the void in my life that was there before and then after we became separated was very real, and it ached even more, so I sought counsel. And I went to a man who very quickly turned me to the one true counselor: Jesus. Jesus is very real, in the fact that He was the keeper of my salvation from an early age. It was nothing more than just that. I figured it wasn't that He wasn't there for my day-to-day life. But then I began to trust Him in my day-to-day life. I started seeking His counsel in prayer and through His Word. And He made me realize that I alone allowed Satan into our home and to bind us up and to tear us apart, and I was responsible for it.

So He made me go and seek forgiveness of my wife and of God. And my wife would not, and could not, take me back at that time. And then Jesus counseled me in the way that I'd have to accept the possibility that our marriage was truly over. And, indeed, we did get a divorce. But Jesus was not through with us yet. He worked in me. He worked in my life. That promise He has of making you into a new creation He worked in me, and I was surprised. And little did I know that all along He was working in my wife's life to take her out of the bondage of bitterness and anger. And after a full year, after our divorce was final, He brought us back and fully restored our marriage covenant. Jesus healed our marriage. And on top of that, because we heeded His counsel, He has blessed us and honored us with four wonderful little boys. Our marriage, our life, our family, is a testimony, a living testimony to the fact that if you are hurting or in need, Jesus is your counselor and your healer, and He will comfort you."

### 3. Debbie Gleason

Debbie Gleason: “My name is Debbie Gleason. And there are not adequate words to express the awesome, incredible, never-ending and ever-faithful Jesus Christ and what He means to me. That was something I always thought I believed, but never did I believe it so strongly as when six years ago my husband, Joe, was diagnosed with colon cancer. And Joe’s incredibly strong faith and never-wavering belief that God is in total control kept us focused on eternal things. And through his four-year illness I never once saw him distraught or hopeless, because he knew that heaven was just ahead. I cannot say that it has been easy. It hasn’t. I cannot say that I understand why it happened. I don’t. And I can’t say that there’s not sadness in my heart. For there is. But there is one wonderful lesson I have learned through all this, and that is that no one or nothing can take away my joy, for its foundation is Jesus Christ.

I think back over the last weeks of my husband’s life, and he kept saying, ‘I just don’t think God is through with my life yet.’ And now I know what God was revealing to Joe. He wasn’t through. He still isn’t through with Joe’s life, for I know many, many times I have been, and I know others have been, strengthened by the way that Joe led his life and the way that God’s faithfulness saw us through Joe’s death. One of my favorite verses has become 2 Corinthians 4:17. It says, *‘For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight in glory.’* I know that my Jesus is faithful, for heaven is still ahead.”

“But, pastor, these are selective witnesses. Don’t you have any at random?” Yes, I do. Are there those in this auditorium this morning who would say, “I have found Him faithful and I love Him with all of my heart?” Would you lift your hand? Praise God! Hallelujah! Take your hands down. Thank you for that acknowledgement.

#### C. The Supreme Witness

But now I want us to get very quiet and very reverent, because I call a final witness. With great humility, I call to the witness stand Almighty God. God the Father, would you tell us, who is Jesus? *“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”* (Matthew 3:17; Matthew 17:5; 2 Peter 1:17). And, friend, that testimony is true—the testimony of God Himself.

And let me tell you what God the Father did. When they nailed Jesus up on that cross, and they put Jesus in that cold, clammy tomb, and they said, “He is worthy of death; crucify Him,” Almighty God reversed the decision of the court and raised Him from the dead, and He has been shown *“to be the Son of God with power...by the resurrection from the dead”* (Romans 1:4).

You say, “You believe that?” Yes, I believe it. I believe it. The early apostles believed

it. Many of them died for their faith. Men may live for a lie. Few men will die for a lie. Men tell lies to get them out of trouble, not into trouble, but these people were so totally convinced that Jesus came out of that grave.

## Conclusion

Now it's time. You're the jury, and you're going to register your decision. Take out your invisible ballot. Take out your invisible pen. In a moment, you're going to check a decision. "What will be the decision, pastor?" Very simply: to crown Him or crucify Him, to acknowledge Him or reject Him, to receive Him or deny Him. And you will make a decision, and you cannot wash your hands, and you cannot be neutral. You will make a decision today. Even to decide not to decide would be the worst decision you could possibly make.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Would you pray? Those of you who have already given your heart to Jesus, gladly you will reaffirm your decision right now. Oh, with thanksgiving you'll reaffirm it. Those of you who've never yet done that, if you believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, if you believe these testimonies and these witnesses, and the witness from God Himself—and, "*If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater*" (1 John 5:9) is what the Bible says—would you say, "Jesus, I believe you're the Son of God, and I believe you died for me on that cross, and I now receive you as my Lord and Savior; and because I believe it, and because I receive it, I will not be ashamed of you. Pilate let pride and public opinion stand in his way. Pilate let position and possessions stand in his way. They will not stand in my way. I will acknowledge you, Jesus, openly and publicly, as my Lord and Savior, regardless of the seeming cost. I will stand with you, my Lord, and I know you'll stand with me."

Father, I pray that many today will say an everlasting yes to Jesus Christ and not be ashamed of Him. In His dear name I pray. Amen.

# What Will You Do with Jesus?

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: December 05, 1993**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 27:22**

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## Introduction

**T**ake God's Word and turn to Matthew chapter 27, and when you've found it, look up here. If you did not bring a Bible with you tonight, likely there's one there in the rack before you. Take it out. The Book of Matthew is the first book in the New Testament—Matthew chapter 27—and when you've found it, look up here and let me tell you what I'm going to do tonight.

### I. The Question Pilate Asked

I'm going to ask you tonight a question. It will be, I believe, the greatest question that could possibly be asked of you. It was the question that Pontius Pilate asked the crowd that day. We find it in verse 22: *"Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?"* (Matthew 27:22). "What shall I do with Jesus?"

Now, I'm going to ask that question of you. What will you do with Jesus? No greater question could be asked. You will remember that Pilate was the Roman governor. Jesus stood before Pilate to be adjudicated and then to be crucified. But, Pilate tried to thrust the

matter into the crowd, and asked this question: “*What should I do...with Jesus which is called Christ?*” Pilate had Jesus on his hands, and he had to make a decision.

Several things I want you to notice about this question tonight.

### **A. It Is a Pressing Question**

The very first thing I want you to notice is that it was and is a pressing question, because just as Pilate had Jesus on his hands, you have Jesus on your hands. The fact of Jesus Christ is inevitable, and He is unavoidable. I will tell you with all of the emphasis, function, and emotion of my soul, you will do something with Jesus. It is a pressing question. You may ignore Him, but that’s doing something with Him. You may adore him: that’s doing something with him. You may crown Him, you may crucify Him, you may accept Him, you may reject Him, you may believe Him, you may doubt Him, but you will do something with Jesus, isn’t that right? You will do something with Jesus.

You say, “Well, I don’t even believe there is one called Jesus.” Pardon me—and I hope I don’t insult you—but your ignorance is showing. Only ignorance scoffs at the fact that Jesus Christ was a literal, historical figure. The Gallup Poll people who do the polls did a poll, and they found out that 91 percent of adult Americans, about 145 million of them, accept the fact that Jesus Christ was a person who lived in history.

Now, we have the Bible that tells about Jesus, but other history tells about Jesus. Flavius Josephus was a brilliant man who lived in the first century. He was a priest. He was a soldier. He was a historian. He was a military commander. He was a student. He was a diplomat. Josephus wrote a series of volumes called *The Antiquities of the Jews*, about 20 volumes. Flavius Josephus lived in the first century. Would you like to hear what this historian said about Jesus Christ? I’m talking about material outside of the Bible. He wrote this as he was talking about Pontius Pilate, and he said Pontius Pilate was the procreator about A.D. 36, and then Josephus includes this paragraph: “There was about this time Jesus, a wise man, for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as received the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles, and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those who loved him at the first ceased not to do so, and the race of Christians so named for him are not extinct even now.” That’s what Josephus wrote in the first century. I’m saying that even the enemies of Christ, even those who do not accept His deity, even those who do not believe in Him, those who do not worship Him, accept the fact that Jesus Christ lived on this earth.

As a matter of fact, the great Albert Einstein, one of the greatest minds that the twentieth century has ever produced, said, “No man can deny the fact that Jesus existed.”

That's what Albert Einstein said. What I'm saying to you is this: when I ask this question, "What will you do with Jesus?" it is a pressing question. There is the fact of Jesus, and the same Jesus that confronted Pontius Pilate so long ago is the Jesus that I confront you with tonight. He is a fact of history.

## **B. It Is a Pertinent Question**

It is a pressing question. I'll say something else about this question. It is a pertinent question. I'm not asking you about something that is incidental. Jesus is not just another man, just another Jew, just another teacher, just another priest, just another ruler, just another statesman, just another reformer. Jesus is different from all others who ever lived. Jesus was on trial then, and He still is. The issue today is just who is Jesus Christ. We know He existed. No one with any knowledge of history would doubt the fact that He existed—no one. But, who was He? Yes, it's a pressing question, but is it a pertinent question?

Do you know why they wanted to crucify the Lord Jesus? John 19, verses 6 and 7—listen to it: *"When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him. The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die,"*—and then here's the reason—*"because he made himself the Son of God"* (John 19:6–7). Now, they said, "Crucify Him, because He makes of Himself the Son of God."

Now, we know that He existed as a person. The question comes, was He and is He the Son of God? That's a pertinent question, because if He is not the Son of God, He needs to be dismissed and not respected at all. If He is the Son of God, He needs to be worshiped and adored. And, you are faced with three inescapable possibilities concerning just who He is.

First of all, you can say that He was an evil person. And, friend, if He is not the Son of God, He may have been an evil person. "Why do you say, Pastor Rogers, that He was an evil person if He's not the Son of God?" Well, you see this. If He's not the Son of God, He's a liar, because He said He was the way, the truth, and the life, and no man comes unto the Father but by Him (John 14:6). If He was not the Son of God, He was a hypocrite, for He was preaching one thing and practicing another. If He was not the Son of God, He was a deceiver who promised forgiveness and eternal life that He could not deliver. Therefore, if He was not the Son of God, He was cruel and heartless, because He was building false hopes in the hearts of so many people. And, the man who is a liar, a hypocrite, a deceiver, and who is cruel and heartless, would be an evil person.

"Well," you say, "I don't think He was evil." Then, you've come to a second possibility if He's not the Son of God. Maybe He was not an evil person, but maybe He was deceived. Maybe He just thought He was the Son of God. Maybe He was guilty of megalomania. Maybe

He just somehow thought that He was someone that He was not. So, He was not a deceiver, but He Himself was deceived. Do you believe the One who gave us the Sermon on the Mount; do you believe the One who taught and loved as no one could love and teach was a madman? that He Himself was deceived? C. S. Lewis puts it this way—and listen to what C. S. Lewis said, one of the great literary geniuses of our time: “I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him. That is, I am ready to accept Jesus Christ as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.” And then, Lewis said, “A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things that Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. Let us not come up with any of the patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. Jesus was either much more than a great teacher, or He was much less. To say that He was right in most of His teaching but wrong in His greatest theme is neither sensible nor honest.” Now, what C. S. Lewis is saying is this: that you cannot just tip your hat to Jesus Christ; either you have to reject Him or bow your knee to Him. You see, either Jesus was evil, who knew that He was not God and went around deceiving people, or else He was a madman who thought He was God and was a sheer fool.

Now, the third possibility is this—and we know that Jesus existed; we know He is a fact of history: either He was a liar, or else He was a lunatic, or else He is Lord. He’s one of the three: liar, lunatic, or Lord; deceiver, deceived, or Deity. What are you going to do with Him? You’re going to have to make up your mind, which is He? Because Jesus Christ Himself taught that He was God.

You say, “Where?” Turn to John chapter 8 and verse 24. This is the reason that I say this is a pertinent question. It could not be more pertinent. Listen to how pertinent it is. In John chapter 8 and verse 24, here are the words of Jesus: *“I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins”* (John 8:24). Your eternal destiny depends upon what you think concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, skip down to verse 56—John 8, verse 56. Jesus said to the Jews of that day who were confronting Him, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day and saw it and was glad.” Now remember that Abraham had been in the grave for centuries when Jesus said this. He said, *“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?”* Now, here’s the key verse, verse 58. I hope it’s underlined in your Bible: *“Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily...”*—now, whenever He says, “*verily, verily,*” that means, “pay attention”—*“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am”* (John 8:56–58).

Now, wait a minute, folks. *“Before Abraham was, I am.”* Read it carefully. He didn’t say, “Before Abraham was, I was.” He didn’t say, “I got on the scene before Abraham did.” He

was saying, "There never was a time when I was not." *"Before Abraham was, I am."* What is "I Am"? "I Am" is the most sacred name for deity that the Jews had: the Great I Am. Remember when Moses said, "Lord, who shall I say sent me?" and Jehovah spoke to Moses, and said, "Moses, you tell them that 'I Am' sent you" (Exodus 3:13-14). What does that mean? Not "I was," not "I will be"; just "I am." He is the great, eternal, self-existent God. There never was a time when He was not. And, Jesus said to these people in that day, *"Before Abraham was, I am."* And, He took the most sacred name for deity and took it to Himself. No wonder the Bible says they took up stones to stone Him. No wonder they wanted Him crucified. He said He was the Great I Am.

Now, this question concerning Jesus Christ is a very, very important question. It is a pressing question. You have Him on your hands. It is a pertinent question. Now, Jesus said that He and He alone could meet every individual's need for forgiveness, for moral direction, for spiritual security, for inner peace, and He could bring to anybody who would trust Him eternal life. Now, either He can do that, or He cannot do that. Either He is the Great I Am and the Lord of Glory, or He is not. What an amazing life the Lord Jesus lived!

You think about the life of the Lord Jesus. Do you realize that Jesus never corrected, withdrew, or amended any statement that He ever made? I wish I could say that. Do you realize that Jesus Christ never apologized for anything He ever did or said? Never apologized! Never said, "I'm sorry." Never said, "I am wrong." And it was certainly not because people didn't get angry with Him. Was He just arrogant? Do you realize that Jesus Christ never sought advice from anyone, that Jesus lived a modest life, raised in a carpenter's home, and He confronted the scribes and the Pharisees and the Sadducees, but He never asked anyone for advice? That is arrogance! Jesus never asked for forgiveness. Do you realize that Jesus Christ didn't have any strong points? For Him to have strong points, He would have to have weak points. He was altogether lovely.

Robert Clark has rightly given this assessment of the character of Jesus, and I want you to listen to it: "There was meekness without weakness, tenderness without feebleness, firmness without coarseness, love without sentimentality, holiness without sanctimoniousness, lowliness without lowness, truth without error, enthusiasm without fanaticism, passion without prejudice, heavenly-mindedness without forgetfulness, carefree-ness without carelessness, service without servility, self-exaltation without egotism, judgment without harshness, seriousness without somberness, mercy without softness." What a person was the Lord Jesus Christ! As I said this morning, He could look at His enemies and say, "Which of you convinces me of sin?" Friend, this question concerning the Lord Jesus Christ is a pressing question. It is a pertinent question.



## II. The Voices Pilate Heard

Now, Pilate had a lot of voices that confronted him concerning the Lord Jesus.

### A. The Voice of Jesus

I want you to look in chapter 27 and verse 11: *“And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest”* (Matthew 27:11). Jesus had spoken to Pilate at first, and Jesus gave Pilate some straight answers to begin with. As I preached this morning, there was a time when Pilate began to judge Him, and Jesus never defended Himself. But, when Pilate inquired, Jesus answered. *“Art thou the King of the Jews?” “Thou sayest.”* I want to say to you tonight that the same Jesus who spoke to Pilate so long ago is speaking to you tonight. You say, “Well, I don’t see Him.” Well, friend, He lives in me, and I have His words in my mouth, and He sent me here tonight to tell you that He loves you. Jesus Christ is alive and well and living in His Church.

### B. The Voice of Reason

Pilate heard the voice of Jesus. He also heard the voice of reason. Look, if you will, in verse 18. The Bible says, *“For he knew that for envy they had delivered him”* (Matthew 27:18). Pilate knew men. You don’t get to be a Roman governor by being a fool. Pilate knew human foibles. He knew human methods. Pilate knew that the religious leaders of that day were envious of the Lord Jesus. The voice of reason told him that what was happening was wrong. He knew that for envy they had delivered Him.

Now, if you will think tonight; I mean, if you will use the mind that God has given you—the Bible says, *“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD”* (Isaiah 1:18)—you will know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, for God will show you, and God will teach you. For a man to deny and refuse the Lord Jesus Christ, he really has to crucify his intellect. He is shown to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead (Romans 1:4). The Bible teaches that He showed Himself alive by many infallible truths (Acts 1:3). The reasons that people give for not receiving the Lord Jesus Christ will not stand scrutiny.

### C. The Voice of a Loved One

But, not only did he hear the voice of Jesus, and not only did he hear the voice of reason, but he also heard the voice of a loved one. Look in verse 19: *“When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him”* (Matthew 27:19). Pilate’s wife was in contact with God, and in the night hours, when she was asleep, God spoke to her. And, she spoke to Pilate, and she warned Pilate.

And, I would say that there are those of you who are listening to me tonight by radio, and those in this place tonight, not only has Jesus Christ spoken to you through the Spirit, and through His Word; not only has your mind spoken to you; but loved ones have spoken to you. Is there anyone here who has not been lovingly entreated by someone who said, "Listen. Don't turn away from Jesus. Don't refuse Jesus. Don't spurn Jesus"? There are people here tonight whose wives have pled for them and prayed for them just as Pilate's wife did. There are children here whose godly mother and father have wept over them and witnessed to them. Sunday School teachers and pastors and soul winners have spoken to you about the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **D. The Voice of Conscience**

But, I'll tell you, not only did the voice of Jesus speak, not only did the voice of reason speak, and not only did the voice of a loved one speak; the voice of conscience spoke to Pilate. Look, if you will, in verse 22: *"Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified."* Now, watch verse 24: *"When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it"* (Matthew 27:22-24).

What does this tell us? He knew in his heart that Jesus was not guilty of the things they had said about Him. He knew that Jesus was not a blasphemer. He knew that Jesus was not a madman. He knew that Jesus was not a liar. He knew that Jesus was innocent of the charges that had been made against Him. His conscience is thundering within his bosom, and he's trying to wash his hands. I'll tell you that if you'll listen to that voice in your heart, the conscience that God has given you, again you'll understand that you must do something with the Lord Jesus.

### **III. The Things Pilate Did**

Well, what did Pilate do? What did Pilate do? I'm saying this question is a present question. It is a pertinent question. It is a pressing question. Let me mention some things that Pilate did that a lot of you are going to try to do, some who are listening to me on the radio.

#### **A. He Tried to Ignore Jesus**

The first thing he tried to do was just to ignore Jesus. As a matter of fact, in John chapter 18 verse 31, *"Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law"* (John 18:31). He says, "Don't bother me with this. I've got more important things to do. I've got all my business to take care of. You take Him and you judge Him." And, there are some

listening to me who just say, “Pastor Rogers, I’ve got my business. I’ve got my family. I’ve got things that I’m interested in. Don’t bother me with this question.” Pilate tried to ignore Jesus, but he couldn’t do it.

### **B. He Tried to Put the Decision on Somebody Else**

Then, Pilate tried to put the decision on somebody else. Luke chapter 23, verses 6 and 7: *“When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilaean. And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time”* (Luke 23:6–7). Now, Herod was running things up at Galilee. Pilate learned that Jesus was from Galilee. Pilate said, “I’ve got a perfect way out. I won’t have to judge Him. I’ll just let Herod judge Him. Herod is the king of Galilee.” And so, Pilate sent Jesus to Herod. But, Herod listened to Jesus and sent Him right back to Pilate. Pilate could not get Jesus off his hands. It was like a man who bought a new boomerang and killed himself trying to throw the old one away. Jesus just comes back to him.

### **C. He Tried to Admire the Jesus Without Worshiping Him**

And then, Pilate does what many of you are going to try to do tonight. First of all, he tried to ignore Him. That was impossible. Secondly, he tried to put the decision on somebody else. You’re going to try to let your wife take care of the decision, or your children take care of the decision; you’re just going to put it somewhere else. The third thing that Pilate tried to do was just simply admire the Lord Jesus without worshipping the Lord Jesus. Luke chapter 23, verses 14 and 15: *“[Pilate] said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one who perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him: no, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him”* (Luke 23:14–15).

Now, what is Pilate saying? Pilate is saying, “I don’t find any fault in Him.” Well, at this point, what should Pilate have done? At this point, Pilate should have pressed in and tried to determine just who is this man—this sinless man, this perfect man, this miracle worker, this loving man—but he didn’t do that. Do you know what he did? He just simply said some nice things about Jesus. And, some of you might think that He would be honored if you would just say some nice things about Him. But, you can’t just say nice things about Him. I mean, if He’s not the Son of God, don’t say anything nice about Him. If He’s not God in the flesh, He’s a liar or a lunatic. Don’t try to flatter Jesus. As I say, you cannot tip the hat; you must bow the knee. This is the worst thing that Pilate could have done. It would have been better for Pilate to be an out-and-out pagan than to simply admire the Lord Jesus.

#### D. He Tried to Simply Remain Neutral

The last thing Pilate tried to do was just simply remain neutral. Look in chapter 27 again, and look in verses 22 and following: *“Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified.”* Now, watch this: *“When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it”* (Matthew 27:22–24). And so, Pilate said, “Bring me a basin,” and he put his lily-white hands in that basin and tried to wash away his guilt with indecision. “I am innocent,” he said. But, oceans of water could not wash away that sin.

It is true that Pilate did not hold the lash that lacerated His back. It is true that Pilate did not swing the club that bruised His head. It is true that Pilate did not weave the crown of thorns. It is true that Pilate did not with that hammer drive those nails into His quivering flesh. But, this is also true: that he did not decide for the Lord Jesus Christ. He tried, by indecision, to wash his hands of the whole matter. And, history will record that Pilate’s indecision was the worst decision. And, when Pilate said, *“Let him be crucified,”* when that gavel fell on Earth, another cry rang through the universe. And, when Pilate allowed Jesus to be crucified, Pilate sealed his doom.

Now, one of the reasons that Pilate did not want to make a decision is this. They had warned Pilate, and said, “Pilate, if you do not allow us to crucify Jesus, we’re going to tell Caesar that you’re allowing another person who says He’s a king to exist in this land, and we have no king but Caesar. And, Pilate had a soft job, and what buttered his bread determined his conduct. And so, Pilate is trying to walk skillfully in this matter. He’s trying, on the one hand, not to say, “I believe that Jesus Christ is guilty.” He’s saying, on the other hand, “I don’t want to lose my job and take a side against Caesar.” So, he just simply says, “I will wash my hands of the whole matter.”

Is there someone here tonight who thinks that you can escape a decision that way? Let me give you a verse of Scripture—Matthew chapter 12 and verse 30—Jesus Christ said, *“He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad”* (Matthew 12:30). You absolutely, totally, cannot be neutral concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. You say, “I will not decide,” you just decided. What did you decide? You decided not to decide. You say, “I don’t have to decide.” You do have to decide. This question is a pressing, inescapable question. And, even a decision not to decide is to decide not to decide. *“He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.”* Jesus is a fact. He is a fact. He is Lord, liar, or lunatic. You must consider who Jesus Christ is. You say, “Well, I’m not going to choose.” No, you are free not to choose, but not to choose is

a choice, and once you choose not to choose, which is your choice, then you're not free to escape the consequences of that choice. First, you make the choice, you choose, and then your choice chooses for you.

Now, at that time, Jesus was in Pilate's hands, but today, Pilate's in Jesus' hands. In that day, Pilate crucified Jesus, and crucified his own soul at the same time.

## **Conclusion**

Now, the question is this: What will you do with Jesus? Now, pay attention. The question is not what are you going to do with Adrian Rogers. The question is not what are you going to do with the Baptist denomination. The question is not what are you going to do with Bellevue Baptist Church. The question is what will you do with Jesus Christ. The question is not what are you going to do with your neighbor that you think is a hypocrite. God knows about that hypocrite. The question is not how big a sinner you are or may not be. The question is not the sin question; the question is the Son question.

Now, what can you do with Jesus? You can accept Him or reject Him. Which will you do? If you do not accept Him, you reject Him. What can you do with Jesus? You crown Him or you crucify Him. You cannot be neutral. What can you do with Jesus? You confess Him or deny Him. And, everybody in this building tonight will do one of those things: accept Him or reject Him; crown Him or crucify Him; confess Him or deny Him. You're free to choose, but you're not free not to choose. Not to decide is to decide. You're free to choose, but you're not free to escape the consequences of your choice. The question is: What will you do with Jesus who is called Christ? Receive Him, and "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18). Reject Him, and no matter how much good you think you do, you'll spend eternity forever separated from Him. Jesus said, *"He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."*

Bow your head in prayer. Every head bowed; every eye closed. I ask the question again. I ask this question with a heart of love: What will you do with Jesus? It is a present question, not something to answer some other time. It is a pertinent question. It deals with the Son of God. It is a pressing question: you cannot escape it. It is a personal question: nobody else can answer it for you.

If you're not certain that you're saved, let me help you to get it settled right now tonight where you are. Would you pray a prayer like this? "God, I know that you love me, and I know that you want to save me. Jesus, I believe You're the Son of God. I know that You existed. I know that You're not a deceiver. I know that You're not an evil person. I believe that You're the Son of God. I believe You carried my sins to the cross. I believe You paid my sin debt with Your own blood. I believe that God raised You from the dead. I believe that if I

would trust You, You will forgive my sins, come into my heart, and make me a new person. I'm sorry for my sins. I turn from my sins. I open my heart. I receive You right now this moment as my Lord and Savior. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me, Lord Jesus." Would you pray that prayer? "Save me, Lord Jesus." Did you pray it? Ask Him from your heart. "Save me, Lord Jesus. Save me, Lord Jesus. I give You my heart. I yield my life to You as Lord and Master. Now, save me, Lord Jesus."

Did you ask Him? If you did, I want you to pray this way: "Thank You for saving me, Jesus. I receive it by faith like a child, and that settles it. I don't look for a feeling. I stand on Your Word. I accept Your promise. You have saved me. I trust You. I believe on You. You're now my Lord, my Savior, my God, and my friend. And, now, Lord Jesus, begin to make me the person You want me to be. And, help me, Lord Jesus, never to be ashamed of You. Give me the courage to make it public and to take a stand for You, because You died for me. In Your holy name I pray. Amen."

# The Crown

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** March 20, 1994

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 27:26–31

*“And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!”*

MATTHEW 27:29

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Sacred Mystery of That Crown
- II. The Solemn Misery of That Crown
- III. The Shameful Mockery of That Crown
- IV. The Saving Ministry of That Crown
- V. The Sovereign Majesty of That Crown

Conclusion

## Introduction

The Lord Jesus was crowned with thorns. It was not incidental; it was not accidental that Jesus was crowned with thorns. Though the crowning of thorns came out of a diseased mind—the crowning of thorns was a cruel mockery; it was a wicked act of hatred and rebellion—yet, in another sense, Jesus being crowned with thorns was a part of a drama that had been written before the world was swung into space. Jesus being crowned with thorns has a message, a message indescribably glorious and wonderful.

We’ve seen how Jesus came into Pilate’s judgment hall and Pilate tried to wash his hands of making a decision and allowed Jesus to be scourged. They took a vicious whip that cut His back to ribbons. Then, they tied Him to a whipping post. Men would have died, had they not been strong, from that scourging. When they’d finished, they put a scarlet robe on Him. They put a bamboo reed in His hand for a scepter. They took a crown of thorns and pressed it on His brow and then took clubs and beat Him on His head. No rubies in this crown—the only rubies there: the ruby red drops of the blood of the Son of God.

Take your Bibles. Turn, if you would, please, to Matthew chapter 27. I begin reading here in verse 26. It speaks of Pilate, and it says, *“Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified. Then the*

*soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.” (Matthew 27:26–31)*

Are you ready for some wonderful truths? Do you want to see why I said this was not incidental, not accidental, that God allowed this to happen, and though done by the hands of wicked men, yet a part of the magnificent plan of Almighty God? Several things I want you to notice:

## **I. The Sacred Mystery of That Crown**

First of all, I want you to notice what I’m going to call “the sacred mystery of that crown.” Do you have it? The sacred mystery of that crown. In one sense, this was the random thought, the cruel jest, the hollow mockery of a psychopathic Roman soldier. And yet, on the other hand, there was a mystery here known in the heart and mind of God. What does a crown of thorns speak of? It symbolizes the curse that is upon humanity—on you, on me, on us all—because of sin. When God created mankind, God put mankind in a garden. And, in that garden, the Garden of Eden, there were no thorns, there were no thistles, there were no brambles. The first rose that ever bloomed was a rose that bloomed without thorns. And, when Adam picked blackberries, he didn’t have to fight brambles like we do to get to them. There were no thorns there.

You might put in the margin of your Bible “Genesis chapter 3.” And look, if you will, in verse 17. There our Lord speaks of the curse that came upon Adam and Eve because they sinned, they disobeyed God, and the Bible says as a result of that sin, God came into the garden. And, listen to what God said in Genesis chapter 3 and verse 17: *“Cursed is the ground for thy sake: in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life”*—now, listen to verse 18—*“Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.”* (Genesis 3:17–19) Thorns and thistles began to grow on Planet Earth. Until this time they had not grown. The thorn, the thistle, is the sight of the curse of sin upon humanity.

Put this verse down in your margin—Hebrews chapter 6 and verse 8: *“But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected”*—did you hear that?—*“that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.”* (Hebrews 6:8) Jesus was bearing those thorns. Jesus was wearing that crown. Had Adam not sinned, thorns would never have grown on this earth. Jesus wore that crown because Jesus bore that curse. The thorns that Jesus wore on His head speak of the hardship,



the sorrow, the death that comes with sin.

Are you having heartaches? Are you having sorrow? Do you know sickness? Can I tell you this—that the thorny pathway that we walk is because of sin; the bed of briars that we sleep on is because of sin? And, no matter how well you may be, or think you are, right now, and no matter how you may feather your nest, there's a thorn in it; and sooner or later, you'll find it. When you go out into the field to work, no matter what your occupation, you'll be working in a thorny field, and your body will find, like the Apostle Paul, *"a thorn in the flesh."* (2 Corinthians 12:7) You will know sickness; you will know suffering; you will know pain—because something has happened to creation.

Put this verse down—Romans 8 and verse 22: *"For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."* (Romans 8:22) Why? There's a curse upon everything, friend, because of sin. You want to know why we have confusion, frustration, suffering? Why? Look at every hospital and say, "Sin did this." Look at every mental institution and say, "Sin did this." Look at every jail and say, "Sin did this." Look at every twisted and warped body and say, "Sin did this." Look at all heartache, pain, toil, and anguish, and you can write over it one word: *sin*. And, the thorn is the emblem, the symbol, of that sin. When Jesus died on that cross, He was crowned with thorns. He wore the crown because He bore the curse.

## II. The Solemn Misery of That Crown

The second thing: not only do I want you to see the sacred mystery of that crown, but I want you to see the solemn misery of that crown. That crown speaks of suffering; it speaks of pain. That crown was placed upon His head, the temple, one of the most sensitive parts of the human body; it was placed there. These great spikes were put there. And then, on top of that, with a club they began to beat and batter the head of the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who paint and depict the Lord Jesus on the cross are kind. We would not want to see a picture that portrayed Him literally. His face was so brutalized you could not tell whether it was the face of a man or an animal. Remember, with their hands they had snatched the beard from his face. Can you imagine that? With their fists they had battered that face, loosened His teeth. Blood runs down His nostrils; it's mingled with the filthy spittle from their mouths. They have taken a club, and with that club they have battered the Lord Jesus Christ. You would not want to see Him. Isaiah 52, verse 14 says this: *"His visage"*—that means, "His countenance"—*"was so marred more than any man."* (Isaiah 52:14) That is, He didn't look like a man. He didn't even seem human there upon the cross. Why this? Well, Isaiah 53, verse 4 says, *"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows."* (Isaiah 53:4) There is the mystery of that crown. There is the misery of that crown.

† Some years ago in New York City there was a mother who was hanging out her

clothes. She was outside. A neighbor came screaming and said, “Your house is on fire! Your house is on fire!” She dropped her clothes, ran into that house—it was a raging inferno—and went to the crib where her little girl was, took that baby, wrapped that baby in a blanket, and came out to the front yard and laid that child upon the grass there as the house was consumed—no chance to get anything else. That mother’s face took the heat of those flames and was horribly scarred. Her hands were burned, gnarled, and could never ever again be the kind of hands that God created them to be. But, the little baby was not touched at all with that fire. Not a hair was singed.

That little girl grew up to be a beautiful girl, and when she was eighteen her high school class was having an outing. It was Senior Day. They were on the Hudson River on a boat, and the parents had been invited. And, this girl, because of her charm and her beauty, was the center of attention. At a certain moment, this girl’s mother passed by with her face hideously scarred, her hands gnarled and burned, and one of the high school girls, not thinking how cruel the remark would be, said, “Who is that hideous woman?” This girl said, “I don’t know.” Her own daughter said, “I don’t know who she is”—was ashamed of her mother.

The mother heard. Later on when they got home, the mother said, “Darling, come here. I want to tell you something. You’ve often asked me about the burns on my hand and the burns on my face, and I’ve never told you. And, I have not told you because I did not want to add to your sorrow and give you a burden to bear. But now, I’m going to tell you. When you were a baby, I went into a burning house and rescued you. Not a hair on your head was touched, but these scars on my face and these scars on my hand are there because I rescued you from the flames.” When that daughter saw that and heard that, she was smitten with shame and remorse. She took those two hands of that darling mother, put those hands together, brought them to her lips and wet them with her kisses. Then, she brought that scarred face to her lips and kissed that face over and over again and said, “Oh, my mother, can you ever forgive me?”

Well, friend, I had rather be that daughter, ashamed of her mother, than to be ashamed of Jesus, who wore that crown for me. †

Oh, how could we ever—how could we ever—blush to speak His name or to own His cause? Jesus wore my crown. The sacred mystery: He bore the curse. The solemn misery: He suffered our hell. The Bible says in 1 Peter chapter 3, verse 18: “*For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.*” (1 Peter 3:18)

### **III. The Shameful Mockery of That Crown**

The third thing I want you to notice: that is what I want to call “the shameful mockery of that crown”—not only the mystery and the misery, but the mockery of that crown. What

were they doing? Well, look, if you will, in verse 29: *“And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him”—mocked him—“saying, Hail, King of the Jews!”* (Matthew 27:29) Why were they mocking Him? Because of their rebellion. They were saying, “You’re not our King. You’re not a true King. We will not bow the knee to you.” What they were doing is this: they were ridiculing His right to rule. They didn’t put a purple robe on Him (that’s the sign of royalty); they put a red robe on Him (that’s the symbol of sin). They did not put a scepter in His hand; they put a reed in His hand. They did not put a diadem on His brow; they put a crown of jagged thorns on His brow. And, the homage that they paid Him was to spit in His face. Can you imagine that here is the Lord of glory and they spit in His face? May I tell you what the root of all sin is? Not that you do wrong that you ought not to do, or not that you fail to do what you ought to do—sin is refusing to bow the knee to your rightful King. These other things are the result of that. Do you know what sin is? Sin is rebellion. Sin is a clinched fist in the face of God.

Psalm 2—I want you to listen to the first three verses of Psalm 2, and you’re not going to understand what was happening here. In Psalm 2, verse 1: *“Why do the heathen rage”—do you know what rage is? Rage is what you do when you don’t know the answer—“Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed”—that means “against His Christ”—“saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.”* (Psalms 2:1–3) That is, what? We do not want Christ to rule over us. When Jesus Christ came into this world, Jesus Christ came into the Roman world of government, Jesus came into the Greek world of culture, and Jesus Christ came into the Hebrew world of religion. Those are the dominant thoughts, and they rejected Him. Rather than crowning Him with a diadem, they crowned Him with thorns.

Today the same thing is happening in the world of government. We’ve outlawed the Lord Jesus Christ in America—America that has had a Judeo-Christian foundation. We move from one dilemma to another, one crisis to another, and leave the One standing outside the door who is the only One who can unscramble the whole mess. And, in the world of culture, can you imagine standing up in one of our great universities today and saying that Jesus Christ is the answer? There’s room for humanism. There’s room for blasphemy. There is room for fornication, for sodomy, for adultery, but no room for the Lord Jesus Christ. And, the so-called “culture” of our today has dropped beneath the dignity of the beasts of the field.

And, in the world of religion we will not bow the knee to Jesus Christ. Many churches in the world today are glorified country clubs with steeples on top. And, the Lord Jesus Christ, crowned with thorns, is left standing outside the door. How many churches today

are still preaching the book, the blood, and the blessed hope of the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? You say, “Well, at least they were religious.” I remind you that it was a religious crowd that crucified the Lord Jesus Christ. *Most of the people in America don't need religion; they need to turn from religion to Jesus Christ.* Friend, there was the mystery of that crown: He was wearing the curse. There was the misery of that crown: He suffered for us. There's the mockery of that crown: men today, as then, refused to bow the knee to Jesus Christ. And today, you will either bow the knee or crown Him with thorns one more time.

#### **IV. The Saving Ministry of That Crown**

Here's the fourth thing I want you to notice—and it is the saving ministry of that crown. This is not by happenstance. Why did Jesus wear a crown of thorns? Because God is teaching a lesson that He who knew no sin—that's Jesus—God had made to be sin for us.

Second Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 21: *“For [God] hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”* (2 Corinthians 5:21) What does that mean? It means that my crown of thorns, my sin, my curse, was put on the head of the Lord Jesus Christ and Jesus bore that punishment. Please listen to me. You're a sinner, and as surely as you're sitting there and I'm standing here, your sin will be punished. God is a holy God, and God has sworn by His holiness that all sin will be punished. God never has, God never can, God never will let one-half of one sin go unpunished. Your sin must be punished. There's only one question: Who will bear that punishment—you or Jesus? That's the only question. No sin is ever overlooked. *Sin will be pardoned in Christ or punished in hell, but sin will never be overlooked.* That's the reason the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5, verse 21: “Him who knew no sin”—that's the Lord Jesus—“God hath made to be sin for us.” (2 Corinthians 5:21) He took our sin. He was crowned with our sin. He, the Lord Jesus, carried that sin to the cross.

Do you know where this happened? Do you know where Jesus Christ was crowned with thorns? Do you know the spot where that happened? May I tell you the spot where that happened? That was Calvary. It was Golgotha. It was Mount Moriah. You say, “What?” Yes, Mount Moriah.

Mount Moriah—what was Mount Moriah? Mount Moriah, the Temple Mount, and Calvary are all the same limestone ridge, all the same mountain. Centuries before Jesus Christ was born, God said to Abraham, who was the brightest star in the Hebrew heaven, “Abraham, I want you to take your son, your only son, the son that you love, the son of promise, and I want you to take your son to a place I will show you—not just any place, a certain place—and there you are to offer your son.” Isaac, by this time, was a

strapping, strong, young man. Abraham and Isaac go to the place of sacrifice. Isaac knows they are going to make a sacrifice. He looks around, and he says, “Father, here’s the wood to burn the sacrifice. Here’s the fire to start the sacrifice. Father, we have everything. We’ve got the rope. We’ve got the knife. Father, where’s the lamb?” Abraham chokes back the tears because Isaac does not yet know, and he says, “[Son,] *God will provide himself a lamb.*” (Genesis 22:8) And, up that mountain we go. The wood is put in place, and Abraham now must say to his son, “Son, you must trust me. Oh, my son, you must understand I don’t understand; I just believe God. I’ve got to do this. I don’t know why. God will just have to raise you from the dead. But son, you’re the sacrifice. Put out your hands. I must tie you.”

And, that son, strong and strapping, who could have overcome this man well over a hundred years of age, willingly submits and becomes a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. He stretches out there on that altar. Abraham lifts that gleaming knife into the sky to plunge it, when he hears a voice: “Abraham, Abraham, don’t harm the lad! I have provided a substitute.” And, Abraham looked over here, and here was a ram, a ram caught in a thicket—the Hebrew word means “a thicket of thorns”—his head caught in the brambles, in the thorns. And, God says, “Abraham, take that and sacrifice him instead.” And, that ram caught in a thicket, that ram crowned with thorns, became the sacrifice that day in the place of the one who should have been and would have been sacrificed. (Genesis 22:1–14) No wonder Jesus said, “*Abraham...saw [my day], and was glad.*” (John 8:56) God preached the gospel to Abraham so long ago. Why? Here’s one sacrifice; he gets up. Here’s another sacrifice crowned with thorns. And, that’s the saving ministry of the crown.

Listen to me. Abraham built many altars. You follow the life of Abraham, and you’ll find the trail is dotted with altars. But, he never built another altar after this episode. Why? This was the perfect altar because it pictured the perfect sacrifice. I’ll tell you something else, friend: after Jesus Christ died upon that cross, there’s no need for any other altar. “*For by one [sacrifice] he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.*” (Hebrews 10:14) And, to build another altar is blasphemy. It is finished. It is done. It is paid in full.

*Jesus paid it all,  
All to Him I owe;  
Sin had left a crimson stain,  
He washed it white as snow.*  
—ELVINA M. HALL

He was bearing our curse. He carried our sins to the cross. He was bearing a crown of thorns—the wickedness, the vileness, the filth of our sin. The same sin that He drank from that cup He now wore on His head as He went to Calvary.

## V. The Sovereign Majesty of That Crown

The one last thing I want you to see—and that’s not only the saving ministry of that crown, but I want you to see the sovereign majesty of that crown. Oh, the sovereign majesty of that crown! Do you think that Jesus died as a helpless victim? Do you think that Jesus died because things got out of control? Do you think that perhaps Satan was on the throne and Satan was doing all of this? Oh, friend, let me give you a verse now. Put this in your margin: Acts chapter 4, beginning in verse 27. The apostles are preaching after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and they’re seeing now with eyes washed with tears and with revelation faith; and they are saying this, speaking to those who crucified Jesus: *“For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together”*—now, that’s for man’s side, but now look in verse 28—*“for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.”* (Acts 4:27–28) Not incidental, not accidental—a drama fulfilled in the heart and mind of God. What am I saying? Friend, when Jesus wore this crown, He was the sovereign majesty, not a helpless victim. What God ordained ahead of time should be done. He was in perfect control.

Crowns have always been a symbol of authority. Charlemagne wore a crown. Historians call him Charlemagne the Great. He had an octagonal crown. On each side was a plaque of gold. Rubies, emeralds, and diamonds were encrusted on the crown of Charlemagne the Great. It was worth a king’s ransom. Richard the Lionheart, he had a crown, a crown that was so heavy that when he wore his crown, there were two attendants on either side to hold his head up straight. That’s how heavy the crown of Richard the Lionheart was. The Queen of England has a crown. If you’ve ever seen the crown jewels, you’ll understand how magnificent that crown is. Do you know the value of the crown that the Queen of England wears? Suffice it to say, you could replicate this building and all that we have with the value of that crown and still have plenty left over—that crown sitting upon the head of the Queen of England. Jesus, in the glory, wears a crown—a crown of peace, a crown of righteousness, a crown of glory.

But, as for me, He never wore a crown just like this one. Oh, the sovereign majesty of that crown—the rubies, I say, the drops of His blood! And, it speaks, by contrast, of the crown that He will wear. As we sang today, “Crown Him with many crowns, the Lamb upon His throne.” Jesus is the Rose of Sharon, and the Rose of Sharon blooms from this crown. Sharon’s sweetest rose, a rose of fragrance, a rose of beauty, whose petals are kissed with the sunshine of heaven, blooms from this crown.

When a little bird wants to build its nest, a place of safety, security, many times a little bird will build in the brambles for protection. And, that’s where I’m headed today. My security, my safety, my salvation, my all and all is found in a name, a name above

all names, the name of One who wore my crown.

## **Conclusion**

You have a choice today. Do you know what your choice is? You can bow the knee and honor Jesus or you can say, "Take that crown from off His head and put it on mine. I will bear my own curse. I will pay for my own sin. I will suffer and burn in hell because I refused to bow the knee to the One who loved me so." And, that's your choice. Jesus offers to you amazing grace, wonderful love, and you can be saved. There's the mystery of this crown. There's the misery of this crown. There's the mockery of this crown. There's the ministry of this crown. And, there's the majesty of this crown. I, for one, want to bow my knee and say, "All hail King Jesus!" Hallelujah. What a Savior!†

# Attitudes That Crucify

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** February 9, 1992

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 27:1–44

*“And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!”*

MATTHEW 27:29

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Attitude of Self-Righteousness
- II. The Attitude of Hypocrisy
- III. The Attitude of Cowardliness
- IV. The Attitude of Conformity
- V. The Attitude of Hardness
- VI. The Attitude of Indifference
- VII. The Attitude of Skepticism and Cynicism

Conclusion

## Introduction

Turn in the Gospel of Matthew, if you would, to Matthew chapter 27, and we're going to prepare our heart to receive the Lord's Supper. Verse 29: *“And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.”* (Matthew 27:29–31)

The greatest tragedy and the greatest victory that the world has ever known has been the crucifixion of Jesus, the tragedy and the victory that took place on that hill called Calvary when the Son of God, the Lord Jesus, God the Mighty Maker, died for man, the creature's sin. I want you to come with me tonight to Calvary, and I want you to consider cruel Calvary and think of the suffering of our dear, dear Savior that we're going to remember tonight. I want you to think of His anticipatory sufferings because Jesus, from His youth up, knew how He was going to die. Psalm 88 and verse 15 quotes the Lord Jesus Christ as saying, *“I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth*



up.” (Psalms 88:15) That was not simply a statement of David; it was a prophetic statement of the Lord Jesus Christ. We think of the Lord Jesus Christ as He grew up in Joseph’s carpenter shop. Every time He saw a crossbeam in that carpenter shop, it could remind Him of that cruel cross upon which He would die. Every time the Lord Jesus Christ drove a nail in Joseph’s carpenter shop, it spoke to Him of those hellish nails that would be driven into His quivering palms. Every time the Lord Jesus saw a rose grow, He could look beyond that rose and see the thorns and be reminded of that crown of thorns that would rest upon His brow. He lived in the shadow of a cross. His anticipatory suffering.

I think of the Lord Jesus when He went alone to pray in dark Gethsemane. Nothing moves my heart more than thinking of Gethsemane, where Jesus was in such agony that He literally sweated drops of blood, where He cried out to God the Father and said, *“O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.”* (Matthew 26:39) And, all of the sin of all of the world was distilled in that cup, and Jesus knew that the wrath of God that comes with that sin was in that cup. *“Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.”* (Matthew 26:39) But, the silence from heaven said, “There is no other way.” And, Jesus said, *“Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done,”* (Luke 22:42) and He drank that bitter cup, the dregs of it. Jesus drank it all—my sin and your sin—and our sin was in that cup. And, Jesus suffered there alone. The disciples were asleep; the city was asleep, but Jesus’ eyes would not close in sleep until they closed in death.

I think of the cruel mockery of death, where they hauled Him away to be tried, and the vile injustice that was done to Him. Never, never was there a greater miscarriage of justice than that mock trial that they gave to the Lord Jesus Christ. Finally, Pilate said, “Whether of the two will ye that I release unto you: Jesus or Barabbas?” They said, “Release unto us Barabbas.” He said, “What then shall I do with Jesus which is called the Christ?” And, they said, “Crucify Him.” (Matthew 27:21–22) And, Jesus lost an election to a common criminal.

I want you to consider the indecencies that began at that time. They stripped the Lord Jesus Christ naked. And, some psychopathic, barrel-chested Roman soldier who was probably a volunteer for the job took a long whip called a cat o’ nine tails and began to lacerate the body of Jesus with it. Ribbons of flesh would hang down. The whip would have little bits of bone and lead and glass in the very end. It would wrap around the body of the victim and tear away the flesh and sometimes disembowel the victim. Many times a person who had received a scourging like this was not able to walk. The Romans were skilled at this. They knew how to punish a man within an inch of death and still leave Him bleeding.

Then they put a purple robe upon the Lord Jesus Christ. They put a wilted reed in His hand. They pressed a crown of thorns down upon His tender brow. They spit in His

face. And, they kneeled before Him, and they mock-worshipped Him, saying, "*Hail, King of the Jews!*" (Matthew 27:29; Mark 15:18; John 19:3) And then, they would take Him and pass Him from one to another while He was blindfolded and smite Him in the face. The blood trickles down His cheeks and from His nose and drips off His beard. And then, someone reaches up and takes a handful of His beard and rips it from His cheek. The Bible says that they plucked the beard from the Lord Jesus Christ. (Isaiah 50:6) They shoved Him from one to another and said, "If you are a prophet, prophesy. Tell us who it is who is striking you in the face this time." (Matthew 26:68; Mark 14:45; Luke 22:64)

Then, they took the Lord Jesus and they laid on His back a roughhewn timber. The splinters are embedded into those wounds. The Lord Jesus starts up that hill called Calvary. He makes His way down the Via Dolorosa, the "Way of Sorrows," going to Calvary. He is so weak from loss of blood, from the bruised battering that He has received, He stumbles. A whip cracks. He picks up the cross and tries again. Finally, He stumbles again under the load of that cross. Someone else is forced to carry it, as He comes to that hill called Calvary, and there they stretched the Lord Jesus out. And, a hammer drives those rough nails into those quivering palms, into those feet that never walked in sin, and every nerve in His body becomes a pathway for the feet of pain to travel upon.

No one has known suffering like the Lord Jesus suffered. The Bible says that His face was so marred by the beating and the abuse that it was hard to recognize Him as a man. (Isaiah 52:14) He looked like some sort of an animal. All of the paintings of the Lord Jesus that we see are kind because they still show the Lord Jesus with perhaps a little blood trickling down His face. How abused was the Son of God! But, my dear friend, the veil of the Temple was rent in twain. The earth began to split. The rocks began to split. The sun hid its face, and it was utter midnight when the Lord Jesus was on the cross. And, Jesus cried out, "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34) The disciples had fled. And now, God the Father turns His back upon God the Son. When David walked through the valley of the shadow of death, he could say, "*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.*" (Psalms 23:4) But, when Jesus walked that lonesome valley, He walked it all alone, suspended between heaven and earth, crucified by men and forsaken by the Father, because He was bearing the sin of the world.

And, not only did the Lord Jesus Christ suffer physically at the hands of men, but on that cross Jesus Christ took the thunderbolts of the wrath of God. And, in a finite period of time, He, being infinite, suffered the infinite punishment that we would suffer had we died and gone to hell, because as the sins of the world were distilled upon the Lord Jesus, the eternities were compressed upon the Lord Jesus. And, Jesus baptized His

soul in hell for me, for you. Jesus walked the burning corridors of the damned.

But, the question comes: Who crucified Jesus? “Well,” you say, “the Jews crucified Him.” Well, I want to remind you that His early followers were also Jews and He Himself was also a Jew. You say, “Well, the Romans crucified Him.” The soldiers crucified Him. But, I want to remind you that they were carrying out orders. You say, “Well, Pilate crucified Him.” Well, really, who did crucify Him? Yes, the Jews did. Yes, the Gentiles did. Yes, the soldiers did. Yes, Pilate did. And, so did I, and so did you. He bore our sins. It was for our sins He suffered. And, my dear friend, our sins put Him on that tree. Our sins were the nails that held Him there, and our hard hearts were the nails that drove those nails that made a Calvary and crucified the Lord Jesus.

But, I want us to look, not primarily at who crucified the Jesus, but, as we have the Lord’s Supper tonight, I want us to look at what crucified Him. Do you know, this twenty-seventh chapter of the book of Matthew is a very interesting chapter because here we see some attitudes that crucified the Lord Jesus Christ? And, I don’t want these attitudes to be in my heart and in my life. I call them “attitudes that crucify.” I want to mention seven of them. And, as I mention these seven attitudes tonight in Matthew chapter 27, I want you to listen very carefully. We’re going to have a roll call at the cross. It just might be that you’ll hear your name called. It just might be that you’ll have in your heart tonight some of the attitudes that nailed Jesus Christ to the cross. And, if you do, would it not be a thing unthinkable that you would take into your body, imbibe into your mouth and into your digestive system, these elements that represent His shed blood and broken body and yet have in your heart and in your mind the attitudes that crucified Jesus so long ago?

## **I. The Attitude of Self-Righteousness**

The first attitude I want to mention to you is the attitude of self-righteousness. Look in verses 1 and 2: *“When the morning was come, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death: and when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.”* (Matthew 27:1–2) Now, who were these? These were the religious leaders, the scribes, the Pharisees, the chief priests. These were people who thought that they were self-righteous, that they did not need to be saved. Oh, they had such punctilious laws! Why, they kept their Sabbath! If they got a tack in their shoe, they would take it out before Saturday lest they be accused of carrying a burden on the Sabbath. They would not lay an egg that was laid on Saturday. My dear friend, they would not kill a mosquito or a flea lest they be accused of hunting on the Sabbath day. It’s laughable, but that’s how religious they were. They were full of self-righteousness. They crucified Jesus Christ.

Have you ever thought about what a church full of Pharisees would be like? Think

about it. What would a church full of Pharisees be like? Well, number one: They would all attend every service. Number two: They would all tithe. Number three: They would all work in the church. And, number four: They would all go to hell—self-righteous people. I wonder tonight, are you a self-righteous person? Have you ever truly been broken at the foot of the cross? You know, the Bible says, *“If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.”* (Galatians 2:21) Self-righteousness crucified the Lord Jesus. Is there a shred of it in you tonight? Even a shred?

## II. The Attitude of Hypocrisy

Let me tell you what else crucified Jesus, another attitude: it's hypocrisy. Look, if you will, in verse 3: *“Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.”* (Matthew 27:3–5) There's no doubt about it: Judas was first-class hypocrite. Judas sold Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. He was one of the twelve. He went with them. He had the approbation and the praise of the others. They made him treasurer. Who do you make treasurer? The one that you have the most confidence in, the one that you think has impeccable honesty, the one who is dependable. They made Judas the treasurer. But, he betrayed the Lord Jesus.

Hypocrisy crucified the Lord Jesus. As we take the Lord's Supper tonight, I want you to look into your heart and see if there is any hypocrisy there. You don't have to betray Jesus with a kiss—you don't have to sell Jesus for thirty pieces of silver—to have hypocrisy in your heart. As a matter of fact, I have to keep asking myself this question because, you see, I am a preacher; I stand up and preach, and I say, “Do this, and do this, and do this. And, don't do that, and don't do that, and don't do that.” And, I have to keep asking myself, “Adrian, do you practice what you preach? Do you believe what you say or are you pretending to be something that you're not?” My dear friend, if there is in my heart tonight any pretense, to that degree I am a hypocrite and I have in my heart an attitude that crucified the Lord Jesus.

## III. The Attitude of Cowardliness

I'll tell you a third attitude that's there in this chapter that speaks to my heart. Look, if you will, in verse 11: *“And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest.”* (Matthew 27:11) Now, Pilate was no fool. Look in verse 18: *“For he knew that for envy they had delivered him.”* (Matthew 27:18) Pilate understood why these chief priests and

scribes wanted Jesus crucified: they were jealous of Him; they were envious of Him. That's why they had that malignity in their heart. And, you don't get to be a politician without knowing the motives of men. He knew. He was no fool. But, did he stand up for the Lord Jesus? Well, look in verse 24: "*When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children. Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus*"—that is, he had had Jesus whipped with that cat o' nine tails—"when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified." (Matthew 27:24–26) What attitude is this? It is cowardliness—cowardliness. Pilate knew who Jesus was. Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent. Pilate "*knew that for envy they had delivered him.*" (Matthew 27:18) But, Pilate was a pussyfooting politician. Pilate had rather be in league with Caesar than to stand up for the Lord Jesus Christ. Very frankly, he had a soft job, and what buttered his bread determined His conduct. He was a coward. He was afraid—for shame—to stand up for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Before I take the Lord's Supper, I want to ask myself a question: "Adrian, are you willing to stand up for the Lord Jesus Christ when it might cost you something? Are you afraid of what the crowd might say about you, or what fingers might be pointed at you, or what you might have to suffer if you stand up for the Lord Jesus Christ? If you are, Adrian, you have in your heart an attitude that crucified Jesus, because self-righteousness crucified Him, hypocrisy crucified Him, cowardliness crucified the Lord Jesus Christ."

#### **IV. The Attitude of Conformity**

And then, fourthly, I want you to look in verse 20: "*But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.*" (Matthew 27:20) Now, who are these? These are just people out there. They don't know, hardly, their right hand from their left hand. And, Pilate now is going to give the people a choice. There is going to be an election: "Are we going to release the crook Barabbas or are we going to release Jesus Christ, who is claiming to be God, the Savior of the world?" Now, the chief priests and the elders go out there among the crowd and say, "Now, listen—listen. We are all together on this thing. Jesus is not on our side. Jesus is the bad one. Barabbas is the one that we need released. We know he's an insurrectionist. We know he's a murderer. We know he's a thief and all that, but in this case—now listen—this is what we're all going to do." What crucified the Lord Jesus here? Conformity. They're conformed to the world. They are squeezed in by public opinion. And, they are persuaded to go with the multitude. Look at it again there, if you would, in verse 20: "*But*

*the chief priests and the elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.” (Matthew 27:20)*

Sir, you were in that multitude. Sir, why did you yell out, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!”? “Well, everybody else was. I mean, they told us that was the thing to do. After all, they are our leaders, and we went along to get along.” Conformity. Now, the Bible says, “*Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed.*” (Romans 12:2) At high school, at college, in the restaurant, in the boardroom, on the playing field, do you have what it takes to stand alone, no matter what everyone else is doing? “Stand up, stand up for Jesus, you soldiers of the cross.” Conformity crucified Jesus. Do you have any of that attitude in your heart tonight? I want you to get rid of it before we have the Lord’s Supper.

## **V. The Attitude of Hardness**

Then, I want you to look, if you will, also in verse 27. The Bible says here, “*Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and they mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. And after that they mocked him, they took the robe from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.*” (Matthew 27:27–31)

You say, “Pastor, I would never do that.” No, I know you wouldn’t. But how could these soldiers do this? I tell you, dear friend, they were hardhearted. They were used to killing. They were used to hurting. They were used to maiming people. This was their business. They are professionals. They are so hard that they can play games with a suffering man. Hardness crucified Jesus. And, I have to think about this tonight. I wonder, do I have a hard heart? I wonder if the things that break the heart of God break my heart.

Is your heart tender tonight? Have you become calloused? Would you be able to sit here at the Lord’s Supper, perhaps, and let your mind wander off about something else? Would you be able to take these elements into your hand and harbor hatred in your heart? You’ve got a hard heart. And, while you may not hold that whip and while you may not spit in the face of Jesus, you have an attitude that crucified Him. It’s hardness that crucified the Lord Jesus. Would to God every one of us had a tender heart before the Christ of Calvary who suffered so for us!

## **VI. The Attitude of Indifference**

And then, look, if you will, in verse 36. Here’s the sixth of these attitudes: “*And sitting*

*down they watched him there.*” (Matthew 27:36) Now, He’s up there dying in agony and blood. They’re not spitting on Him. They’re not driving the nails in His hands. They weren’t Pilate, who adjudicated Him worthy of death. They’re just the bystanders.

*“Sitting down, they watched him there.”* (Matthew 27:36) Luke, when he tells this story, says they *“smote their breasts.”* (Luke 23:48) But, it takes more than a pious gesture to save a soul. What is this attitude? It is indifference. Just spectators there, just watching.

How many like that come to a church—I mean, when we’re preaching the Christ of Calvary, when the pastor is tearing His heart out, trying to get souls saved, you’re passing notes to your boyfriend, your girlfriend, cooking up a business deal, thinking about this thing, or that thing, so indifferent to the things that really matter? *“Sitting down, they watched him.”* (Matthew 27:36) Indifference—an attitude that crucifies.

## **VII. The Attitude of Skepticism and Cynicism**

And, last of all, look, if you will, in verse 39: *“And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.”*

(Matthew 27:39) Friend, there was one man Jesus refused to save. Do you know who it was? Himself. They said, “If you’re the Son of God, save thyself”—*“If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.”* (Matthew 27:40) That was the wrong question. They should have stood in front of that tomb and said, “If you’re the Son of God, come out.” *“If [you’re] the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot not save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have them... The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.”* (Matthew 27:40–44)

You say, “Pastor, I would never do what they did.” No, I’m sure you wouldn’t, but you may have the same kind of attitude that crucified the Lord Jesus. What was this attitude? Skepticism and Cynicism. Skepticism: “If you are the Son of God...” Cynicism: they mocked Him. Do you doubt the Word of God? Do you put an *if* by the promises of God? Are you cynical about spiritual things? I’ve seen cynics in churches. I don’t even know why they come. Somebody has said, “A cynic is a fellow who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing.”

## **Conclusion**

As I looked at this chapter, I thought, “These are terrible attitudes.” But, Jesus suffered, bled, and died, and these are the kinds of things that put Him on the cross. And, when I come tonight to take the Lord’s Supper, I don’t want the things that crucified Him to find

a place in my heart, and neither do you.†



# Bible Baptism

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: June 8, 1997**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 28:18–20**

*“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”*

MATTHEW 28:19

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Method of Baptism
- II. The Meaning of Baptism
- III. The Motive of Baptism
  - A. There Is a Master to Confess
  - B. There Is a Message to Convey
  - C. There Is a Mandate to Complete

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you be finding Matthew chapter 28, very familiar verses, verses 19 and 20. This has been called the Great Commission, but alas and alack, many times it is the great omission. We need to find out what the Lord Jesus Christ gave to the church when He gave the church her marching orders, her Great Commission.

Now, let me tell you about the ministry of the Lord Jesus. Jesus had a brief ministry, little more than three years—that’s all—of public ministry. How did Jesus begin His ministry? Jesus began His ministry by being baptized by John in the river Jordan. How did Jesus conclude His ministry? Jesus concluded His ministry by commanding baptism.

Now, notice the scripture right here. He says in verse 18, *“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power”—the word power literally means “authority”—“is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations,”—that literally means “disciple all nations”—“baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe...”—how many things?—“teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have...”—“requested you”? Is that what it says: “requested you, suggested to you”—“teaching them to observe...”—how many things? All—“whatsoever I have commanded you.” Now, who said this? The One*

who says, “All authority is given unto me.” Now, folks, when you come to something like this, the only thing you can reasonably say is, “I’ll say, ‘Yes, Lord, yes.’”

Now, look at it again: *“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world”* (Matthew 28:18–20) —that is, literally, “the end of the age.” He is here today. He is still speaking. He is still saying the same thing. He has not changed. There’s no stutter, no stammer, no apology, no equivocation. It is there in the Word of God. We are to lead people to Christ. We are to baptize them and teach them to observe everything he has commanded us. Now that’s what the Word of God says. That is black print on white paper.

I want to talk to you about baptism today—not Baptists, baptism. Folks, I’m not one whit interested in Baptist baptism. If we have any Baptist doctrine, we need to get rid of it. And Presbyterians need to get rid of Presbyterian doctrine. And Methodists need to get rid of Methodist doctrine. And Episcopalians need to get rid of Episcopalian doctrine. And Assemblies of God need to get rid of Assembly of God doctrine. And Catholics need to get rid of Catholic doctrine. And all of us need to come back to Bible doctrine, is that not right? I mean, we need to understand what does the Bible say. This is a church, not a club, and we don’t make up our rules as we go along. Jesus has all authority. He is the One who tells us about baptism.

Now what I want to do is to ask you to look, therefore, into the Word of God. Now if I tell you something that’s not in the Word of God, challenge me on it. If I tell you something that is in the Word of God, then it’s not me that you’re listening to, really; it is God—the Word that we sang about this morning. I hope that makes sense to you. Let’s talk about the biblical method of baptism. What is the biblical method of baptism? Put in your margin Mark chapter 1, verses 9 and 10, and we’re going to find out how the Lord Jesus Christ, our example, was baptized. It says here, *“And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.”* Now, do you know how far that was? That was sixty miles, one way, to be baptized. You say, “Well, it’s a little inconvenient for me to get baptized. If I got baptized, I’d mess up a twenty-dollar hairdo.” Oh? Jesus came sixty miles from Nazareth to Jordan and was baptized of John in Jordan—not near Jordan, not by Jordan, but in Jordan. Jordan was a river. *“And straightway coming up out of the water,”*—now if he came up out of the water, where was He? Down in the water—*“he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him.”* (Mark 1:9–10) That’s why you see that dove back there in our baptistry. When that screen is up, you’ll see that dove, because it symbolizes the Holy Spirit.

## I. The Method of Baptism

It is obvious that Jesus was baptized by immersion. Why did Jesus come all the way out to Jordan? Why was John baptizing in Jordan? Good question. I'm glad you asked it. Now, let me see if I can answer that question. Turn to John chapter 3 and verse 23, and you're going to find out why John was baptizing in this particular spot. And the Bible says, *"And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because..."*—"it was so beautiful there," "because it was so convenient"? That isn't what it says, folks; listen—*"And John also was baptized in Aenon, near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized."* (John 3:23)

Literally, the word *baptized*, as you've heard, means "immersed." The reason that John went out there to the river Jordan was not for the scenery and not for the convenience. Folks, it just takes a lot of water to baptize. If I baptized the way some people do it, and call it baptism, I could baptize everybody in this auditorium with a washtub full and have plenty left over. But no, baptism takes a lot of water. Jordan was a muddy old river, and it wasn't convenient, but there was water there.

I went to Kenya, and in East Africa went out past ostriches and zebras and wildebeests and gazelles out in a Land Rover out to the backside where this noble tribe of Maasai warriors were. I went out there with missionary Jim Hooten. He was leading those Maasai warriors to Jesus Christ. How was he going to baptize them out there? They took a shovel and dug a grave, lined that grave with polyethylene, and then on his Land Rover he hauled in water and filled that grave with water. And those Maasai warriors were laid in that muddy water, in that grave, symbolizing that they had died with the Lord Jesus Christ and were buried with the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's not easy to baptize. I remember the first person I ever baptized. Her name was Willie Vereen. I led Willie to Christ in the first little church I pastored in Fellsmere, Florida. I went over to see Willie on a Saturday night and witnessed to her. She was a lovely lady, but she said, "Pastor, I want to be saved, but I just don't know how to believe; I don't know how to trust." I said, "Well then, just trust Him." She said, "Well, I want to, but how do you do it?" "I don't know how to tell you to do it. Just do it. Trust the Lord." She said, "Oh, I want to, but I just can't trust." I didn't know what to tell her. I said, "Willie, I'm going to pray for you. I'll see you tomorrow. You just tell the Lord. Ask Him to help you to trust Him. The next day, she came. Her face was like the noonday sun. She said, "Oh, Pastor, God saved me last night! God saved me last night!" She came forward.

I was a young preacher, only nineteen years of age, pastoring a church. I didn't have any business pastoring that church, except that God had called me and told me to do it. I mean, as far as experience, I didn't know how to baptize. I didn't know how to lay hold of a person to baptize them. I didn't know how to do it. You know, I paid no attention to

my pastor when he was baptizing. But we didn't have a baptistry in that church. Folks, we didn't have running water in that church, much less a baptistry. And we didn't have a restroom in that church. I mean, we had a floor and walls, and a two-by-eight to sit on, and a two-by-eight to lean back on, put together with an iron bracket. But God was in that church out there on the edge of the Everglades in Florida. We had a canal out there called Lateral A Canal, where they drained those sugarcane fields. We went out to Lateral A Canal, and I went out there, and our little church gathered. I went down that slippery, muddy bank, and Willie followed me down there. The water was about waist-deep in Lateral A Canal, and I remember it was cold, Brother Bob; for Florida, it was cold. I can still hear right now—when Willie's feet hit that water, she said, "Oooohhhh." It was cold. It wasn't like we have today, folks. I mean, there were wiggle tails and everything else in that water; pollywogs, and maybe a moccasin or two. But we went out there and I laid that gracious lady back in that water and raised her up. I'll never forget. Why do that? It would be so much easier to take a rose petal and put a little water on her head. Why do that? Why? For the same reason that Jesus went all the way to Jordan: because there was much water there. We had to find a place where there was water.

One time in my church in Florida I announced a baptismal service, and when I got there, the baptistry was empty. We had a pipe about as big as my thumb that filled that baptistry. Folks, it took forever and then a day to fill that baptistry. And I looked, and the janitor forgot to turn it on, and I said, "Oh, what are we going to do? We've got people who have come from out of town to see folks baptized." I had an idea—I believed, divine inspiration. I called the fire department and said, "I've got an emergency: send a pumper truck over." And, you know, they did it. And people thought the church was on fire. They saw that big fire engine out there and that hose running in there. We filled that baptistry up lickety-split with that big pumper truck, and I baptized those people.

Now, why go to all that trouble? Why, when we built this building, did we build this beautiful baptistry back here? Because Jesus said to teach them to "*observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*" Because it is not easy, but it is glorious; it is wonderful. We're not looking for convenient religion. Listen, folks. It's not a matter of convenience. Let's just find out what the Bible says. Bible baptism is by immersion.

Now some people want to make it easy. You know, churches are getting so lax today I expect to see some churches start taking members in on the telephone and baptizing their photographs. Baptism is by immersion. The very word *baptism* is basically a translated Greek word. *Baptizo* means "to dip, to submerge, to immerse." *Rantizo* means "to sprinkle." *Luo* means "to pour." But God's word that He uses, He says, "Take them and baptize them." If you were to take the word *baptize*, it is a word that is transliterated, taken out of the Greek language, put into the English language, but

the word literally, if it's translated, means "to dip, to immerse." That's what the word means. And did you know that in the early years all Christians baptized the way we baptize—by immersion? As a matter of fact, if you go to Europe and you look in some of the great cathedrals that were built before the thirteenth century, you'll find out they had baptistries like we have in our Baptist churches—I have gone and stood in some of those baptistries in these old cathedrals—because in the early years everybody baptized just like the Bible teaches us to baptize.

And so that is the biblical method of baptism. It is by immersion. That is the method. Now the method and the meaning of baptism are inextricably interwoven. The reason that the method is so important is, the method is necessary to the meaning, and the meaning dictates the method.

## II. The Meaning of Baptism

Now we've talked about the method, and we've seen the Lord Jesus was baptized by immersion by John in the river Jordan. But now, what is the meaning? Well, the meaning is, baptism pictures the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, take your Bibles and turn to Romans chapter 6, and look, if you will, in verse 4: *"Therefore we are"*—what's that next word?—*"buried with him by baptism into death:"*—now, folks, baptism is a burial—*"that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:"*—so the Bible says—*"knowing this,"*—verse 6—*"that our old man"*—now, watch it. Our old man, old Adrian, that rascal—*"is crucified with him,"*—that is, with Jesus—*"that the body of sin might be destroyed,"*—that's the old man I used to be—*"that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin."* (Romans 6:4–7)

You see, what does baptism picture? Baptism pictures the gospel. What is the gospel? First Corinthians 15 tells us the gospel is this: that Christ died for our sins; He was buried; He was raised again the third day." (1 Corinthians 15:1–4) Folks, that is the gospel: the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Do you understand that? Do you understand that that is the gospel? What does baptism picture? It pictures the gospel. *"We are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead...even so we also should walk in newness of life."* (Romans 6:4)

Can you understand why the devil would like to destroy that symbolism? If there is one message, if you were the devil, what one message would you want to take out of the church? The gospel. What one message would you want to obliterate? The gospel. What one message would you want to make sure was not seen over and over again? It is the gospel: the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Now some people say, “Well, the method is not important. It only pictures salvation. Any picture will do.” Suppose you’ve never seen my wife Joyce, and you say, “Adrian, do you have a picture of Joyce?” and I say, “I sure do,” and I pull out a picture, and there’s a racecar, or there’s a waterfall, or there’s a coffee table, and you say, “That’s Joyce?” “Well, any picture will do. It doesn’t make any difference.” “Well, you know, I didn’t know your wife looked like a racecar.” “I didn’t know she looked like a waterfall.” “I didn’t know she looked like a coffee table.” “Well, any picture will do.”

Hey, folks, baptism is a picture of a death, a burial, and a resurrection. I mean, God wants it to be clear; God wants it to be plain; and that’s the reason that we picture what Jesus did to save us. The devil would love to remove that from our church, but we want to keep it there.

*Living, He loved me; dying, he saved me  
Buried, He carried my sins far away;  
Rising, He justified freely forever:  
One day He’s coming—O glorious day!*  
—L. WILBUR CHAPMAN

That’s in baptism, my folks. It shows, first of all, that we believe that, and we identify ourselves with it.

Look in verse 5 here in Romans chapter 6: “*For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death...*” (Romans 6:5) When I go under the water, when I’m baptized, that says I am in the likeness of death. I die, the old Adrian dies, because when Jesus died, He died for me. When I trust Him, His death has my name on it. He died my death. He took my place upon that cross. So my death with the Lord Jesus Christ is pictured in baptism. That’s the reason, if you were baptized before you got saved, hey, folks, you weren’t really baptized. To be baptized before you’re saved is like having your funeral before you die. Baptism is a picture of your death.

Always in the Bible—always—baptism follows salvation: dying to the old way. Just put these scriptures down. I’m going to hurry through, because we’ve got to hurry, but just jot them down. Acts chapter 2, verse 41: “*Then they that...received his word were baptized.*” (Acts 2:41) You see, you’ve got to receive the word before you get baptized. That’s why we don’t baptize little infants. Acts 10, verses 46 and 47: “*For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as we?*” (Acts 10:46–47) In this transitional period, the mark that these Gentile believers had received the Holy Ghost was the ability to speak in foreign languages. It was a supernatural gift of God to confirm that the gospel was going to the Gentiles. When Peter saw that, he said, “Why, these can be baptized also, because they have received the Holy Ghost.” It’s necessary that you be saved and receive the Holy Spirit before

you're baptized.

Acts chapter 16, verses 31 through 33—Paul and Silas were in prison, there was an earthquake, the jailer came to them and wanted to know what he had to do to be saved, and Acts 16, verse 31 says, *“And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house:”*—that doesn't mean they'd be saved because he believed; it means, *“If they believe, they'll be saved just like you're saved”*—*“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And they took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.”* (Acts 16:31–33)

Now in all these scriptures I'm showing you, baptism follows belief. The Bible never says, *“Be baptized and believe,”* but vice versa, *“Believe and be baptized,”* because real baptism follows real salvation. It pictures what? Our death—verse 5. But it also pictures our resurrection with Jesus. Look in verse 4—this is Romans 6, verse 4: *“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”* (Romans 6:4) So when I went down beneath that water, that was a liquid tomb. The old Adrian died with Jesus. The old Adrian was buried. It was a funeral. The only mourner there was the devil. He hated to see me die. I am buried with Jesus. His death had my name on it. He died for me. I died with Him. Baptism says, *“I believe that.”* The old man is dead, and this world is crucified to me, and I'm dead to this old world. And then the Bible says that *“like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”* Goodbye, old world! Goodbye, old man! Hello, new world! Hello, Jesus! Hello, resurrection life! And that's what it's about. When Jesus died, I died. When He arose, I arose. He did that for me, and I did that with Him.

But it also pictures the fact that one of these days—one of these days—I'm going to die physically, if Jesus tarries, and they're going to lay me in the grave. I don't want to invite you to my funeral. It wouldn't be polite to invite you to something when I won't be there. I'll be up in heaven looking down on you. But my body will be in the good, clean earth until the trumpet sounds and the resurrection comes; and just like I came out of that baptistry when I was baptized, I'm coming up out of that grave. I mean, my body is going to be raised. And you see, what does baptism picture? Friend, it pictures Calvary, because we died with Him. It pictures Easter, because we rose with Him. It pictures the Second Coming, because one of these days we're going to be raised up out of that grave to live with the Lord Jesus Christ in a resurrected body. Don't you think the devil would like to take that picture out of the church?

Now, folks, that is the biblical meaning of baptism: the death, burial, and resurrection

of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **III. The Motive of Baptism**

Now, here's the last thing—and listen quickly: not only the method, and not only the meaning, but the method and the meaning now are tied to the motive. Why be baptized? Three reasons.

#### **A. There Is a Master to Confess**

First of all, there is a Master to confess: the Lord Jesus. We are baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. We take the name of Jesus. He is now our Master. The Bible teaches—look, if you will, in verse 6—*“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”* (Romans 6:6) You see, we have a new Master, a new life. I'm a new man with a new Master. I'm identifying myself with Christ. Do you know what baptism is? Baptism is your way of saying, “I am not ashamed of Jesus Christ. I thank God for what He did for me on that cross.”

Look up here. I don't know whether you can see that or not, but you see that thing on my finger? That little piece, that's the only piece of jewelry I have, except for this Seiko watch I'm wearing. I wouldn't call that jewelry—but that's it right there. Do you know what that is? That's a wedding ring. Do you know who gave me that? Sweet Joyce. Do you know why I wear that? Because I love her and I'm not ashamed of her. I want everybody to know that I belong to one woman: her name is Joyce. Now this ring doesn't make me married. I could be married and not have a wedding ring, or I could go down to the dime store and buy one and not be married. She didn't buy this in the dime store. I don't think. I'll ask her. But now, listen, folks. Listen. What does that mean? That means I belong to Joyce. What does baptism mean? It means I belong to Jesus. I belong to Jesus. It doesn't make me a Christian. It shows I'm a Christian. Friend, there is a Master to confess.

A little boy got saved in the children's church, and they said, “Go over to big church and tell them you've been saved and you need to get baptized.” He didn't understand baptism. He went to the big church. He told the pastor, “I've been saved. I need to get advertised.” That's it. That's it, folks. You're getting advertised.

#### **B. There Is a Message to Convey**

Now there is a Master to confess. Listen. Secondly, there is a message to convey. Did you know that every time when you get baptized, you're preaching the gospel? Every time when you get baptized, anybody who gets baptized, he's preaching the gospel: the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. A Master to confess. A message to convey. It shows what happened when you got saved. It shows what Jesus did. Many



times I've seen people get under conviction of sin and get saved because of a baptismal service. The very things that baptism pictures are what bring conviction in the hearts of people, and they say, "I need a Savior; I need somebody to have died for me; I need a new life; I need what that pictures."

### **C. There Is a Mandate to Complete**

But, last of all, friend, it is a mandate to complete. Now, listen. Go back again. It is a Master to confess. It is a message to convey. But it is a mandate to complete. Jesus said, "*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:*"—now, watch this—"*teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*" (Matthew 28:19–20)

### **Conclusion**

What is your response to that? I'll say, "Yes, Lord, yes."

# Don't Let the Great Commission Become the Great Omission

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: April 16, 1993**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 28:18–20**

*“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”*

MATTHEW 28:19–20

## Outline

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- I. God's Unlimited Power
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## Introduction

Would you take God's Word and be finding Matthew chapter 28? In a few moments, I'm going to begin reading in verse 19. If you're familiar with your Bible, you know that this passage of Scripture is what we call "the Great Commission." The title of the message this morning: "Don't Let the Great Commission Become the Great Omission." I think we're in danger of doing that. The late, great Peter Marshall described the modern Church as "a deep-sea diver equipped with all sorts of fantastic equipment to go down many fathoms deep." He said, "The Church is like that: bravely marching forth to pull plugs out of bathtubs." We have so much; we do so little. Yet our Lord has given His

marching orders for the Church.

Now, when someone speaks, the occasion for which they say what they say has a lot to do with how important it is. For example, if you had a loved one who was just about to step over to the other side and go to heaven and they beckoned you to bend down because they wanted to whisper something in your ear that they felt was very important, indeed, you'd say, "I want to hear these last words of my beloved before he or she goes to heaven."

Now, many of us believe that the words that I'm about to read to you were words that the Lord Jesus spoke to the assembled multitudes, upward of five hundred reported there in the book of 1 Corinthians, just before He stepped over into heaven. (1 Corinthians 15:6) These are His last words. How important they are! They are His marching orders for His Church. Listen to what the Lord Jesus had to say: *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."* (Matthew 28:19–20) What an important passage of Scripture this is! And, I want you to listen to it.

There are three basic things that God is not only saying to people in ages past but God is saying to this congregation this morning, and not only to this congregation this morning, but to you as an individual. There are three major things that stand out to me as I look at this passage.

## **I. God's Unlimited Power**

Number one: our Lord's unlimited power. Do you see it? His unlimited power. He says, *"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."* (Matthew 28:18) Now, let's break that down to three parts.

### **A. What Is Given to Him?**

First of all, what is given to Him? *"All power."* (Matthew 28:18) Now, the word *power* here is not the word that means "power" like the power that a bulldozer has, but it's the word for "authority." Our Lord is saying, *"All [authority] is given unto me."* (Matthew 28:18) That is, "I am sovereign Lord." God has declared Him Lord. Angels have announced Him Lord. It is our responsibility and privilege to crown Him Lord. For He says, *"All authority—all Lordship—has been given unto me."* (Matthew 28:18) It is the Lord who is speaking. We have a little saying, a little quip, that we use: "God said it, I believe it, and that settles it." Well, friend, God said it, and that settles it, whether you believe it or not. He is Lord.

## **B. Where Is It Given to Him?**

So, there's the *what* of this. And then, I want you to notice the *where* of it. He says, "*All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*" (Matthew 28:18)

### **1. In Earth**

Let's talk about the earth, first of all. Our Lord says, "I have sovereign power over all of the earth." I don't want you to think of Christianity, therefore, as the Western religion, much less to think of Christianity as the white man's religion. God forbid! All nations, all kindred, all tribes, all people belong to Jesus Christ. Say "amen." They do.

### **2. In Heaven**

On earth it all belongs to Him, and in heaven. "*All [authority] is given unto me in heaven.*" (Matthew 28:18) Actually, this word "in heaven" means "in the heavenlies." You know, there in Ephesians chapter 6, where the Bible says, "*We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, [and] powers...[and] spiritual wickedness in high places,*" (Ephesians 6:12) that literally means "in the heavenlies." It's the same thing He's talking about here. And, what is He saying? He's saying not only here in the material realm that we can see, but in that unseen realm—that spiritual realm—Jesus Christ is Lord. Angels bow before Him. Demons cringe at the name of Jesus Christ. Our Lord has authority on the earthly sphere. On earth and in heaven, our Lord is sovereign. He is Lord.

## **C. Wherefore Is It Given to Him?**

"*All [authority]*"—that's the *what*—"is given unto me in heaven and in earth"—that's the *where*. And now, notice the *wherefore*: "*Go ye therefore*" (Matthew 28:18–19)—"because I have the authority as your sovereign Lord to command you." And, what our Lord is saying—listen: there is no power He cannot break; there is no place He does not belong; and there's no person He cannot use. That's what He's saying. "*All [authority] is given unto me*"—"there's no power I cannot break"—"*in heaven and in earth*"—"there's no place I don't belong. "*Go ye therefore*"—"there is no person that I cannot use." (Matthew 28:18–19)

### **1. It Is Universal in Scope**

Now, our Lord is speaking to all of us, and what He says to all He says to each. You see, this is universal in scope. I told you before that most likely, our Lord gave this announcement and pronouncement before the five hundred plus who saw Him in His resurrection body, and He gave it, therefore, to all of them. This is to the Body of Jesus.

### **2. It Is Individual in Application**

But, what He says to all He says to each. It is universal in scope, but it is individual in application. Now, you know the danger here today? You're going to think I'm speaking

to someone, and you're going to think that the Great Commission was given to somebody else. You're going to think that there are a certain select few—pastors, evangelists, and missionaries—that Jesus Christ was speaking to. I want to tell you something plainly: if you don't understand that the Great Commission is given to you as a believer in Jesus Christ, I have failed this morning as a preacher.

Would you help me a moment? How many of you are here today? Would you lift your hand if you're here? Let me watch. Some of you are not here. No, go ahead. Don't be ashamed; just hold it up. I want to see how many of you are here. Now, if you have your hand up, I'm talking to you, okay? I'm talking to you. I am talking to you because Jesus Christ is speaking to you. He is not just talking "to whom it may concern." He is speaking to you. This is a message to you.

There is no power He cannot break. There's no place He does not belong. There is no person He cannot use. And, there is a *wherefore*: "*Go ye therefore.*" (Matthew 28:19) And, to fail is not simply to miss a blessing; to fail is a clinched fist in the face of God. To fail is high treason against heaven's King. The French Foreign Legion used to have this motto: "If I falter, push me on. If I stumble, pick me up. If I retreat, shoot me." Oh, that ought to be the marching orders as we sang "God Raise Up a Mighty Army." God wants us to be a part of His salvation army. God wants us to be a part of His invasion army.

So, the very first note, the very first section, of this Great Commission is what I call "His unlimited power": "*All [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore.*" (Matthew 28:18–19) He has authority to send us. He is our sovereign Lord.

## **II. God's Unchanging Program**

The second thing I want you to see: not only His unlimited power, but I want you to see His unchanging program. From the time that Jesus Christ left this earth to the time He comes again, He has but one program for His Church, and it's right here in verse 19: "*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*" (Matthew 28:19–20)

Now, we don't have to guess at this. We're to disciple all nations; we're to baptize all believers; and we're to teach all His commandments. It's just that simple. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure this out. The Church doesn't have to say, "Lord, we really don't know what you wanted us to do. We wish you had given us clear instructions." Now, He says we're in the business of making disciples. "*Go...and teach all nations.*" (Matthew 28:19) That literally says in the Greek language, "Disciple all nations." So, when it comes to disciples, what are we to do?

## A. We Are to Make Disciples: Evangelism

First of all, we are to make them. And, how do you make a disciple? You bring a person to a saving faith in Jesus Christ. You tell him of Jesus, who is mighty to save. That is evangelism. Now, the church that is not in evangelism, whether it be at home or abroad, is failing, not even worthy of the dirt, the ground, upon which it is built. “For a church to major in evangelism,” the late, great Dr. Havner said, “would be like a railroad majoring in transportation. We exist by evangelism as a fire exists by burning.” That’s why we’re here. The great heart of God is for souls, and the Bible says, “*The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*” (Luke 19:10) And, if you’re not concerned about bringing people to Jesus Christ, you’d better examine your heart and see if you’re saved. I can tell you this: from the moment I gave my heart to Jesus Christ there has been—there is now—a desire to share Jesus Christ with other people.

Now, if Jesus Christ is real to you, if Jesus Christ is a blessing to you, would you not want to share it? People say, “Pastor, do you believe that people without Christ are lost?” I do. “Well,” you say, “they have their religion.” They may; but friend, salvation is in Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone. Now, *if Jesus Christ is not the only way to heaven, Jesus Christ is none of the ways to heaven.* Why do I say that? I say that because of this: Jesus Christ Himself said that He was the only way. Read it in John 14:6. Jesus said, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*” (John 14:6) The Apostle Peter picks that up in Acts 4:12 and says, “*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*” (Acts 4:12) There’s no other way. Now, *if Jesus Christ, therefore, is not the only way, He’s none of the ways*, because if He’s not the only way, He is a liar, and a liar is nobody’s Savior. And, He said that He was the only way. If He is not the only way, He’s certainly not the Messiah of God because He’s a fake, a fraud, and an impostor.

You say, “Well, Pastor Rogers, that is narrow.” You can call it what you want, but friend, people without the Lord Jesus Christ are lost. “No one comes to the Father, but by Jesus Christ.” (John 14:6) It is our duty, it is our privilege, it is our mandate to tell them.

You say, “Well, what if they never hear? Are they lost if they never even hear?” I have a harder question than that: Are we saved if we don’t tell? You need to ask about it. Friend, *if you can’t give your faith away, you ought to give it up.* We talk about “keeping the faith.” We need to share the faith. If we believe what we believe, we are to make disciples of all nations, and that begins with your next-door neighbor; that begins with the members of your family. It begins in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth. It is the marching orders of the Church—evangelism. We are to make disciples.

## B. We Are to Mark Disciples: Enlistment

But, not only are we to make disciples; we're to mark disciples. We are to baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. (Matthew 28:19) That's a part of it. What is baptism? Baptism is the outward declaration that "I belong to Jesus Christ." Somehow in our day and age, we have minimized baptism. Never minimize baptism. Our Lord did not minimize baptism. Our Lord only had a ministry of about three years. That's not a very long ministry—only about three years here on this earth. Now, He had a lot to do. But, how did Jesus Christ begin His ministry? By being baptized. Did He not? Of course He did—was baptized by immersion in the river Jordan. How did Jesus conclude His ministry? He commenced it with baptism. How did He conclude it? By commanding baptism.

Are you a baptized believer in the Lord Jesus Christ? Did you know that baptism is the outward symbol and mark that you belong to Jesus Christ? You say, "Does baptism save me?" No.

† This ring that I'm wearing doesn't make me married, but it's the mark I'm married; it's the sign I'm married. And, I want to tell all the world, especially any other woman who may be living, I belong to Joyce. I am set aside; I am set apart. There is a lady that I love, that I'm committed to. And friend, baptism is the mark. It doesn't save you any more than this ring makes me married, but it shows that you're not ashamed of the Lord Jesus Christ.†

And, what is baptism? It is a picture, an element, a symbol of that which saves you. What saves you? The gospel. What is the gospel? Read it—1 Corinthians chapter 15. (1 Corinthians 15:1–4) This is the gospel: that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried, and that He was raised again the third day. That's the gospel. Read it. There is no other gospel than the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ for our sins. He's "[shown] to be the Son of God with power." (Romans 1:4) He's not just another religious leader, in that God raised Him from the dead.

What is baptism? Baptism is a picture of that. Romans chapter 6: "*Therefore we are buried with him by baptism...that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life*"—listen to this—"For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." (Romans 6:4–5) What is baptism? Baptism is the likeness of His death and the likeness of His resurrection. Anytime anyone is baptized, they are picturing, portraying, proclaiming the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That baptistery becomes a liquid tomb. When that person's arms are folded and they lay back in that tomb, they are being buried with Christ. They're saying, "Lord Jesus, I believe you took my sin to the cross, and when you died, I died with you. Hallelujah! My

sin debt is paid, and my sin is buried in the grave of God's forgetfulness." And, when you come up out of that water, you're saying, "O God, I believe that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead by the power of God, and I believe, through His resurrection, I have a new life. I have become a new creature, born to live a resurrection life." And, you portray that by being baptized.

Why should you be ashamed to be baptized? Many who are sitting in this congregation this morning may say, "Well, I belong to Jesus Christ, but I'm not going to worry about baptism; it's not all that important." Who are you to say what is important and what is not important? Don't you think the One who says, "*All [authority] is given unto me*" (Matthew 28:18) is the One who ought to say what's important and what's not important? Don't you think that the devil would love to remove the symbolism, the emblem, of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ from the churches? You can't bury a person with a few drops of water any more than you could bury them with a few grains of sand. "*We are buried with him by baptism...that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*" (Romans 6:4) And friend, if you don't have a new life, you have no business being baptized. Baptism is a symbol and an emblem of the new life that you have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **C. We Are to Mature Disciples: Edification**

And so, what are we to do? What are the marching orders of the Church? What is His unchanging program? We are to make disciples; that is evangelism. We are to mark disciples; that is enlistment. We're to get them into the New Testament church. Friend, are you a baptized believer of a New Testament church? You ought to be if you're to be a part of the Great Commission. We're to make them. We're to mark them. And then, we are to mature them. We are to "*[teach] them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*" (Matthew 28:20) It's not enough to get them saved. It's not enough to get them baptized. Then, we begin to teach them. We begin to pour the Word of God into these disciples because as we make them and mark them, then we mature them. After we have evangelism and enlistment, we have edification. And, they begin to "*grow in [the] grace, and...knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*" (2 Peter 3:18)

You say, "Well, I don't know. What should we teach them?" Teach them what He commanded you. "*[Teach] them...all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*" (Matthew 28:20) Well, what did He command you to do? To make disciples, to mark disciples, to mature disciples. You see, what is a New Testament Christian? He is a maker not of disciples; he is a maker of disciple-makers. Did you understand that? We're not just simply makers of disciples; we are makers of disciple-makers. My evangelism is not complete when I simply win you to Christ on a street corner. I am to



come on and stay by your side until you make a public profession of your faith in Christ, until you follow Christ in the water of believer's baptism. But, my discipleship and my obedience is not done then. I am to stay with you, to love you, to edify you, to enlist you, to teach you until you can begin to be a soul winner yourself. Then I fulfill the Great Commission—when I have taught you to obey what He commanded me. And, when I take a convert and turn a convert into a soul winner, then, friend, Christianity has begun to take off in such an incredible way.

You see, we wonder why we are not reaching the world for Jesus Christ. I'll tell you why we're not reaching the world for Jesus Christ: *we have a generation of Sunday morning bench warmers who think they've done God a wild favor if they come to church on Sunday morning*, but they have not learned that the Great Commission is given to them and they have an incredible and glorious responsibility.

Now, listen to me. If there were only five thousand believers in the world—I will preach this morning to five thousand people right in this building; put the two congregations together, it will be more than five thousand people—if there were only five thousand believers in all of the world—out of five-and-a-half billion people, only five thousand believers—just five thousand; that's all we had to start with, just five thousand—and those five thousand became soul winners, and in a year each one won three and got them baptized and began to disciple them—now, is there anybody, who, if they really tried, were full of the Holy Spirit, and gave their heart to it, couldn't win three people a year? I doubt it. Is there anybody who couldn't do that: just three a year? Now, if we did that, and we had five thousand this morning, a year from now, in March, we'd have what? Twenty thousand. But now, our twenty thousand—not just twenty thousand; they're twenty thousand makers of disciple-makers—so let's say that our twenty thousand will win three and teach them to do the same. Well, all of a sudden, exponentially, we can see this thing has begun to grow. But now, the next year, incredible numbers! And the next year, astronomical numbers! And in ten or eleven years, every soul on Planet Earth is a Bible-believing Christian. Three a year. Incredible? Three a year!

See, our Lord knew what He was talking about, didn't He, when He said we're not just simply makers of disciples? We are to be makers of disciple-makers. When we win somebody to Jesus Christ, we make them, we mark them, we mature them, and they begin to start the process over again. That's the Great Commission. That's what our Lord has commanded us to do. What a thrill, what a privilege, what an obligation is ours!

### **III. God's Unfailing Promise**

Third thing—listen. First of all, there is our Lord's unlimited power: *"All [authority] is given unto me."* (Matthew 28:18) Secondly, there's our Lord's unchanging program. It's

never been canceled, never been abrogated. It is for you today. And thirdly, there is His unfailing promise. What is His unfailing promise? Look at it. He says, “And if you will do this”—“*and, lo*”—“behold”—“*I am with you always, even unto the end of the world*” (Matthew 28:20)—literally, “to the end of the age.” “*I am with you.*” (Matthew 28:20) What an unfailing promise!

How is the promise preceded? Well, the promise is preceded with His authority. He says, “*All [authority] is given unto me.*” (Matthew 28:18) How is the promise followed? By His presence. So you have His authority behind you, His presence within you, and the task before you. It’s not bad. His authority is behind you: “*All [authority] is given unto me*” (Matthew 28:18)—“and I am in you, and you are in me.” (Matthew 28:20) What a combination! “The authority of heaven and earth is mine, and I am with you. Now, go.” Isn’t that neat? Isn’t that wonderful? That’s the way it is. “*All [authority] is given unto me...Go ye therefore.*” (Matthew 28:18–19)

You say, “Pastor Rogers, Jesus Christ is not particularly real to me.” Oh, He’s not? Would you like for Him to be more real? Why don’t you get on the firing line, winning souls to Jesus Christ, and see if Jesus Christ does not become more real to you? You see, the *lo* depends upon the *go*. “Lo, I’m with you when you go.” How universal this is! All authority! All nations! All commandments! All the days of your life!

Now, we can’t all do it the same way. God is not calling every one of us to go overseas. God doesn’t want us all to be preachers—thank God for that! Boy, I’d hate to belong to a congregation full of preachers! God wants some of you to be businessmen. God wants some of you to be nurses, schoolteachers, athletes. We have an athlete here this morning, Chris Donnelly, free safety for Alabama, who made a Florida boy root for Alabama this year. But, he’s a disciple-maker, not ashamed of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Armour Meatpacking—have you ever eaten any Armour meat? Of course you have! He’s a great Christian. Somebody asked Mr. Armour one time, “What is your business?” He said, “My business is winning people to Jesus Christ.” They said, “No, no, what is your business?” He said, “I said, my business is winning people to Jesus Christ.” They said, “No, where do you go to work?” “Oh,” he said, “I pack meat to make a living, but my business is winning people to Jesus Christ.” That’s what I’m talking about. God may keep you in the same job, the same place, the same neighborhood, but you’re going to be a part of the Great Commission, bringing people to Jesus Christ. You say, “Well, I don’t have a lot of talent.”

† Many of you have heard of Howard Hendricks. He’s preached from our pulpit. Howard Hendricks, one of the greatest exponents and expositors of the Word of God in America today, seminary professor at Dallas Seminary, was a little boy from a dysfunctional family. Howard said, “I used to sit on my front steps and cry a lot. And, I had an old dog that I’d kind of bury my face in his fur and cry, and he’d lick the tears off

my face.” Howard said, “I thought it was because he loved me. He just liked salt, though. Just licking the tears off my face—he didn’t understand my heart was broken. But,” he said, “there was a man in our community. His name was Walt. He had a sixth-grade education. And,” he said, “Walt got a heart for the Lord, and Walt went to the church and said, ‘I’d like to teach a Sunday school class.’ They said, ‘Walt, we don’t believe you’re able to teach a Sunday school class.’ He said, ‘Well, I’d sure like to try.’” Howie said, “He was a big old tall guy, sort of an Ichabod Crane-looking character. And, they said, ‘Well, Walt, why don’t you just build a class? We’ll give you a room. You build a class.’” And, Walt began to walk around that neighborhood and find some little boys out there.” He came to Howard Hendricks, got down in the dirt and shot marbles with him, and then said, “Son, would you come to my Sunday school class?” Howie said, “Of course I’d come. A man was interested in me, who would shoot marbles with me. Of course I’d come!” He said, “He built a class—Walt built a class—of thirteen boys.” Howard Hendricks, brilliant seminary professor, said, “I don’t remember a word that he taught in that class, but I remember this: that he poured his love into those thirteen boys.” Of those thirteen boys, eleven of them went into fulltime Christian service: two of them seminary professors, four of them pastors, six of them missionaries around the world. A man with a sixth-grade education, but he had the world on his heart.†

You may never go overseas as a missionary, but you might be a missionary mamma and raise a boy to be a missionary, raise a girl to be a missionary. You might be a missionary businessman, raising money for missions. How do you go? You go with your prayers. You go with your money. You go with your input. You go with your life. You go as He tells you to go. But, He has told you to go, and He says, “If you will, I’ll be with you always right to the end of the earth. I’ll be with you in failure, and I’ll be with you in success. I’ll be with you in the good times; I’ll be with you in the bad times. I will be with you if you’ll only go.” That’s it.

## Conclusion

And, I beg you today, people of Bellevue, that you don’t let the Great Commission become “the Great Omission.” And, I beg you to begin in your Jerusalem, which is right here, and begin with your next-door neighbor, or that person in the desk beside you, or that boy that you play ball with—whomever, wherever. Would you say to the Lord, “Anywhere, anytime, any cost”? We all ought to say that. And, don’t be afraid to say that. Don’t fear the Lord. Oh, He loves us so much. Look around. Just look at this congregation. I’m going to tell you something: in fifty years, most of you will be dead, including me. Fifty years— isn’t that right, doctor? Here’s a doctor here. That’s right— fifty years, most of us be dead. You say, “Not me. I’m young. I’m only twenty-one.” You might be dead tomorrow. I don’t know. You don’t. We don’t know. But, I mean, just a

few ticks of a clock, and we're gone.

What are you going to do? What on earth are you going to do for heaven's sake? What do you want to leave behind? Aren't you tired of just drawing your breath and drawing your salary? Don't you want to be a part of something big? What could be bigger, what could be greater, than sharing the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ with those who've never heard? *"All [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."*

(Matthew 28:18–20)<sup>f</sup>

# Missions Unlimited

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date:** March 5, 1989

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 28:18–20

**Main Scripture Verse:** *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*

## Outline

Introduction

- I. God’s Unlimited Power
  - II. God’s Unhindered People
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    - B. The Command Is Individual in Application
  - III. God’s Unchanging Program
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## Introduction

Take God’s Word tonight and open, please, to Matthew chapter 28—some very familiar passages that we’re going to read: Matthew 28:19–20. When you’ve found it, look up here. The great Presbyterian preacher, Peter Marshall, said that “so many twentieth-century Christians are like deep sea divers, encased in diving suits, structured and fitted to go down many fathoms deep, who bravely march forth to pull plugs out of bathtubs.” We do so little with so much. May I tell you lovingly but firmly that no matter what else you do—no matter how fervently you pray, no matter how faithfully you attend, no matter how liberally you give, no matter how circumspectly you walk, no matter how beautifully you sing—if you’re not endeavoring to bring souls to Jesus Christ on a regular basis, you are not right with God, okay? Amen or “oh, me”? You’re not right with God.

If you do not have the soul winner’s heart and the missionary’s heart—which are one and the same thing, really; there’s no difference—if you don’t have that kind of a heart, let me tell you what’s wrong with you. Number one: You are a disobedient Christian, because I just read a command from Jesus. And let me tell you, dear friend, worse than your disobedience to Christ, it is what is behind your disobedience to Christ that is so

bad, for Jesus said, *“If a man love me, he will keep my words.”* (John 14:23) You’re guilty of a lack of love for the Lord Jesus Christ. You’ve given evidence that you’re not a follower of Christ, for He said, *“Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”* (Matthew 4:19) You have shown that you are not abiding in Christ, for He said, *“Abide in me, and you will bring forth much fruit.”* (John 15:5)

Have you ever eaten any meat packed by the Armour meatpacking people? Most of us have. Armour is a familiar name to us. What many people don’t know is the founder of that company was an ardent Christian and a great soul winner. And somebody asked him, *“What is your business?”* They didn’t know that he was the meatpacker, but they weren’t prepared for his answer. He said, *“My chief business is to lead men to Jesus Christ. I pack meat on the side to make a living”—“My chief business is to bring men to Jesus Christ.”* And whether you’re a doctor, a banker, a lawyer, a butcher, a builder, a housewife, a student—no matter what else it is—that’s incidental to your call as a believer in Jesus Christ to bring men to Christ. Do you agree with that? Nod your heads. That’s most of us.

Now, listen. Beloved, we are called to be His witnesses. I want to speak to you tonight on *“Missions Unlimited.”* I have just read to you what is called the Great Commission, but sadly, with many of us, is the Great Omission. We are failing to do what Jesus told us to do. Now the time that Jesus gave this command is so very important. If you had a loved one who was about to go to heaven, and just before your loved one was about to take his exit from this world and step over into eternity that loved one called you to himself and said, *“Listen, this is the thing that is on my heart more than any other thing, and before I step into the next world, I want you to hear this,”* would you not give it heed? Would you not pay attention?

My dear friends, before our Lord ascended to heaven, these were His words. And I want us to look at them very carefully, because I am convinced that there is nothing to limit the Church of the Lord God from carrying out the Great Commission except our unbelief, our unfaithfulness, our ignorance, our fear, or whatever it may be. But truly, the Lord who commanded is the God who enables. And I want you to learn with me tonight four wonderful, wonderful truths as we look at Matthew 28:19–20.

## **I. God’s Unlimited Power**

And the very first thing I want you to see is God’s unlimited power, mediated to us through Jesus Christ. Look at it again—verse 18: *“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me.”* (Matthew 28:18) Whether it be in your witness in your school, or whether it be your witness in a foreign nation, you’ve got to believe that, that Jesus has said, *“All power is given unto me.”* Now the word *power* that

is in our King James Version of the Bible is a translation of the Greek word *exousia*, which means all “authority.” Some translations give it that way. Jesus has all authority. That means He’s Lord. God has declared Him Lord. Angels have announced Him Lord. We must crown Him Lord. That means His word is final. We don’t argue with it: no refusal, no rebuttal. *“All [authority] is given unto me.”* Ladies and gentlemen, what I am talking about now is not optional; it comes from the Lord, who has all authority.

That’s the *what*: authority. The *where*? Listen to it: *“All [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”* Now, on earth He has authority. That means He has authority to say to any one of us, “Go,” and we must go. To fail to go is not simply an omission or a failure; it is high treason against heaven’s King. We need to understand that He has authority on this earth. We talk about the world’s religion, as I said when we were singing a while back; but Jesus and His truth is not just one more of the world’s religions. It is not the Western religion. Or, worse, it is not the white man’s religion. It is the faith and the life for every creature. It transcends all barriers of language, culture, nationality, color, race, and rank. All authority on earth is His.

And all authority in heaven is His. When the Bible says, *“All [authority]...in heaven,”* it includes what we would call “the heavenlies.” It doesn’t just simply mean “up there, in the abode where God dwells,” but it means “in the spiritual realm.” There’s a spiritual realm called “the heavenlies.” It speaks of spirit creatures. When Jesus said that “all authority is given to me in the heavenlies,” it means that angels must serve Him, and it means that no demon power can stand before Him. I hope you believe that—that Jesus has authority in heaven and on earth. That’s the way to begin. There’s great security in that—when we know that we go with the power, the authority, of heaven behind us.

And when I say, “No demon spirit can stand before Him,” you see, He gives that authority to you. And the devil hopes that you don’t understand that; the devil hopes that you don’t know that. Many of us think we have arrived when we’re no longer afraid of the devil. No, dear friend, you haven’t come far enough yet. The question I want to ask is, is the devil afraid of you? Is the devil afraid of you? Demons trembled in the presence of Christ. And He says, “All authority is given unto me in the heavenlies. Go therefore.” And to a person walking in the Spirit, He has the authority of the Lord Jesus; He has the “authority to tread on serpents and scorpions,” (Luke 10:19) symbolizing demon powers.

## **II. God’s Unhindered People**

Now, the second thing: Not only must you see God’s unlimited power; but therefore, as a result of that, you must see God’s unhindered people. It follows. Look, there’s an argument, a philosophy, here. Jesus said, *“All power is given unto me in heaven and in*

earth. *Go ye therefore.*” (Matthew 28:18–19) Do you get the idea? “I have the power. I’m giving it to you. You’re now unhindered.”

### **A. The Command Is Universal in Scope**

When He said, “*Go ye,*” He was speaking to His entire body. This promise and this command is universal in scope. It happened just before Jesus ascended. This command probably was given to the five hundred brethren that are mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15:6 that saw Jesus alive after His resurrection. (1 Corinthians 15:6) The Great Commission is not a message for a select few—not merely for the pastor, the evangelist, the missionary; it is a message, a commission, to every blood-bought child of God. It is universal in scope.

### **B. The Command Is Individual in Application**

But now, listen. It is personal and individual in application. God has a particular place for you to work. God has a particular place for me to work. He doesn’t call us all to the same task. God placed me here as the pastor of this church; and if that’s His will for me, then I’m in a wonderful place. If God put you in a business and that’s His will for you, then my place is no higher than your place, because, you see, there is no higher place than the will of God. Nobody can be in a bigger place than the will of God. And, dear friend, you are as much a servant of Christ, and you will get the same kind of a reward that I or any evangelist would get, if you, in your place, are there by God’s will, doing God’s purpose for you.

You say, “Well, it’s not God’s will where I am.” Then, find God’s will and get in it. But I want to tell you, what we call “secular work” is not a biblical term. There is no Christian who has a secular job. My dear friend, whatever we do, in word or deed, we’re to do all to the glory of God. (1 Corinthians 10:31) Every day is a holy day. Every place is a sacred place. And every act is an act of service by somebody who’s obeying the Great Commission, if he understands what the Bible is saying here. God doesn’t call us all to the same task; but we are all commissioned, we are all empowered, and therefore we are all unhindered in getting out the gospel. This command: universal in scope. This command: individual in application.

But I do believe this with all of my heart: that God is calling out of this church many of our college young people, and our high school young people, and our younger adults, and saying, “I want you to be career missionaries.” I don’t believe that God engineered all of the preachers to be in America. You preacher boys, it’s just not *ipso facto* that when you graduate from Mid-America Seminary, you’re to seek a church here. That may be His will. When I got out of seminary, I was torn in three directions. I did not know whether God wanted me to be a missionary, whether God wanted me to be an



evangelist, or whether God wanted me to be a pastor. And, very frankly, I had a burning desire to do all three. And very, very easily, God could have made me a foreign missionary or a home missionary. All He would have had to have done, as far as I know, is to whisper in my ear. Or, God could have made me an evangelist. I suppose the thing I really wanted to do was to be an evangelist—I think every young preacher does. But God called me to be a pastor, and I believe I'm here by the hand of God.

But it is not automatic that our young people are just simply called to pastor churches—and here especially in the buckle on the Bible Belt where there's a church on every corner and so many people who have never heard the name of Jesus in this world.

If you saw a heavy log that needed to be carried, and on one end of that log there were nine men and on the other end of that log there was one man, what do you think might be a wise thing to do? Don't you think that some on one end of the log ought to go down and get on the other end of the log? I mean, we've bunched all the workers up together. That's not necessarily the plan. It is not the plan of God.

### III. God's Unchanging Program

So, my dear friend, our Lord has unlimited power. Therefore, we are to be unhindered people. The third thing I want you to notice: The God with the unlimited power, who has empowered His unhindered people, has an unchanging program. Now we don't need a new and a modern gospel for a new and a modern age. Did you read today in the paper where some scholars say that Jesus didn't say He was coming again? Friend, let me tell you something. We have some smart alecks today who think that they have what it takes to judge this book. I want to tell you, Jesus said this book is going to judge us. He said, "The words that I speak unto you, they will judge you in that day." (John 12:48) And it doesn't change. *If it's new, it's not true.* Methods may change, but God's program is always the same, whether we go on a sailing ship or a 747.

Here is God's unchanging program—listen to it: "*Go ye therefore, and teach*"—that is, "disciple"—"*all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*" (Matthew 28:19) Now the word *teach* here actually means "to disciple" or "make disciples of all nations." And, by the way, *God did not call us to make decisions, but to make disciples.* A lot of what we call evangelism may not be evangelism.

And, actually, there are three things that we're told to do in these verses, concerning the disciples.

## A. We Are to Make Disciples

We're to make them; that is, we're to bring them to Jesus Christ. Yes, they are lost without Christ. Somebody will ask you, "Do you believe that those so-called 'heathen' are lost if we don't tell them? Isn't their religion as good as ours?" No! Jesus Christ is the only way. You can call me a bigot if you want, but I believe that with all of my heart. *"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."* (Acts 4:12) Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."* (John 14:6) The great question is not, "Are they lost if they don't hear?" The great question is, "Are we saved if we don't tell?" That's the great question. How can we believe that Jesus Christ is the answer to this world's hurts and the hope of eternal life and we be sinfully silent? The very first thing He tells us to do is to make disciples, to win them to Christ.

## B. We Are to Mark Disciples

We are to make them; and then, we are to mark them. We are to baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Don't minimize baptism. Baptism is the mark that you have entered into the Body of Christ. People are baptized as they become a part of a local church, and it's so important that people openly and publicly say, "Look, I believe in Jesus Christ, and because I believe in Jesus Christ—because I believe that Jesus Christ died, was buried, and raised again—I want you to take me and I want you to put me in that watery grave. And when I go beneath the water, it is my way of saying, 'I believe that Jesus died and was buried.' And, bless God, I am dying with Him. And when I come up out of that water, it's my way of saying, 'I believe that Jesus was raised from the dead by the glory of God, and I believe that same Jesus has given me new life.'"

When Joyce and I took a mission trip last year, we went to Kenya. And in Kenya, we went with one of our fine missionaries out to the foothills of the Kilimanjaro, out there where the Maasai live—these warrior-like people, these tall warriors who think that God gave them all of the cattle: If anybody else has any cattle, they stole it from the Masai, and it's all right for the Maasai to go and steal it back. They believe that God gave them all the cattle in the world. They drink blood and goat's milk together—warm blood. They are fierce people. They're a proud people. They are primitive people living in little mud huts. Joyce and I went out there to see the Maasai. What a trip that was, as we went out behind Nairobi about forty or fifty miles, and then turned off the road to a dirt road, and then followed that dirt road until there was no more road—to drive out there not in a wild game preserve, but just out in Africa past the wildebeests, past the flocks of gazelles, past the exotic birds. It's interesting to look up and see a big flock of ostrich just going

by, to see zebras and other wild animals just out there in that area. We drove and drove and drove.

Joyce, with her camera, kept saying, “Can I take some pictures of these Maasai?” And our missionary would say, “No, I don’t believe it’s wise. I don’t think you ought to take any pictures right now. Just wait a while.” And we’d come up to a Maasai village of the mud huts out there, and she’d say, “Can I take a picture?” He said, “No, just wait a while.” We kept on asking, “Why do you want us to wait?” He said, “That’s all right.” He said, “We’ll find the right time to take pictures.” When we got back, I found out why. I told another missionary about it. He said, “Yes.” He said, “They don’t like their picture taken, especially when you’re taking pictures like they’re something different, like they’re strange, like they’re some sort of an animal in a cage or something like that.” You’re wanting to come back and say, “Would you look at that?” And, of course, many primitive people feel that when you take their picture, you’re taking something from them, because whatever is there somehow gets on that paper. They don’t like that idea unless they know you, and love you, and trust you.

But he said there was one of these Americans who came over there and asked one of the Maasai warriors, “Can I take your picture?” And he said, “No.” He said, “Well, I’ll give you some money if you’ll let me take your picture.” He said, “No.” They’re very proud people. So he said, “Well, all right.” And when they got in the Land Rover and started to leave, this missionary turned around, through the rear mirror, and snapped a picture as they drove off. When they did, this Maasai warrior took his spear and threw it right through that rear window, right through that American’s chest, and went all the way down and through his leg. He almost died. Now I understood why the man said, “Just wait a moment, Joyce. Don’t take any pictures.”

But when we got out there—I mean, on the backside of nowhere, in the middle of what you would call dark Africa—Jim Hooten, our Southern Baptist missionary, said, “Here’s our headquarters.” It was a little green tent about *this* big he’d set up. And he said, “This is where we baptize.” And do you know what he showed me? He showed me a grave they had dug in the ground—just like a grave, a dirt hole in the ground, and they had lined it with plastic and filled it with muddy water. And he said to me, “In the last several months, we’ve baptized more than eighty Maasai right there.” Friend, to me, that’s missions. But I thought to myself, “Can you imagine putting a man in a dirt grave and bringing him up?” And I said, dear friend, to myself and others, “That is what baptism is.” It doesn’t matter whether you’re here or there or wherever you are; it’s a part of the Great Commission. We’re to baptize them.

And, by the way, if you haven’t been baptized, why not? What right do you have to call yourself a follower of Jesus Christ if you don’t obey Him? It’s not a suggestion.

### C. We Are to Mature Disciples

We are to make them. We are to mark them. And we are to mature them: *“teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.”* (Matthew 18:20) It’s not enough to win somebody to Jesus Christ. It’s not enough to get them baptized. We are to teach them what Jesus said. We’re to mature them in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And if we would really begin to obey the Great Commission, we’d see far more people saved than we do see saved. Primarily, we don’t need more Christians; we need better Christians. We need Christians who themselves become soul winners. Actually, we’re not to be makers of disciples; we’re to be makers of disciple-makers. We are to teach those that we win to do what He commanded us to do—and that is to win people. Your evangelism is not complete until the evangelized becomes an evangelizer: till you have taken that person, you have made that disciple, you marked that disciple, you matured that disciple, and now he’s set out to do the same thing; he is doing whatever Jesus commanded you to do. And that’s the way we get out of addition and we get into multiplication.

### IV. God’s Unfailing Promise

Now, friend, what is the Great Commission? Unlimited power: *“All [authority] is given unto me.”* Unhindered people: *“Go ye therefore.”* Unchanging program: *“Teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.”* And then, there is, my dear friend, an unfailing promise: *“And, lo, I am with you”*—hallelujah!—*“lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”* (Matthew 28:18–20) It literally means “to the end of the age; to the end of time as we know it.”

Think about it. This command is preceded by the promise of His power, and it is followed by the promise of His presence. You have the authority of Christ behind you. You have the presence of Christ within you, and you have the task of Christ before you. It’s a wonderful deal.

Dear friend, do you want to know the presence of Jesus? Many people say, “Well, you know, Christ is not as real to me, pastor, as you seem to say that He’s real to you.” Have you ever noticed two words *go* and *lo*? “You go; and, lo, I am with you.” Jesus is never more real to you than when you’re witnessing. Let me ask you a question, those of you who are soul winners, those of you who have witnessed: When you witness in the name of Jesus, don’t you feel very close to Him when you’re witnessing? Don’t you? And doesn’t your faith seem so strong? Isn’t there something about sharing the Lord Jesus Christ that makes His presence very real in your heart? That’s true in mine. I mean, when we get serious about obeying Him: “You go and make disciples. And, lo, I

am with you always, even unto the end of the age”—His unfailing promise.

## **Conclusion**

Now I said this is “Missions Unlimited,” and I want you to see why I said it was unlimited. I want you to think of how inclusive this is. He says, “all authority.” He says, “all nations.” He says, “all of his teaching, for all of the days, even to the end of the age.” Don’t get the idea that because we’re living at the end time we’ve run out of power and we’ve got to hold the fort till Jesus gets here. It’s time to stop singing “Hold the Fort” and start singing “Onward, Christian Soldiers.” Jesus said, “I am with you to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20) And there’s not a shred of Scripture that says we can’t have a mighty revival in this day and in this age—and in Memphis, Tennessee. Let’s get off the defensive; let’s get on the offensive, and let’s report for duty and quit running around pulling plugs out of bathtubs when we’re equipped to do something else.

# Our Marching Orders

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: March 05, 2000**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 28:18–20**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. God's Unlimited Power
- II. God's Unchanging Program
  - A. We Are to Disciple the Nations
  - B. We Are to Baptize All Believers
  - C. We Are to Teach All His Commandments
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Conclusion

## Introduction

**T**ake your Bibles and find our quintessential missionary chapter, Matthew chapter 28. And that's going to bring you to what is known as the Great Commission, and I don't know how we could have a missionary conference without looking at it one more time. So to bring this World Mission Conference to a conclusion, let's look at this verse that is the pivotal verse, Matthew 28, beginning in verse 18: *"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the [age]"*—or *"the end of the world."* *"Amen"* (Matthew 28:18–20).

Now what we have here are the marching orders of our Lord and Savior, our Sovereign King. He's given them to all of us and given them to each of us. Now people's last words are often written down and recorded in history because we think they are especially important. But these are the last words that Jesus uttered before He ascended into heaven, and well might we listen to these last words. I will be brief tonight, and I pray God that He will help me to lay four things upon your heart tonight that you will not forget.

## I. God's Unlimited Power

First of all, I want you to think, as we think about this great world missionary enterprise that God has given us, I want you to think of God's unlimited power. He says, *"All power*

*is given unto me*” (Matthew 28:18). Now, what does that mean? Well, the word here is the word not for power like energy power, but it is the word for power like authority. And what He is literally saying is that, “I have all authority.” Plain English: He is Lord. God has declared Him Lord. Angels have announced Him Lord. We must own Him and crown Him as Lord. Now, as Lord, if He has all authority, that means His Word is final. I’ve often heard people say, “Well, God said it, I believe it, and that settles it.” Well, that sounds good, but God said it: that settles it, whether you believe it or not. He is Lord. He is absolute Lord.

Now, where is He Lord? He says, “*All [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*” Now, let’s think about on earth. On this earth, on this terrestrial globe, He has all authority on this earth. Christianity is a world religion. It is not the Western religion. Don’t buy into that. Much less is it the white man’s religion. This is, He is authority over all of the world, every creature. His gospel transcends every language, every culture, every nationality, every color, every race, and every rank of people in all of the world. He is Lord of this world. “*All [authority] is given unto me on earth.*” And He says, “*in heaven and in earth.*” Now when He says, “*in heaven,*” that literally means, “in the heavenlies”; that is, in the realm of the spiritual things, and that includes where the angels are; that includes the realm of the demons; it includes all spirit creatures. He is Lord over them. Angels must serve Him, and demons must bow before Him and cringe at His authority. I’m telling you, “*If God be for us, who can be against us?*” (Romans 8:31).

Now He’s saying this—look: “*All [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*” Wherefore—now we’ve talked about the *what* and the *where*; let’s talk about the *wherefore*. He has authority in heaven and in earth. What does that mean? Well, it means, friend, there’s no place He doesn’t belong, and there’s no power that can stand against Him. That’s what it means—“*in heaven.*” And there are no powers in the heavenlies, no demon powers, that can withstand Him, and there’s no place that He does not belong. His gospel is universal in scope.

Now, listen. It means there’s no place He does not belong. It means there’s no power that can resist Him and stand against Him. And it means there is no person that He cannot use. He says, “*Go ye therefore*” (Matthew 28:19). Not, “Go some of you.” “Ye”: it is plural; it is universal. Now I believe that probably He gave this Great Commission where He was being seen of 500 people (1 Corinthians 15:6). That’s spoken of in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 6. But this is not a message for a select few. It is universal in scope, but it is personal in application. You can’t go like I can go. I cannot go like you can go. You go one direction. I go another direction. You go one way. I go another way. But, folks, what He has said to all He says to each, and you are included in this. And for you to fail to obey the Lord Jesus Christ in the Great

Commission is high treason against your King. And we ought to have the motto of the French Foreign Legion. The French Foreign Legion motto is “If I stumble, pick me up. If I falter, shove me on. If I retreat, shoot me.” We are under commands.

## II. God’s Unchanging Program

Now that’s the first thing I want you to see, is His great, unlimited power. Here’s the second thing I want you to see. I want you to see His unchanging program. It’s very simple. Our Lord has delineated it here, and friend, by and large, it has not failed; it just is not being tried.

### A. We Are to Disciple the Nations

First of all, we are to disciple all nations. That’s what He says. Look at it here: “*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations*” (Matthew 28:19). The word *teach* literally means, “to disciple” all nations. It literally means, “to make disciples” of all nations. That is, there’s no place that Jesus Christ does not belong. People say, “Well, leave them alone. They can’t be lost without Christ.” Yes, they are lost without Christ. There’s only way to heaven, and it’s through the Lord Jesus Christ. And people are asking, “Oh, are they lost if they don’t hear?” I’ll tell you a bigger question than that. Are you saved if you don’t care? Are you saved if you don’t care about these without the Lord Jesus?

### B. We Are to Baptize All Believers

We are to disciple all nations; and then we are to baptize all believers: “*baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*” (Matthew 28:19). There are many missionary programs that seem, for whatever reason, to omit baptism. Don’t you dare minimize what God has maximized and emphasized. How did Jesus begin His public ministry? By being baptized, identifying Himself with us. How did Jesus conclude His short public ministry? By commanding baptism right here. This is not some optional thing. We are to make disciples, and then we are to mark disciples. We are to baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

And we’re not talking about sprinkling people; we’re talking about baptizing people. The word *baptize* means, “to immerse.” You say, “Well, Adrian, what difference does it make?” Folks, it makes a lot of difference—a lot of difference.

Suppose you’d never seen a picture of my darling wife who was up here on the platform with me a little while back. You say, “Adrian, do you have a picture of Joyce?” “I sure do.” And I reach in my billfold and I pull out a picture of a speedboat, a waterfall, a hunting dog, a lighthouse. And you say, “Well, is that Joyce?” I say, “Well, any old picture will do.”

No, no. Baptism is the likeness of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.



*“We are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection”* (Romans 6:4–5). That baptistry is a liquid tomb which pictures the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which, sir, is the gospel. If there’s one message that the devil would like to take out of the church, it would be the gospel. If there’s one message that God wants preeminent in the church, it is the gospel. And every time anybody gets saved, God says, “You make a disciple out of them, and then you baptize them, you give a graphic illustration of what it was that saved them: the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

### **C. We Are to Teach All His Commandments**

We are to disciple all nations. We are to baptize all believers. And then we are to teach all His commandments: *“teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you”* (Matthew 28:20). Well, what did He command us to do? He commanded us to go and make disciples. What do we do when we get somebody that we have won to the Lord Jesus and we baptize them? What do we do? We teach them to go and make disciples. Do you see the cycle? I win somebody to Jesus Christ, get him baptized: I’m not finished with him until I teach him how to win somebody to Jesus Christ and get him baptized. “I am commanding you to go into all the world. Now you teach them whatever I have commanded you.” So it is to go on and on and on and on. We’re not merely makers of disciples; we are to be makers of disciple-makers. Now, listen to this. Not merely makers of disciples; we are makers of disciple-makers. He tells us to go and make disciples, and then He says, “You teach them to do all things whatsoever I have commanded you.”

So your evangelism is not complete when you get a person to assent to the fact that they trust Jesus. He didn’t tell us to make decisions; He told us to make disciples and get them baptized. We’re to make them. We’re to mark them. We’re to mature them. We are to teach them to do what He taught us to do. And then rather than growing by addition we grow by multiplication. We grow experientially. And when we begin to do that, then the church is going to grow in an incredible way.

### **III. God’s Unfailing Promise**

Now we’ve seen His unlimited power. Now we see His unchanging program. I want you to see now, thirdly, His unfailing promise. Here’s what He says: “You go and do that,” and he says, *“and, lo…”*—that is, “pay attention”—*“lo…”*—“hello”—*“lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the [age]”* (Matthew 28:20). Now, don’t you tell me, “Oh,

we're living in the last days, so therefore we don't have any more power. We're just singing 'Hold the Fort.'" No, friend, we need to stop singing, "Hold the Fort," and start singing, "Onward Christian Soldiers." *"I am with you always, even unto the end of the [age]."* God is not dead. God is not old. God is not sick. God is not infirmed. His power is not diminished. He still has power to "rescue the perishing, care for the dying, snatch them in pity from sin and the grave." I believe that these are the greatest days for evangelism. And He says, "I am with you right to the end of the age." It's translated in the King James Version, *"the end of the world,"* but literally, "the end of the age." He says, "I am with you."

Now I want to tell you that the *lo* and the *go* are linked. "You go, and, lo, I am with you." Jesus Christ will never be more near to you than when you are out in missionary service serving the Lord. Those of you who've gone overseas, you will say, "Yes, that is true." Those of you who go door to door, you who go out, whenever you're sharing Jesus Christ, you're going find that you have incredible faith. You're going to find that you have a sense of anointing, because He is with you. He moves alongside of those who will follow Him and obey Him.

Now, listen. This command is preceded by the promise of His power. It is followed by the promise of His presence. I have the power: *"All power is given unto me."* "You go, and, lo, I am with you always." His authority will be behind you. His Spirit will be within you as the task is before you, and you're to go.

## Conclusion

Now I'm going to wrap this up, but I want you to notice the inclusivity of this great command. I want you to notice the *alls* that are in it. He says, "all authority, all power." I mean, friend, who can stand against Him? *"All [authority] is given unto me."* And then He says, "You are to go make disciples of all nations." We're to go everywhere with the gospel. Nobody is excluded. And then He says we are to teach all His commandments: "teaching them to observe everything whatsoever I have commanded you." And then He says, "and I am with you all of the days. I'm with you right to the end." That's so inclusive.

And so this is our responsibility. It is our privilege. It is our joy. Let's not let the Great Commission be the Great Omission. Let's let this church be a Great Commission church. *No church is worthy of the real estate that its buildings are built upon that is not endeavoring to share the gospel with the whole wide world.* Now every now and then I hear people, they get so excited about world missions, and if they're not careful they dismantle the local base in order to do world missions, and that's foolish. Bellevue must continue to be strong. We must continue to grow. We must reinforce the home

base. And we're not going to reach the world by weakening the home base, but we are to be strong here. We're to reach our Jerusalem, all our Judea, our Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth (*Acts 1:8*). And *we're going to continue to grow and glow, or we will dry and die. We will evangelize or we will fossilize.* But we are not going to fossilize, and we're not going to dry, we're not going to die. We're going to believe Jesus, who said, "*All [authority] is given unto me.*" And we're going to follow Him right around the world till He comes. That's what it's all about. That's what it's all about. That's the Great Commission. And God help us to do it.

# State of the Church

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** January 14, 1996

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 28:18–20

*“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.”*

MATTHEW 28:19

## Outline

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Conclusion

## Introduction

Be finding a passage of Scripture that is the church's marching orders: the Great Commission, Matthew chapter 28, verses 18 to 20. I believe you probably know this by heart, but listen to it. Matthew chapter 28—I begin in just a moment in verse 18. Now we're going to be talking to you about our mission as a church, and you have been given—or will be given real soon—a mission statement. I'm going to ask that it be put

over my head. But the mission statement that you're going to see, that you have in your hand, comes out of this mission statement given by our Commander-in-Chief: *"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."* (Matthew 28:18–20) Notice the *alls* there. Verse 18: *"all power."* Verse 19: *"all nations."* Verse 20: *"all things."* Verse 20: *"always."*

What a comprehensive statement! And what incredible authority! It comes from our Commander-in-Chief, and His word is final. It is to be undisputed. It comes from our Lord. It comes to me. It comes to you. He has authority in heaven. Angels bow before Him. He has authority on earth. We must obey Him. No angel can refuse Him. Even demons must cringe before Him. His authority is in heaven and in earth. Now, what is the responsibility of Bellevue Baptist Church? Well, it is to live up to the command and to obey the command of our dear Lord and Savior.

Now we've given to you a mission statement, and you see that mission statement. It is right up there: "Bellevue Baptist Church exists for the purpose of magnifying Jesus through worship and the Word, making Jesus known to our neighbors and the nations, and moving believers in Jesus toward maturity and ministry." That's what we're about, folks.

## **I. Factors of a Mission Statement**

Now, why do we have a mission statement? Well, number one, we want to be obedient to Jesus. But let me tell you some factors that the mission statement gives to us.

### **A. The Fellowship Factor**

Number one: there's the fellowship factor—when we are together doing the same thing. Put this verse in your margin—1 Corinthians 1:10: *"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you."* (1 Corinthians 1:10) We all need to be on the same page. We all need to be in fellowship together. And when we all speak the same thing, there is no division; and when there's no division, there is fellowship. When you're all rowing the boat, you don't have time to rock the boat.

Tommy Lasorda, the great manager of the Los Angeles Dodgers, said this to those who played underneath him—the team, the Dodgers. He said this: "When you play for yourself, you win trophies; but when you play for the team, you win championships."

Now what we want to do is to be successful not as individuals, but together. As Bellevue Baptist Church, we want to be in fellowship one with another. We want to

speak the same thing. And therefore we have to have the same goal. Real fellowship is not coffee and doughnuts; real fellowship is serving Jesus Christ together in a common cause. There is the fellowship factor.

## **B. The Focus Factor**

Then here's another reason we need this mission statement. There is the focus factor. We all need to be focused. The Bible says in James chapter 1 and verse 8, "*A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.*" (James 1:8) We've got to be focused.

When I was a little boy, my brother and I used to get together and get a magnifying glass and get out in the hot Florida sun and get that thing just right. We would be able to make wood burn. We would be able to kill insects with that thing. Just to get the rays of the sun focused.

What is a laser? A laser is what? It is focused light. A laser beam light can burn through steel when it's focused. And just think of all of the light that God has given to all of us. But we need to get that focus. You see, there is a difference in efficiency and effectiveness. Efficiency is doing things right; effectiveness is doing the right things right. And what we want to do is to bring the energies of this church and focus them together.

Now it's true in the natural world; it's true in the spiritual world. John Maxwell has said that approximately ninety-five percent of us have never written out our life's goals, but of the five percent who have, ninety-five percent have achieved them. And then he gave this incredible illustration. He said in 1953, at Yale University, according to a survey, three percent of the graduating class had specific, written goals for their lives. In 1975, they went back and surveyed, and they found out that the three percent who had written down specific goals had accomplished more than the other ninety-seven percent put together.

## **C. The Forcefulness Factor**

Now when we as a church find out what our mission statement is, there is a fellowship factor, there is a focus factor, and then there must be, as night follows day, a forcefulness factor, because when you get fellowship and focus together, then you get force. Look around us. Look at all of us in this building today. Can you imagine what kind of influence we could have for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ if we began to get focused to do together what we ought to do? When I look at this congregation, I feel almost like Ben Franklin felt when he looked at the lightning and he said that is incredible power, if we could harness that power. And we need to harness the power that is here in this church.

## D. The Future Factor

And then there's the future factor. You see, a church that doesn't have goals doesn't know where it is going. Proverbs chapter 19 and verse 2 says, "*He that hasteth with his feet sinneth.*" (Proverbs 19:2) What does that mean? It means if you just go off not knowing where you're going, you're sinning. Proverbs chapter 24, verses 3 and 4: "*Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established.*" (Proverbs 24:3–4) We need to have some goals; we need to have a purpose, if we want to have a successful future.

Now many of us are just simply coming on Sunday morning, attending the church, doing our thing, but we don't really project ourselves out into the future for the glory of God. Now the future is in God's hands, but that doesn't mean that we are not to plan. The Bible is not against planning. The Bible says, "What man, intending to build a tower, doesn't sit down first and see if he has what is sufficient to build it, or if he goes to war, to see whether or not he's going to be able to finish the battle?" (Luke 14:28–31)

Now we need to look to the future. We've been talking about "A Bridge to the Future." Someone has well said, "Where there is no faith for the future, there is no power in the present." I believe that's a good statement. Or as that eminent, well-known theologian Yogi Berra said, "If you don't know where you're going, you're liable to end up somewhere else." Makes a lot of sense to me.

You know, we've got a lot of kids today—I mean, kids in this church. We have some of the most wonderful young people. But don't you think we ought to give them a future? I mean, don't you think we ought to put a dream in their heart and in their lives? I read something the other day that made me so righteously indignant. I started to use another word. It was a statement by a television mogul, one of the high muckety-mucks in MTV, which is nothing but pornography set to music. And this man, his name, Bob Pittman—he was one of MTV's founders, a past chairman—here's what he said: "The strongest appeal you can make is emotionally. If you can get their emotions going, make them forget their logic, you've got them." "Get their emotions going, make them forget their logic, and then," he said, "you've got them." And then he said—listen to this, parents: "At MTV we don't shoot for the fourteen-year-olds; we own them." That's MTV. That's a pretty big boast, isn't it?

Well, I want to tell our kids, we've got a goal. We've got a dream. We've got a vision. We've got something worthwhile, something better than that, something for your future, something that you can tie into.

## II. What a Mission Statement Should Provide

Now any mission statement, whether it be this one or any other, it has to have several things. Whether it be in the secular world or the spiritual world, it's got to be specific. But

for us, it's got to go beyond that: it's got to be biblical. And because it is biblical, it will be possible. I'm not just talking to you about the blue sky and wild dreams and all of that.

I read something here a few weeks ago about World War II. They were having difficulty with the Nazi submarines, and so they met, and one man said, "I have an idea. What we will do is just boil the ocean. It will make all the Nazi submarines float to the surface. Then we'll get them." Somebody said, "All right, how do you do that?" He said, "Well, I'm just a conceptualizer: the details are up to you." Well, we're not talking about those kinds of plans. We're talking about something that is specific, but biblical, and therefore altogether possible by the anointing of God the Holy Spirit.

### **III. Our Mission Statement**

Now, let's look at the three mission statements that we have.

#### **A. Magnifying Jesus Through Worship and the Word**

Look at number one. Bellevue Baptist Church exists for the purpose, number one, of magnifying Jesus through worship and the Word. What is the purpose of the church? It's to magnify Jesus. Ephesians 3, verse 21, says, "*Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus.*" (Ephesians 3:21) We are to magnify the Lord Jesus. We are to make visible the invisible Christ. Jesus Christ is the invisible part of the Christian, and the Christian is the visible part of the invisible Christ. This church is Jesus in this community. We are to magnify Him.

Now, how will we do that?

#### **1. Through Worship**

Number one: through worship. That's why we've met here on Sunday morning. That's why this incredible choir has rehearsed. That's why these lovely ladies sang as they did. That's why you sang. We are here to worship. The bottom line is not evangelism. The bottom line is worship. We get people saved, so they can worship, so they can know the Lord. I'm not saying that evangelism is not important, but why do people get saved? So they can worship and praise our Lord.

Our music department is really a worship center. The worst thing that could be said about any music is not that it's off key, but that it's sung to the wrong audience. We're not in the entertainment business. We're here to worship and give God glory. And I thank God, Brother Jim Whitmire, for the music program of this church. I thank God that we have more than three thousand enrolled in music programs. I'm so grateful that we start with the little children. We've got more than a hundred learning to play the violin for Jesus, 101 Strings, and we have children's musicals that will be done this week here at Bellevue Baptist Church. We have the Performing Arts Center. We have a marching band that will march with banners for Jesus in local parades. We have banners and



banner ministries. We have pageants like the Passion Play and the Singing Tree and “Celebrate America.” Then we meet together, and our finest music program, beyond all of these other things, is when we as a congregation stand and sing. That is music when all of us together are giving glory to God.

And let me tell you something. You on the back row; you down here; you deacon; you Sunday School teacher; you staff member, you’re sinning, in my estimation, if you sit here on Sunday morning in a worship service and don’t sing praises to God. You ought to sing. You ought to glorify Him. “Let those refuse to sing, who never knew our God.” If you can’t do anything else, as Brother Jim says, make a joyful noise. Praise is not optional.

## **2. Through the Word**

So we’re to magnify Jesus through worship. Then, as a church, we’re to magnify Jesus through the Word, because the living Word, Jesus, glorified and honored the written Word, and the written Word glorifies and honors the living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore Bellevue Baptist Church has been and shall be a church with the pulpit central. And Bellevue Baptist Church is known for the ministry of the Word of God, and it begins in the pulpit. But then we have Bible classes. We have Bible classes for every age group. And unless you’re providentially hindered, you need to be enrolled in a Sunday morning Bible class here at Bellevue Baptist Church. Thank God for the big worship service. That is wonderful. But you need to be in a class where they know you by name, when they miss you when you’re absent, and when you can have that one-on-one fellowship and people can pray for you and care for you.

That’s another thing we do: to worship with the Word and to honor Jesus. First of all, we’re saying, through the pulpit. Secondly, through our Sunday School or Bible classes. Thirdly, through our bookstore. The bookstore for us is not a business. Of course, it needs to be done in a businesslike way. It is a ministry to get wonderful materials in your hand, and the sermons and the Sunday School are only to whet your appetite to go down deeper.

Then we as a church provide to you special conferences and seminars like we’re going to have tonight—special classes, special groups. Soon we’re going to have a women’s seminar called “A Flourishing Faith.” There will be three to four thousand women who will come to that wonderful seminar for women, teaching them how to have faith.

We want our children to learn the Word of God. That’s why we have a Vacation Bible School. That’s why we teach our children Bible memory. That’s why we have a new members’ class, the children’s new Christians’ class that my wife teaches. And last year we graduated 160 boys and girls from this class, first through sixth grade.

Thank God our Sunday School is growing. We have a Sunday School at eight

o'clock. We have one going on right now at nine thirty. We have another that will go on at eleven. And you need to be enrolled in Sunday School. If you were not in Sunday School yet today, I invite you to stay over at eleven and get in a Sunday School. And thank God, one of the fastest growing areas in Bellevue's Sunday School is the young adults and the young married adults. And that's the reason we're having to build—hallelujah—a new children's building. Thank God for that! So far you've given over 3,600,000 dollars to the Love Offering. Isn't that a *hallelujah*? Praise God! Give God a hand on that! I tell you, thank God! That's wonderful! That will enable us to build a children's building. We're not in the business of building buildings. We're not in the business of raising money. We're in the business of teaching boys and girls, men and women, about Jesus Christ, and all this is simply a tool.

## **B. Making Jesus Known to Our Neighbors and the Nations**

And so that's our first goal up there. It is to magnify Jesus through worship and the Word. That's what we're about. But, secondly, we are here as a church to make Jesus known to our neighbors and to the nations.

### **1. To Our Neighbors**

We are to make Jesus known to our neighbors. That's why we have here at Bellevue Baptist Church a program known as Making Friends Forever. God tells us that we are to be friends to those who are lost. Jesus was a friend of sinners. Don't ever let anybody criticize you for having unsaved friends. Jesus was a friend of sinners, and we ought to be. How are we ever going to reach them for Christ if we don't begin to show love to them? We are the salt of the earth. You don't put the salt in one barrel and the fish in another. Now that doesn't mean you're to run with them in their ungodly ways. It doesn't mean that you're to accommodate yourself to them and let them squeeze you into their mold. But we are to be able to reach out to lost people, to make friends, to bring them to the programs of the church, to make ourselves available to them in our homes, or wherever, so that we can win them to Jesus. And I think one of the finest forms of outreach evangelism that we have in making Jesus known to our neighbors is Making Friends Forever. If you're not familiar with that program, you need to get familiar with it.

Rick Warren has said this: "Churches grow warmer through fellowship. Churches grow deeper through discipleship. Churches grow stronger through worship. Churches grow broader through ministry. And churches grow larger through evangelism." "Pastor Rogers, how big is big enough for Bellevue?" Well, Bellevue will be big enough when all five and a half billion people on the face of the earth are saved. And we have to keep on growing. We want every church to grow. We don't want other churches not to grow. We want everybody to grow and reach souls for Christ.

Now another program that we have in making Jesus known to our neighbors is not

only Making Friends Forever, but Evangelism Explosion. We're training soul winners to learn how to systematically, kindly, wisely, share Jesus Christ. We call that EE, and it is a system, a wonderful school of evangelism, and we have one of the finest Evangelism Explosion ministries in the world, I believe.

Now, here's a third thing we're doing. We have an evangelistic note in every service. Now that doesn't mean that we're just turning the Sunday morning service into an evangelism rally. Not so. We try to worship and feed the saints, but at the same time we give an evangelistic appeal, an invitation, to come and receive Christ as personal Savior and Lord, and we tell people how to be saved.

Another great way that we're making Jesus Christ known to our neighbors is the productions that we do, like the Singing Christmas Tree. How many people made professions of faith in the Singing Christmas Tree this year? Twenty-three hundred-plus people checked a card this Christmas season that they prayed to receive Christ as their personal Savior and Lord during that production. Thank God for that. And then the Passion Play will come. And again we will preach and present the Lord Jesus Christ. Then again, "Celebrate America" will come. Jim Whitmire has told us that these performances are but just a giant fishhook.

We're not in the entertainment business; but entertainment, if it holds attention so that you can preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, is a wonderful, wonderful tool. We're about to have one of the finest ministries we've ever known in making Jesus known to our neighbors. Right now we're calling it "Bellevue Cares." And the young man sitting on the platform right there, Brother Phil Weatherwax, is going to be heading that program. And that is going into the inner city, going into the outer city, going to the down and out, going to the up and out, in all kinds of services, in food, in clothing, in literacy, in medicine, in trailer parks, in apartment houses, wherever we can, on street corners, through sports, or whatever, to present Jesus Christ. And many of you have abilities and talents and gifts, whether you be medical people, or doctors, or teachers, or professors, or musicians, or coaches, that you can plug in through the ministry called "Bellevue Cares."

Making Jesus known. This city is our responsibility. And we thank God for what every other church is doing, but we need to take the responsibility if nobody else was doing it. We will do it for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

And then we have campus ministries. I'm so grateful for the ministry to all of the high schools, junior high schools, and colleges. At the University of Memphis, the Bellevue Christian Fellowship is a recognized campus ministry. We're going into the medical center. We're going into the nursery school. We must always keep a heart for the lost. And a church that prays about missions overseas and does not win the next-door neighbor to Jesus Christ is a religious farce. We're to care for the lost.

You say, “Well, I think we’ve got enough here this morning, Pastor Rogers.” I want to ask you a question. Let’s suppose you had three or four children, and you all go on a picnic, and then the children are lost. And you go out and find two of them, or three of them, and you say, “Look, the car is already full. We’ve got enough for fellowship on the way home. We can sing some songs on the way home. The car is already full. I mean, one more would crowd us a little bit. Let’s just go.” You can’t do that.

Do you know what we do when we say we’re not going to win any more souls? We’re saying to those who are lost, “You can just go to hell. We’re satisfied.” We can’t do that. We are to be making Jesus known to our neighbors.

## **2. To the Nations**

But, secondly, we are to be making Jesus known to the nations. That’s the reason we have a missions program here at Bellevue Baptist Church and we send people around the world. This past year our people have been from Bellevue to Brazil to build a church, to South Africa to build a church, to Israel, to Romania, where we’re helping to build a seminary, to China, where we have sweet and precious members of our church, who are even there right now as I speak. By our church mission trips we’re making Jesus known to the nations. By our church giving we’re making Jesus known to the nations. Are you ready for a *hallelujah*? This past year this church gave over two million dollars to missions. Thank God for that! Hallelujah for that!

Then another way that we’re doing it is by sending missionaries. I have my own dear son who is in Spain right now. We have full-time missionaries in China, in Israel, in South America, in Spain, in Mongolia. When God measures a church, He doesn’t measure a church by its seating capacity, but by its sending capacity. And we exist to lay the burden of world missions on the hearts of people. Thank God for Love Worth Finding. Those of you who are watching Love Worth Finding today, thank you for watching. But let me tell you what you’re helping to do. You’re helping to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ across America, from sea to shining sea. But let me tell you where this program is now heard: Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, Egypt, Cyprus, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, the Bahamas, Bermuda, Brazil, Columbia, Guatemala, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Trinidad, Belize, Venezuela, Canada, Costa Rica, St. Martin, South Africa, Ethiopia, Guyana, Botswana, Mozambique, Mumbai, Nigeria, Rwanda, Swaziland, Uganda. Again, Zambia, Zaire, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Malawi, Lesotho, Australia, New Zealand, the Solomon Islands, Singapore, India, Western Samoa, the Philippines, Guam, Great Britain, Northern Ireland, and other places. Hallelujah! We exist to make Jesus known to our neighbors and to the nations.

## **C. Moving Believers in Jesus Toward Maturity and Ministry**

Now, here’s the third reason we exist: to move believers in Jesus toward maturity and

ministry.

## 1. Toward Maturity

Now we're to be moving you, and all of us, to maturity. Put this verse down—Ephesians 4:13 and following: *“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man,”*—and the word *perfect* there means “mature”—*“unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, making increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”* (Ephesians 4:13–16)

Now that's a long statement and hard to understand. Let me break it down.

### a. Mature in Stature

What he's saying in verse 13 is we are to be mature in stature. Look at it again: *“...unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”* That is, we're to grow up and be like Jesus. As one of our deacons, Morris Mills, said the other day, “The proof of this ministry is, are you becoming more like Jesus.” The proof of this ministry is not budgets and buildings and baptisms. The proof of the ministry is, are you becoming like Jesus Christ. We are to be mature in stature like Jesus.

### b. Mature in Stability

We are to be mature in stability. Verse 14 says that we are no more like children blown about by every wind of doctrine. Some false cultist knocking at your door is not going to send you stampeding some other direction. You are going to be built on the solid rock of Holy Scripture, and you are not going to become victimized by apostates and cultists.

### c. Mature in Speech

And then we're to be mature in speech. Verse 15 says that we are to be *“speaking the truth in love.”* Do you know what Bellevue Baptist Church is known for? Speaking the truth in love. We don't back up from the truth. We don't apologize for the truth. There's no stutter, no stammer, no apology, no equivocation for preaching the truth. But we want to do it in love. *Truthless love is hypocrisy; loveless truth is brutality.* We are to speak the truth in love. And mature people can do that.

### d. Mature in Service

Mature in stature. Mature in stability. Mature in speech. And mature in service. Look in verse 16. Let me give you a paraphrase for verse 16, because it's the hardest one to understand here: “Each part in its own special way helps the other parts so the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.” Verse 16 speaks of the joints. Do you

know what the Greek word for *joint* is? It is *harmos*, the word that we get *harmony* from. You see, when people are mature, they can work together in harmony. Little children don't know how to work together in harmony. Mature people can work together in harmony.

And so, what are we going to be doing? We are going to be moving believers in Jesus toward maturity. They're going to be mature in stature. They're going to be mature in stability. They're going to be mature in speech. They're going to be mature in service.

## **2. Toward Ministry**

Now the problem is that on Sunday morning we have a lot of big babies who need to grow up, isn't that true? You know it's true. And what is our goal? It is to move members to maturity, but also to move believers to ministry. Every member of this church, every one sitting here, is to be a minister. Our responsibility, our goal, our ambition, is to help you to discover, to develop, and to deplore your spiritual gift. Therefore, our new member classes, we call them Discovery Classes. Now when people join Bellevue, we expect them to go through these Discovery Classes. There are six marks of membership that we want our people to understand, and so we teach them.

What are the marks of membership? Worship, ministry, evangelism, fellowship, stewardship, and Bible study. And that's the way we want to help that new Christian to begin to learn these six marks of membership.

Now another way that we help to move believers to maturity is through our Neighborhood Fellowships. Did you know that all over this city we have geographical Neighborhood Fellowships that meet once a month for a shared meal, if they wish, to pray for one another and to encourage one another?

Another way that we are moving our members to maturity is through our Women's Ministry. Bellevue's Women's Ministry is an incredible ministry reaching literally hundreds of women. We have one of the finest programs called MOMS to teach young mothers. Our young mothers love it. They say, "I want some help on how to be a godly and a wise mother."

We have a Men's Ministry called Man to Man. This past year we had over five hundred of our men go to Promise Keepers rallies. We are now beginning to have special meetings for men to teach them how to lead their families, to love their wives, and to bless their children. One of the wonderful ways that we do that is a ministry called SonSeek that gets dads with their sons and with their daughters in an outing.

We have—and thank God for this—the activities ministry. And the activities ministry is to help mature believers in service. It's more than recreation; it is re-creation. We have hundreds of sports teams. Every sports team has an assistant coach. That assistant coach is really a chaplain, to see if that boy, that girl, that man, that woman,

knows Jesus; to lead them to faith in Christ. I asked them over there in the Activities Building, and they told me that last year in the Grace Building—Giving Recreation A Christian Emphasis, *G-R-A-C-E*—in that building, over ninety-two thousand people came through the Grace Building. Of course, many of them were repeats; but I'm talking about people just coming in the door of that Grace Building. Thank God for that. And it's a laboratory where we work out what we have heard in the Word in Sunday School.

And then the Prayer Ministry in this church. I am a part of it. Many of you are a part of it. We have a specific time. When I get the call from the Prayer Ministry—mine comes on Monday morning—as soon as I'm finished with my prayer time, I call up Pat Caldwell on the phone and say, "Pat, how are you this morning? I'm turning the Prayer Ministry over to you." She says, "Thank you, Pastor. What can I pray for you about today?" What a blessing that is to my heart to know! As a matter of fact, I have while I'm preaching this moment a band of men who say, "I will pray for you today." And then the next day there will be some other men praying for me. And the next day there will be other men praying for me. And the next day other men. Men, many of them, fasting and praying for your pastor. Thank God for that.

Then we have these special seminars like we're having tonight, "Investing for Life." Then we have the wonderful retreats. Just recently in our winter retreat we had 251 students over in Gatlinburg. Revival broke out. A great number of them got saved. They had services that would last for hours of confession and love and repentance. There was a line, a long line of students, standing in line to call back home to ask Mom and Dad to forgive, to call friends to make reconciliation, to call people to say, "Thank you." Real worship broke out.

I'm grateful for all these ministries. Some places you've got two options: take it or leave it. I'm grateful that we have many options for people.

## **Conclusion**

Now, what do I want you to do? I gave you a card. We gave you a card. On that card is the mission statement of Bellevue Baptist Church: "Bellevue Baptist Church exists for the purpose of magnifying Jesus through worship and the Word. Bellevue Baptist Church exists for making Jesus known to our neighbors and the nations. Bellevue Baptist Church exists for moving believers in Jesus toward maturity and ministry."

Now, are you a part of the church? Let me tell you something, folks. One thing that kind of rankles me is for a man or a woman who is not involved to say, "I belong to the church." You don't belong to the church. How could you say you belong to the church? Your time doesn't belong here. Your money doesn't belong here. Your prayers don't belong here. Your energy doesn't belong here. Your influence doesn't belong here. You don't belong to the church. Your name is just on the roll. I'm talking not about Adrian's

church; I'm talking about Jesus' church. If you belong to the church, these things would belong to the church, isn't that right?

Now what I want you to do is not just simply have your name on the roll. I want you to belong to the church. You say, "Pastor Rogers, I just thought it would be easy being a member of a church." Well, you're wrong.

One of the greatest advertisements ever written was written by Sir Ernest Shackleton. He put it in a London paper. Here is what it said. "Men wanted for hazardous journey. Small wages. Bitter cold. Long months of complete darkness. Constant danger. Safe return doubtful." Sir Ernest Shackleton put that in the London newspaper because he was going to explore the South Pole. What kind of response did he get? He said, "It seemed as though all the men in Great Britain were determined to accompany us."

We're not asking for something small, something easy, something lazy. You know, there are people who will tell you, and the secularists will tell you, that the church is on its way out. Well, I want to tell you this: Bellevue is on her way out. She has been bought out by the blood of the Lord Jesus. She has been called out of this world to a specific purpose. She has been sent out by the Great Commission. And one of these days soon we're going to be taken out when Jesus comes again. Thank God the church is on its way out. And I'm glad to be a part of a church.

What is the state of Bellevue Baptist Church? Well, we have to ask ourselves again, what is our business? And, number two, how is business? And when I tell the state of the church, I'm going to tell you, I'm on a razor's edge. On the one hand, it would be a great sin for us to be ungrateful for what God has done; but on the other hand, it would be a great sin for us to be satisfied with where we are now.

I believe God has brought us together for something good and something wonderful, and I want you, if you can prayerfully do it, to sign your name to that mission statement. And don't give it to me. Put it in your purse, in your billfold, and keep it, and look at it, and see if you're a part of what God is calling us together to do.



# The Church's Marching Orders: The Great Commission

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date:** June 23, 1985

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 28:18–20

**Main Scripture Verse:** *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”* Matthew 28:19–20

## Outline

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## Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles and turn to the Gospel according to Matthew chapter 28. We begin reading in verse 18—Matthew 28 and verse 18. That's beautiful music, also, to hear the turning of those pages, isn't it? All right, in verse 18: *“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”* (Matthew 28:18–20)

I want to speak to you today on “The Church's Marching Orders: The Great

Commission.” Peter Marshall, in his own inimitable way, described the twentieth-century church this way. He said we are “like deep sea divers”—the members of these churches—“all dressed up, encased in diving suits, capable of going down many fathoms and staying down for a long time, bravely marching forth to pull plugs out of bathtubs.” Now, dear friend, we modern Christians are doing so little with so much. That early church did so much with so little. O God, help us to believe as they believed, that we might achieve as they achieved. And the thing, I believe, is wrapped up here in what is called the Great Commission, Jesus’ marching orders to His Church. The choir sang “Onward, Christians Soldiers,” and I pray God that something of that spirit will grip your heart today as we bring this message.

Now this is so important, because these words that the Lord Jesus gave are recorded in one form or another in all four Gospels. These are His last words, therefore, such important words. And they are words for you and me. I want you to pay attention, because they can dramatically change your life and change your eternity.

## **I. His Unlimited Power**

Now the very first thing I want you to notice concerning Jesus and His Great Commission is I want you to notice His unlimited power—His unlimited power. Look, if you will, in verse 18: *“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth”—“all power.”*

### **A. What?**

Now that word *power* literally means “authority,” and some Bibles translate it that way: *“All [authority] is given unto me.”* Now, you see, when a person has authority, that means he’s in charge. Who has the authority? The boss. When Jesus Christ is saying, *“All [authority] is given unto me,”* He was saying, “I am Lord.”

Now, we need to understand that the basis of all missionary enterprise is to understand the lordship of Jesus Christ. Without qualification, without equivocation, without stutter, without stammer, we must say, “Jesus Christ is Lord.” God the Father has declared it. Angels have announced it. The resurrection of Jesus has authenticated it. And we must crown Him Lord of all. And, dear friend, you’re not ready to do anything, to know, or to be anything, until you bow your head and say it and mean it: “Jesus Christ is Lord.” No refusal: He is Lord! No rebuttal: He is Lord! No rival: He is Lord! That is the *what*: all authority.

### **B. Where?**

The where: in heaven and in earth. He is Lord. *“All [lordship]”—“all [authority]”—“is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”*

## 1. In Heaven

When He says, “*in heaven*,” He’s not merely speaking of the place where we’ll go one day when we die, but He is using a phrase here that Paul speaks of in Ephesians that he calls “the heavenlies,” “the heavenly places.” In the spirit realm, He is Lord. In that spirit realm, there are angels, and He’s the Lord of those angels. In that spirit world, there are demons, and He is Lord over those demons. And don’t you forget it. The Apostle Paul says in Ephesians 6:12, “*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers...against spiritual wickedness in [heavenly] places.*” (Ephesians 6:12) But I want you to know there He is Lord—undisputed Lord. And angels must serve Him, and demons tremble at the name of Jesus, because Jesus Christ is Lord.

## 2. In Earth

Now, my dear friend, the *what* is His authority. The *where*: in heaven and also on earth. I mean, dear friend, He is Lord over this world. This is His world. It was made by Him. It is controlled by Him. It, one day, is coming back to Him. And one day every knee on earth shall bow and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. And if He is Lord, and He’s Lord on earth, then it means He’s your Lord. And what He is saying here, my dear friend, is for you to listen to and to obey. God is speaking to you, and your sovereign King is speaking to you. This is not a suggestion. This is not a request. It is a word from your sovereign King. He is Lord over His servants here on earth; and to refuse to obey Him is not merely to miss a blessing, it is to make you guilty of high treason against heaven’s King. He is Lord. Jesus Christ said, “*Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*” (Luke 6:46)

## C. Wherefore?

Now, listen, friend. The *what*: He is Lord. The *where*: heaven and earth. The *wherefore*—listen: If He is Lord—and He is—in heaven and earth—and He is—what does that mean? It means, ladies and gentlemen, there is no place that He does not belong, and there is no power He cannot break, and there’s no person He cannot use. He’s Lord. He’s Lord over the demons of hell. Somebody says, “Well, I’m not afraid of the devil.” That’s not the big question. The big question is, is the devil afraid of you? I mean, as you’re armed in the might and the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is with you, that’s the basis of all missionary enterprise: that Jesus Christ is undisputed Lord. “*All [authority has been] given unto me in heaven and in earth.*” He’s not Lord over Western religion. He’s not the white man’s Savior. Over every nationality, every race, every clime, the Lord Jesus Christ unfurls the banner of His undisputed lordship. “*All [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*” His unlimited power—that’s the first

thing I want you to see.

## II. His Unchanging Program

The second thing I want you to see is His unchanging program. Now, what is His unchanging program? Notice in verse 19: “*Go ye therefore...*”—now, the “*therefore*” refers back to His lordship, the fact that He is Lord: “because I am Lord”—“*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*” That is, “As sovereign Lord, I have commanded you.” Now, what is His unchanging purpose? The same as it was for Peter, James, and John so long ago, it is for us today, and it will be for those who follow us if our Lord tarries. He has no other plan. This is His unchanging purpose. This is His plan for humanity.

### A. We Are to Make Disciples: Evangelism

Now this sentence has a main verb. The main verb is right here in verse 19: “*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations.*” Now the word *teach* means literally “disciple” all nations. That’s the main verb. There are three participles that hinge on that main verb, and we’ll get to them in a moment. But I want you to notice the main verb in this clause. It is to “*teach all nations.*” Now the word literally means to “make disciples of all nations.” Some of you have translations that give it this way: “Go and disciple all nations.” Now, notice he says make *disciples*. He doesn’t say make *decisions*.

Do you know the problem with twentieth-century Christianity? We have put an emphasis upon decision-making rather than disciple-making. So many times we’ll have, for example, an evangelistic crusade, and they’ll say, “Oh, we had so many decisions. Praise God!” Well, if you really want to see whether it was a success or not, come back a year later and find out how many disciples you have. You see, decisions are one thing; discipleship is another thing. Now I’m not against decisions, because every disciple begins with a decision. But, my dear friend, there are some who are making decisions who do not go on to become followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. A disciple is a follower of his master. That’s what the word *discipleship* means.

George Gallup of the Gallup Poll organization took a Gallup poll on the religion of people in America today. He found out something very interesting: Never before have we had more religious interest. More people are going to churches. More people are reading religious books and magazines. More gospel on the radio. More gospel on television. More people saying, “I am born again” than ever before. You say, “Wonderful!” Wait a minute—wait a minute. He also said that never before in history, so far as he could tell, has what people say that they believe so not affected their lives.

There's no change in a lifestyle. They say that they believe; they say that they are apart; but, basically, their lifestyle is not changing. What an indictment to our churches! It is a fulfillment of the prophecy of the last time that men will "have a form of godliness, but they will deny the power thereof." (2 Timothy 3:5) It is this matter of making decisions without making disciples. Our job is to make men followers of Jesus Christ. No man has a right to call himself a Christian who is not a disciple of Jesus, who is not a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, that is the main verb. We are to go and make disciples, because He is Lord. And then, there are three participles. The very first of these participles is *going*. Notice in verse 19: "*Go ye therefore.*" (Matthew 28:19) It literally says "going" or "having gone," "therefore..." It is a participle. And that's certainly a very important thing. We are to go. What this refers to is what we call evangelizing, evangelism, soul winning, bringing people to Jesus Christ, the making of disciples. We're to go and make them.

### **1. It Is Universal in Scope**

Now, every one of us is to do this. Look at it very clearly and very plainly, if you will. Verse 19 says, "*Go ye.*" You see that? That means it is plural. He's not just speaking to one or two people; He's speaking to a group. Bible scholars believe that this was most likely the time when He had those five hundred that Paul spoke about—above five hundred—in 1 Corinthians chapter 15. (1 Corinthians 15:6) That is, what He is saying, dear friend, is universal in scope. He's speaking to every one of us. He didn't just get the twelve. He didn't just get the prophets, the preachers, the evangelists, the ministers of music. He's speaking to you—He's speaking to you. He's speaking to you, folks. He's speaking to every one of us. He's speaking to those back then. He's speaking to us. He's speaking to those who will follow. My dear friend, this command is universal in scope.

### **2. It Is Individual in Application**

But wait a minute. It is individual in application. We cannot go all the same way, nor should we. We cannot all be missionaries overseas, nor should we. We cannot all be pastors, nor should we. We cannot all be ministers of music, nor should we. We cannot all be door-to-door evangelists, nor should we, because God is the God of infinite variety, and God has given to every one of us individual spiritual gifts. God has given to every one of us individual opportunities. And God has a plan for everyone's life. And God has placed every one of us in a sphere of activity with certain opportunities. And God has gifted us in different ways.

Now I may not go as you go. You may not be able to do what I do. But I want to tell you, dear friend, that while it is universal in scope, it is individual in application. Each

one of us, in our own particular way, is to go, whatever it is that our Father tells us to do—and He will tell every one of us.

### **3. It Is Inescapable in Responsibility**

The third thing—listen: universal in scope—go; individual in application—go; inescapable in responsibility—go. Inescapable. If you do not go, I want to tell you again, you're not merely missing a blessing; you have a clenched fist of rebellion in the face of God. Inescapable. Let me tell you what is true about you if you're not endeavoring to make disciples. If you're not endeavoring to bring people to Jesus Christ, number one, you are guilty of disobeying your King; number two, your disobedience proves that you do not love Him, for Jesus said, *"If a man love me, he will keep my words"* (John 14:23)—isn't that what He said?—number three, you're guilty of not following Him, because, my dear friend, He said, *"Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."* (Matthew 4:19) Isn't that what He said?

Now, if you're not fishing, you're not following. *"Follow me, and I will make you [to become] fishers of men."* If you're not doing this, dear friend, you're guilty of not abiding in Jesus, for Jesus said, *"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you,"* (John 15:7) that you will *"bring forth fruit, and...your fruit [shall] remain."* (John 15:16) I am saying there is an inescapable—inescapable—responsibility that is here. We are to go. As we go to the grocery store, as we go to school, as we go to work, as we go overseas—wherever it is—we are to take the good news that Jesus Christ is Lord. And, by the way, folks, He's the only hope of this world. Remember that.

### **B. We Are to Mark Disciples: Enlistment**

Now, listen—listen. There are three participles. We're to make disciples. How are we to make disciples? Number one: We are to go: *going*. Number two: *baptizing*. Not only are we to make them; we're to mark them. Baptizing here refers to putting them into a New Testament church. You see, when a person gets saved, when they become a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, then, the Bible says they are baptized by the Spirit of God into the Body of Christ: *"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body."* (1 Corinthians 12:13) Water baptism is the outward expression of that inward reality, and it is the authentic profession of faith in a New Testament church.

Now, when I preach, I'll give an invitation for people to come forward and declare their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that is a very wonderful thing. But I want to tell you something, folks. In the Bible, the real, true profession of faith in Christ is baptism. That's the way a person professed his faith in Christ. That's the way a person said, "I am not ashamed of the Lord Jesus Christ." Baptism is so very vital and so very important. Every now and then, I hear people say, "Oh, well, baptism, that's not all that

important—if you’re baptized, or how you’re baptized.” My dear friend, Jesus Christ only had a public ministry of three years. He commenced that ministry by Himself being baptized—not that He was a sinner, not that He needed to be saved, not that He needed to show that He had been saved; but it was His way of identifying Himself with us to show that He would become the sin bearer; and that’s why He was baptized—to identify Himself with sinful humanity. We are baptized also to identify ourselves with our saving Lord, you see, and that’s why baptism is so important. He commenced His ministry by being baptized. He concluded His ministry by commanding baptism.

Baptism is not incidental. It is not accidental. It is fundamental. Jesus Christ, in all of the things that He could have said in these brief words, put baptism there. Do not minimize what God has so maximized. Baptism is that one sign, one symbol, which preaches the gospel over and over again. When you are baptized, you are buried with Him by baptism. It pictures the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. When you come out of that water, it pictures your resurrection with the Lord Jesus Christ. That baptistry becomes a liquid tomb, and it preaches the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And how the devil would love to steal that out of our churches!

“Well,” you say, “baptism is not necessary to salvation.” My dear friend, I want to tell you something. Baptism is necessary to obedience, and obedience is necessary to joy and fruitfulness in the Christian life. I’m going to tell you something else. I have sincere doubts about the salvation of anyone who says, “I know what He wants me to do, but I’m not going to do it.” Jesus said, *“Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”* (Luke 6:46) I’m not saying that you’re saved by works, but I’m telling you, my dear friend, you’re saved by faith that works. And James says, *“Faith without works is dead.”* (James 2:20; James 2:26) And one of the commands is that we are baptized. Why? Because that places us into that body of Christ, that fellowship. It is the outward symbol of that inward reality.

Now I’m not saying if you’ve not been baptized you can’t go to heaven, because the minute a person believes in Christ that person is saved. But one of the proofs that that person has really believed in Christ is that he is willing to obey the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **C. We Are to Mature Disciples: Edification**

Now, look. Not only are we to make them, and mark them, but we are to mature them. Go on and look. The first is going. The second is baptizing. And the third is *“teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.”* Do you see it there in verse 20? That’s the third thing: We are to mature them. We’re to grow them up. We are to *“[teach] them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.”*

Now, look at it very carefully. It does not say, “Teach them all things that I have

commanded you.” It says, “[Teach] them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” Do you see the difference? Do you know one of the problems in the average church is that we’re teaching but we’re not teaching people to observe? The words “teach them to observe” literally means “teach them to do; teach them to obey.” That’s what it means to observe. When you observe a law, that means you keep that law. When you observe a commandment, you keep that commandment. Do you know what is wrong with so many people? They are learning, but they’re not living the gospel. They say they believe the gospel, but they’re not behaving the gospel. They want to know why Jesus Christ is not real to them. Dear friend, Jesus Christ will never become real to you by learning.

As a matter of fact, people come and they listen to me preach, and take notes. And I’m glad that you take notes. I think you ought to take notes. If you went to a college class, you’d take notes. I think you ought to take notes. But pay attention. If you get your head full of facts, and you do not put those facts into action, not only will those facts not help you, but they will be used against you. Jesus said that servant that knew his master’s will, and did things worthy of strife, shall be beaten with many stripes. (Luke 12:47) The knowledge that you have that you do not live by will be used as Exhibit A against you at the Judgment Seat of Christ—that little notebook that you’ve got so full of facts. Friend, it would be better for you not to know the way of truth than, after you’ve known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto you. (2 Peter 2:21) What I’m trying to say is Jesus did not say that we are to teach them, but we are to teach them to observe.

Do you know why Jesus Christ is not real to many people? They are not obeying God’s Word. The Bible says, “*If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.*” (John 13:17) James says, “*Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*” (James 1:22) Let me tell you how Jesus Christ can become real to you. Begin to obey Him, and He will be real to you. Jesus said in the Gospel of John, “He that has my commandments and keeps them, he’s the one who loves me: and the one who loves me will be loved of my Father, and I will manifested myself to him.” (John 14:21) Do you want Jesus to be real to you? Begin to obey Him, and He’ll make Himself real to you.

Now, listen. If you don’t hear anything else I’m going to say, I want you to hear this this morning: You will never know God by studying the Bible. It sounds almost blasphemous, doesn’t it? You will never know God by studying the Bible. You will know about God by studying the Bible. You will know God by obeying the Bible—when you begin to obey. “Teach them to observe these things, to obey these things.” And when you do that, this book will become a bright, living reality in your lives. And Christ will



manifest Himself to you, and you will become His disciple indeed.

Now, what am I saying? Listen. Our job, our duty, our mandate is to make disciples. How? Make them, mark them, mature them—evangelism, enlistment, edification. That’s God’s plan. And, you know, folks, when we start obeying the directions, then we’re going to see things come together.

Howard Hendricks is coming to speak to us in our men’s conference. If you’ve never heard Howard Hendricks, he’s one of the most gifted, articulate, scintillating, entertaining, and pungent speakers you’ll ever hear. I heard Howard give this testimony of how Christ enlisted him. There was a man in Philadelphia, a great, big, tall, lanky drink of water. He only had a sixth-grade education. He went to the Sunday School superintendent and said, “I’d like to have a class, please.” The superintendent said, “We don’t have a class for you. If you want a class, go out and get one.” So he went out, this man, on the streets of Philadelphia, and began to walk up and down the playgrounds where boys were. He came to a little sixth grader named Howie Hendricks. He said, “Son, how would you like to go to Sunday School?” Hendricks said anything that had “school” in it reminded him of leprosy. He said, “I don’t want to go.” “Well,” he said, “what are you doing?” He said, “I’m playing marbles.” And that big, old, tall man got down there and shot marbles with that sixth grader—beat him in every game. Hendricks said, “I lost my marbles early.” And then he said, “Son, how about coming to Sunday School?” Howard Hendricks said, “I would have followed that man anywhere after he got down and played marbles with me like that.”

That man went on and walked through the streets of Philadelphia until he got thirteen boys in a Sunday School class. He taught those thirteen boys. Howard Hendricks said, “I don’t remember really anything that he said, but,” he said, “I remembered how he loved us, how he cared for us.” He said, “He used to come over and help me with my arithmetic, and he’d only gone to sixth grade.” He said, “We’d work on a problem.” Howie said, “I’d say, ‘Walt, I don’t think that’s the answer.’ Walt said, ‘I don’t either.’” They couldn’t figure it out together, but he loved Howard Hendricks. Howard said, of that class of thirteen boys that that man got by walking through the street of Philadelphia—you listen to this—out of that class, eleven of them are in fulltime Christian service for the Lord Jesus: two of them are seminary professors—Walt could never even have graduated from a seminary, much less been a professor—six of them are missionaries serving Jesus Christ on the foreign field, and the rest of them are Bible-believing pastors—because a man with a sixth-grade education and a love for boys decided he’d put this scripture into practice and make some disciples, and stayed with some boys and loved them.

Some of you are Sunday School teachers, and you’re asked, “What are you doing?”

“Oh, I’m just a Sunday School teacher.” My soul, what an opportunity! What a privilege! And when we get serious about this matter, dear friend, of making disciples, number one, go out and win them to Jesus; number two, get them in a church, baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost; number three, teach them not just facts, but teach them to observe.

### III. His Unfailing Promise

Now, finally, and very quickly, look. First of all, there is His unlimited power. Secondly, there is His unchanging program. Thirdly, there is, my dear friend, His unfailing promise. What is His promise? Notice in verse 20, the last part—and He says, “*And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.*” Listen, friend. Do you want Jesus Christ to be with you? Do you want Him, as I said, to manifest Himself to you? I’m going to come back on what I said before. Do you want to know His presence in a real way?

Now, there’s a sense in which He is with us always—period—because He said, “I’ll never leave you, nor forsake you.” (Hebrews 13:5) But all of us know that there are times when we meet together in worship when He’s here with us in a very special way, right? Sure. “*Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*” (Matthew 18:20) And we all also know something else: that when we get alone behind closed doors with Him in prayer, He seems to be even closer. Isn’t that true? I’ll tell you, sometimes in prayer it just seems like you can just reach out and touch Him—not always, but sometimes. But I want to tell you something, friend. And those of you who know what I’m talking about I think will say *amen*. Jesus Christ is never more real to me than when I am sharing Him with someone else. Isn’t that true? I never sense His presence more—His power more—than when I am preaching, or when I am individually, one-on-one sharing Jesus Christ; when I have obeyed Him; when I am endeavoring to make disciples. At that time, I know that He is with me.

### Conclusion

How blessed we are, dear friend! Think of the *alls* in this passage of Scripture: “*all power,*” “*all nations,*” “*all things I have commanded you,*” “*always I will be with you!*” Hallelujah! Listen, friend. On one side of this command is the promise of His power; on the other side of this command is the promise of His presence. Do you want Christ to be real to you? Do you want to see Christianity become real in your life, in your church, in your home? Read the marching orders. The motto of the French Foreign Legion is this: “If I falter, push me on. If I stumble, pick me up. If I retreat, shoot me”—“shoot me.” Oh, my dear friend, we dare not retreat.

Someone asked Mr. Armour of the Armour meatpacking business, “Mr. Armour,

what do you do? What is your business?” Do you know what he said? He said, “My business is bringing men and women, boys and girls, to Jesus Christ. I pack meat to make a living; but my business is bringing men and women, boys and girls, to Jesus Christ.” And I don’t care who you are—that, ladies and gentlemen, is your business.

# The Last Words of Jesus

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: March 8, 1987**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 28:18–20**

## Outline

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Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you turn, please, to Matthew chapter 28? And, in a few moments, we're going to read the last three verses in that wonderful chapter. But, let me ask you a question before we read those verses. I want you to use your imagination. I want you to imagine the deathbed of your father, or your mother, or your wife or husband, or perhaps somebody else that you love and respect more than any body else on the face of this earth. And, I want you to imagine now that they have about three or four minutes left on this earth, and you see their lips move. You notice that there is a look of deep concern on their face. You realize that they want to tell you something. Would you listen? Would you bend an ear? Would you want to hear the last word of your loved one—the person that you love, respect, and admire so much? Would you heed these words? Beyond a doubt, you would.

Now, listen to these words that I'm going to share with you, and they are the last words of Jesus before He went to Heaven. I want you to listen to these words—Matthew chapter 28 and verses 18–20: *“And Jesus came and spake unto them saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations,*

*baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world. Amen*" (Matthew 28:18–20). Now, these are Jesus's last words before He ascended into Heaven. They have been called "the Great Commission." But, I'm sad to tell you that for many of us, they are not the Great Commission. We have failed to do what our Lord told us to do. And, as I've said before, to fail to obey Him is not merely to neglect a blessing; it is the sin of high treason against Heaven's King.

And, I want to continue the thought that I had this morning: that every Christian is to be a missionary. And, I want us to look here at the marching orders of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and basically, I pray that you'll see the same four things here that I see. And, I pray that God will enable me to lay them on your hearts.

## **I. Our Lord's Unlimited Power**

The very first thing that I want you to see—if you would be a missionary, if you would be a soul winner, if you would be a soldier of the cross—the very first thing that I want you to see is our Lord's unlimited power. Notice His unlimited power—look in verse 18: "*All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth*" (Matthew 28:18). Now, the word *power* literally means "all authority." Some translations give it that way—perhaps yours does. What Jesus is saying is, "I have all authority. I am Lord—L-O-R-D." Now, God the Father has declared Him to be Lord. Angels have announced Him to be Lord. It is high time that His people crowned Him as Lord. "*All [authority] is given unto me*" (Matthew 28:18). That means that His word is final. There can be no refusal; there can be no rebuttal. Whatever Jesus said is it. "*All [authority] is given unto me*" (Matthew 28:18). Now, where is this authority given?

### **A. Authority in Heaven**

Well, first of all, notice what he says: "*All [authority] is given unto me in heaven*" (Matthew 28:18). Now, that really means "the heavenlies." What do we mean by "the heavenlies"—the sphere of the heavenlies? There is an unseen world, an invisible world—a world of angels and a world of demons. And, Jesus is Lord over that world. When Jesus said, "*All [authority] is given unto me in heaven*" (Matthew 28:18), it means that angels must serve Him. It also means that no demon can stand before Him. Jesus has authority over all of the demonic forces of Hell. Now, Jesus has authority in the heavenlies.

### **B. Authority on Earth**

But, not only does Jesus have authority over angels and demons, but the Lord Jesus

Christ also has authority on earth. Jesus has authority over all of the world. When Jesus, therefore, says to us on earth, “Go,” we must go. You see, He says, “I have this authority on earth” (Matthew 28:18)—“*go ye therefore*” (Matthew 28:19). Now, we’re in danger of making Christianity a Western religion. Even greater than that, we may be in danger of trying to make Christianity the white man’s religion. But, I want to tell you that Christianity is not a Western religion, and it’s not the white man’s religion. Jesus has authority over all of the world. It is every creature that must hear the gospel. And, the gospel of Jesus Christ must conquer all barriers of language, culture, nationality, color, and rank. All of this world is the subject of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus has unlimited power.

## **II. Our Lord’s Unhindered People**

Now, the second thing that I want you to notice is not only His unlimited power, but also, it follows as night follows day that there must be also His unhindered people. Notice, He says in verse 18: “*All power is given unto me*” (Matthew 28:18). Then, He says in verse 19: “*Go ye therefore*” (Matthew 28:19). Now, what does He mean? He means that because He has this authority and because He has this power—because He has power over angels, because He has power over demons, because He is Lord in Heaven and on earth—that God’s people, therefore, are absolutely unhindered in their missionary enterprise. What it really means is that there is no place He does not belong; there is no power He cannot break, and, therefore, there is no person He cannot heal—there is no place He does not belong; there is no power He cannot break, and, therefore, there is no person He cannot use. Think: He says, “*All power is given unto me... Go ye therefore*” (Matthew 28:18–19).

### **A. This Command Is Universal in Its Scope**

Now, this command to go is universal in its scope. It was probably spoken to those 500 brethren that saw Him at one time after His resurrection. The context tells us that Jesus, just before He was taken up—the Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians chapter 15—that He was seen by 500 people at one time (1 Corinthians 15:6). Now, what does that mean when it says, “*Go ye*” (Matthew 28:19)? It is plural. It means that this is a message not for a select few; it means that it is a message for every mother’s child in this auditorium. As I said this morning, to say, “Christian” is to say, “missionary.” To say, “missionary” is to say, “Christian.”

### **B. This Command Is Individual in Application**

It is universal in scope, but wait a minute—it is individual in application. We all don’t go to the same place. We all don’t go the same way. But, we are all to go. The question is

not “if”—it is only “how.” God wants every person in this auditorium to be His witness. No one is exempt. You cannot hire somebody to do it for you. And, if you do not obey your Lord, then you will face Him one day at the Judgment Seat of Christ. It is universal in scope, but it is individual in application. I believe, however, that God is calling many of the youth of Bellevue Baptist Church—perhaps, some of this hundred going on this mission tour up to New York—to go into what we call “full-time missionary service.” Some of you need to go out under a mission board—our Southern Baptist mission board or another mission board—to serve the Lord Jesus Christ across the ocean, or in some remote place where others have not gone, or where others have gone and more help is needed.

If we saw people trying to carry a log, and there were ten people on one end of the log and one person on the other end of the log, then what would be the logical conclusion? That some people on one end of the log ought to go to the other end of the log and help those people. Here in America, we have too many people on one end of the log. I believe that simple reasoning would tell us that God wants us to share the ability, to share the love, to share the prayer, and to share the resources with a world that needs to know about the Lord Jesus. I’m telling you, dear friend, that God’s unhindered people must hear this message.

### C. This Command Is Inevitable in Responsibility

It is universal in scope, individual in application, but listen to me now: it is inevitable in responsibility. If you refuse to hear the last words of our Lord—if you refuse what our Lord is commanding— then I’m going to tell you what it says about you. It says four basic things about you.

Number one: It says that you are a disobedient Christian, and that disobedience will be punished.

Number two: It says that you do not love the Lord Jesus, for Jesus said: *“If a man love me, [he’ll] keep my [word]”* (John 14:23). And, I don’t care how much you sing in a church about your love for Jesus—if you disobey the Great Commission, then you are singing a lie. Jesus said: *“If a man love me, he will keep my words”* (John 14:23).

Also, dear friend, if you are not willing to obey, then you are guilty of not following Christ. You may call yourself a follower of Jesus, but you have no right to call yourself a follower of Jesus, because Jesus said, *“Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men”* (Mark 1:17).

I’ll tell you, fourthly, that if you are not doing it, you’re not abiding in Christ. You can talk about the deeper life, your Bible study, your quiet time, and everything else, but it is all just haughty talk, for Jesus said, *“I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth*

*in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing”* (John 15:5). That’s what Jesus said.

And, I’m telling you, dear friend, that God’s people are to be unhindered. Jesus said that there is no power in Heaven or in earth that can stand against Him; therefore, we are to go. Dear friend, it is universal in scope. It is individual in application. It is inescapable in responsibility.

### **III. Our Lord’s Unchanging Program**

Now for the third thing I want you to notice. First of all, I talked about His unlimited power. Secondly, I’ve talked about His unhindered people. There is nothing, nothing, nothing that can stand between us and the Great Commission—except for our disobedience. Thirdly, I want you to see God’s unchanging program. His program has not changed throughout the years. It is very simple. Many of you have heard the Great Commission preached many times. Many of you say, “Oh, no, here comes his sermon on the Great Commission; I’ve heard it before.” Well, it’s high time that we hear what we’ve heard. It’s high time that we listen to what we’ve been listening to. And, it’s high time that we got it out of theory and into practice. What is His program? It is very plain; it is very simple.

#### **A. We Are to Make Disciples**

Number one: We are to disciple all nations. Notice in verse 19: “*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations*” (Matthew 28:19). The word *teach* literally means “to disciple all nations.” That means that whoever they are and wherever they are, we are to get the gospel of Jesus Christ to them. We are to make disciples. That brings up a question: Are people without Jesus Christ lost? Is not their religion just as good our religion? Are we not meddling with people if we endeavor to go and make disciples of them? My dear friend, I want to tell you that any body on Planet Earth who does not know Jesus Christ as His personal Savior—any person of an age of accountability who dies without Christ—is going to die and go to Hell—any body. It bothers me to think about it. But, people without Christ are lost—I don’t care who they are; I don’t care what religion they have. The Bible says, “*He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life*” (1 John 5:12). Jesus said, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me*” (John 14:6). In Acts chapter 4 and verse 12: “*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*” (Acts 4:12). People are saved by Jesus, or they are not saved at all. There is no other way for people to be saved. If Jesus Christ is not the only way to Heaven, then Jesus Christ is none of the ways to Heaven.



If Jesus Christ is not the only way to Heaven, then He is a fake, a fraud, a liar, and an imposter, for He Himself said that He is the only way to Heaven. So many people keep asking this question: “Oh, are the heathens lost if they don’t hear?” I’d like to turn it around and say, “Are we saved if we don’t tell the love of the Lord Jesus Christ?”

## **B. We Are to Mark Disciples**

Now, step number one: We are to make disciples. But, not only are we to make disciples; we are also to mark disciples. Notice again: “*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*” (Matthew 28:19). We are to baptize them; we are to mark them as disciples in the Lord Jesus. I preached this morning about how Philip baptized that Ethiopian eunuch. Never ever deemphasize baptism. We have some people today who think that it is wonderful to get people saved, but they don’t think that it is necessary to baptize them. I want to tell you, dear friend, that Jesus commanded it in His dying words. Never minimize what Jesus maximizes. Never deemphasize what Jesus emphasizes.

How did Jesus begin His ministry? How did Jesus inaugurate His public ministry? By being baptized. That’s how He began His public ministry. How did Jesus conclude His public ministry? By commanding baptism. Now, dear friend, what our Lord has so emphasized, we dare not deemphasize. Baptism is a glorious picture of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. When Jesus was baptized, He was not baptized because He’d been saved. He was not baptized because He’d been a sinner and needed to be cleansed from His sins. Of course not—Jesus knew no sin. Why was Jesus baptized? When Jesus was baptized, He was identifying Himself with us. Jesus was saying, “This pictures what I’m going to do. I’m going to die. I’m going to be buried. I’m going to be raised again.” For baptism pictures the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. And, Jesus was identifying Himself with us and prophesying His death, His burial, and His resurrection. When we are baptized, we are identifying ourselves with Jesus. We are saying, “Yes, Jesus did die for me. And, when He died for me, I died with Him. When He was buried for me, I was buried with Him. When He rose for me, I rose with Him.” And, that baptism is a picture of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

There are those people who tell us, “Well, it doesn’t make any difference if you are baptized,” or, “It doesn’t make any difference how you are baptized.” Well, then tell me, dear friend, why did Jesus command it? And, why did Jesus say, “*Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 5:19)? I thank God for

the emphasis that this church places on baptism, because it is a Biblical emphasis.

And, if there is an ordinance that the devil would love to have obliterated, or disfigured, or maimed, or minimized, then it would be baptism. Why, every time when a person is baptized, they are preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. That is why it is so important over and over and over again to symbolize the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, because, my friend, that is the gospel. He was buried, and He was raised again on the third day. You cannot—you cannot—symbolize that with sprinkling. The Bible never teaches sprinkling for babies. I'm not talking about Old Testament ceremonies; I'm talking about Christian baptism. It is never by sprinkling; it is always by immersion. The very word *baptism* means "dip," and all Christians were originally baptized that way. If you go over to the old world and see the cathedrals that were built before the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, ladies and gentlemen, they had baptisms just like a Baptist church. This matter of sprinkling people did not come out of the Bible; it came out of tradition, where people took the Word of God and warped and twisted it.

You say, "Well, what difference does it make, Pastor?" Well, I want to ask you a question: What difference does the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ make? It makes the difference of eternal life. I'm not saying that you have to be baptized in order to be saved, but I'm saying it symbolizes your salvation. And, that is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And, it must always stay in the focal point. It must always stay there in a place of emphasis, because our Lord has commanded it. Jesus says we are to make disciples. And then, Jesus says we are to mark disciples. We are to baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. And, if you lead somebody to faith in Jesus Christ, not only should you lead them to faith in Christ, but you ought to lead them down the aisle of this church—or some other church—and get them to present themselves as a candidate for believer's baptism. It's a part of the Great Commission.

### **C. We Are to Mature Disciples**

But, not only are we to make them, and not only are we to mark them, but we are also to mature them. Notice what He says: "*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you*" (Matthew 28:19–20). It's not enough that we dip them and drop them; we must teach them. That's the reason why we have Sunday School here at Bellevue Baptist Church. That's why we have neighborhood fellowships at Bellevue Baptist Church. That's why we have Christian literature in the bookstore at Bellevue Baptist Church. That's the reason why we keep preaching the Bible—that is to mature people in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, we have

an evangelism today that stops short of the Great Commission. People go out in crusades, and they just win people to Jesus. And then, they come back, and they say, “Look how many we won to Jesus!” Well, dear friend, in New Testament evangelism, they did not count decisions; they counted disciples. If you want to find out whether you’ve done any good, then come back.

#### **D. We Are to Be Makers of Disciple Makers**

Now for the fourth and final thing I want you to see. I’ve talked about His unlimited power: “*All [authority] is given unto me*” (Matthew 28:18). Come back a year later and find out how many disciples you have. You see, listen, Jesus said, “*Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always*” (Matthew 28:20). You see, listen, we’re not just to be makers of disciples, really; we’re to be makers of disciple makers.

Now, this is the way that the cycle is complete. I win somebody to Jesus. I get that person baptized. And then, I begin to teach them. What do I teach them? I teach him what Jesus commanded me—that is, to win somebody to Jesus, to get him baptized, and to get him to teach somebody else. And, the circle just keeps on going. We are to be makers of disciple makers. We don’t just get people saved, and that’s it. We get them enlisted in the church. It’s evangelism, enlistment, and edification. We make them, we mark them, and we mature them in the Lord Jesus Christ. Some of you who are Sunday School teachers—what a privilege you have to be a Sunday School teacher, to mature those who you’ve led to the Lord Jesus Christ. Sometimes I just have a yearning in my heart. I wish that I could just take a Sunday School class and get myself a group—a small group of people who I could work with, that I could just mature, and that I could disciple. What a thrill that would be! You Sunday school teachers—what a glorious privilege you have!

I remember hearing the great Howard Hendricks. Many of you know Howie Hendricks—one of the most effective Bible teachers, I believe, in America today. He told of how he was a little boy from a home where the home was broken, and he had several heartaches. There was a man—I believe that he said his name was Walt. He was sort of a big fellow—sort of an Ichabod Crane type of fellow. As I remember the story, this man didn’t even go but through the sixth grade. But, he went to the Sunday School superintendent and said, “Would you give me a class?” They said, “We don’t have a class for you, Walt, but there’s a room. You go get your own class.” And, Howie Hendricks said how he was up there in Philadelphia, and this big old gangly man named Walt came up. Howie said how he was shooting marbles, and Walt got down there in the dust and began to shoot marbles with them. He invited him to Sunday School. And,

Howie said, "If there was anything that had 'school' in it, then I didn't want to go. But, this man was so kind and so loving that he got me in Sunday School." He enlisted 13 boys. Howie Hendricks said, "I cannot tell you one thing that he said, but I can tell you this much: he loved me." He said, "Of those 13 boys, 11 of them are in full-time service for the Lord Jesus Christ. Two of them are seminary professors, six of them are full-time missionaries, and three of them are pastors." A man who had just been through the sixth grade—and they gave him a room. They just said, "Go out and build a class." He went out loving boys and telling boys about Jesus.

Now, you can do that, dear friend—you can do that. You don't have to go across the sea to be a missionary. But, dear friend, you can make disciples. You can make them, you can mark them, and you can mature them in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

#### **IV. Our Lord's Unfailing Promise**

Now for the fourth and final thing I want you to see. I've talked about His unlimited power: "*All [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth*" (Matthew 28:18). I've talked about His unhindered people, because He has given that authority to us. He said, "*as my Father hath sent me, even so I send you*" (John 20:21). I've talked about His unchanging program—that is, we are to disciple all nations; we are to baptize all believers, and we are to teach all His commandments. Now, the final thing that I want you to see is His unfailing promise. Here's His unfailing promise: He says that we are to teach them "to observe all things whatsoever [as I've] commanded you"—then, He says—"*and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world*" (Matthew 28:20). Now, you think about this great commandment that our Lord has given us. It is preceded by the promise of His power, and it is followed by the promise of His presence. His power goes before us, and His presence goes with us. His authority is behind us; Christ is within us. The task is before us. Why shouldn't we go? Why should we be timid when Jesus has promised to go with us? But, I want you to notice that the "go" and the "go" go together. He says, "You go, and lo, I am with you" (Matthew 28:19–20).

#### **Conclusion**

I have found that Jesus Christ is never more real to me, never more dear to me, and never more near to me than when I am preaching or doing personal soul winning. I feel His presence and His power in a remarkable way every time that I'm out sharing Jesus Christ—it just seems like my faith is stronger than ever before. I'm so sure of what I'm saying because I am doing what He has commanded me to do. And then, He begins to

pour His power and His life through me. Is Jesus Christ not real to you? Well, He'll never be real to you as long as you are a benchwarmer, as long as you are a sermon-taker, and as long as you are a note-taker. When you get serious about the business of sharing Jesus Christ with other people, you are going to find out that Jesus Christ is going to be real to you. What a promise—what an unfailing promise! Have you ever noticed the “alls” in this passage of Scripture? Jesus says, “All authority.” Jesus says, “All nations.” Jesus speaks of “all” His commandments. And, Jesus speaks of “all” the days: *“lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world”* (Matthew 28:20).

Many of us are familiar with the Armour Meat Packing organization. It was founded by a man who was a great, great Christian and soul winner. Somebody asked Mr. Armour, “What is your business?” He said, “My chief business is to lead men to Jesus Christ. I pack meat on the side to make a living.” That’s what every deacon in this church ought to say. That’s what every mother in this church ought to say. That’s what every teenager ought to say. Regardless of your business—whether you work in a service station or attend school—whatever you do, your chief business ought to be to bring people to Jesus Christ.

I want every head bowed.

# There's No Omission in the Great Commission

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: March 19, 1995**

**Main Scripture Text: Matthew 28:18-20**

## Outline

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Conclusion

## Introduction

**M**atthew chapter 28. In a moment, I'm going to begin reading in verse 18.

Some years ago, I heard about a man who died, and someone asked his little boy, "What were your dad's last words?" And, he said, "Well, Daddy didn't have any last words." He said, "Mama was with him right up to the end."

Last words are important. And, if somebody just before they step over into glory is giving some last words, we ought to pay attention. We ought to pay double attention if these are the last words of our Lord before He ascends to Heaven. Listen to His last words before He ascended to Heaven: "*And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world*" (Matthew 28:18-20).

Now, I want you to take your Bible, and if you don't mind marking in it, I want you to mark it as I have marked mine. I want you to look in verse 18 and mark *all*—"all power."

Just put a circle around the word *all*. Then, go down to verse 19 and put a circle around the word *all*, which says, “*all nations*.” And then, go down to verse 20 and put a circle around *all* where it says, “*all things*.” And then, the last part of verse 20, a circle around the word *always*. Four *alls* there: “*all power*”—do you see it?—“*all nations*,” “*all things*,” and “*always*.” The title of our study this morning is this: “There Is No Omission in the Great Commission”—“There Is No Omission in the Great Commission.” This is an all-inclusive statement. Our Lord here is giving the marching orders for His Church. These are His last words, and He has left the marching order, the mandate, to me, to you, and it includes four *alls*.

## **I. We Are to Employ All Power**

Now, first of all, I want you to see that you and I, as we go out to fulfill the Great Commission, we are to employ all power. Look again in verse 18: “*All power is given unto me*” (Matthew 28:18). Now, without this power the command to evangelize the world is indeed a mission impossible. And yet, with this power, it is a mission, not only possible, but probable and likely, because our Lord has given us every sufficiency that we need.

Now, if you think about those to whom He was speaking, now you think about it. He had a little handful of unlettered disciples fishermen and ordinary people—no college, no prestige, no money, no machinery—and He tells them, “I want you to evangelize all nations, the entire world.” It’s just a little handful. And, they’re to go out against the iron legions of Rome. They’re to go out against the sophistication and the intellectualism of Greece. They are to go out against the stiff-necked bigotry of Israel, and they are to be His witnesses to all the world.

I mean, how do you think they felt when He sent them out to do this? Well, without this power I think they would have felt like those cows who were out in a field one day grazing, and they looked up and a milk truck went past, and on the side of that milk truck it advertised the dairy, and then it told about the milk. It said, “Pasteurized, homogenized, fortified, vitamin-enriched milk from contented cows.” And, one cow said to the other, “It makes you feel inadequate, doesn’t it?”

I mean, when you think about what we are supposed to do. And, we are inadequate. But, our deficiency with His sufficiency is all that we need. And, that’s what Kay DeWitt sang about: little is much when God is in it. Our Lord says, “*All power is given unto me*.” And so, they went. And, the Book of Acts is a success story. It’s the story of the Church triumphant. I just love to read the Book of Acts. Those early Christians had something that swords couldn’t kill, that water couldn’t drown, fire couldn’t burn, jails could not hold. There was

no power that seemed to be able to stand against them, because the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ was with them. *“All power is given unto me.”*

Now, I want you to notice four things about that power.

### **A. The Description of the Power**

First of all, I want you to notice the description of it. Now, when our Lord uses the word *power* here, He doesn't use the word *dunamis*; He uses the word *exousia*. You say, “What's the difference?” Well, *dunamis* speaks of power that means, “might and force,” but the word that He uses here means, “authority.” And, what He literally is saying is, “All authority is given unto Me.” That is, He is absolute sovereign Lord. God has declared Him Lord. Angels have announced Him Lord. We must crown Him Lord. He says, “All authority is given unto Me.” And, where? *“In heaven and in earth.”* We're going to talk about that, but our Lord has sovereign authority. Now, His word is final. What we're talking about here is not a suggestion. We're talking about a command from our sovereign Lord who has all authority to make it. That's the description of this power.

### **B. The Domain of the Power**

I want you to look at the domain of this power. Look at it. Look at it again in verse 18: *“All power is given unto me in heaven.”* Do you see that—verse 18? “All authority, all power, is given unto Me in Heaven.” Now, this literally means, “in the heavenlies.” What does that mean? That means, “in the spirit realm.” You know, the Apostle Paul said, in Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 12, “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:12)—literally, “in heavenly places.” That's literally what it says. There is a cosmic battle. There's an unseen war going on. There are spirit beings. And, what our Lord says is this: “In that realm, in the unseen realm in Heaven, I have all authority.” And, angels must bow before Him, and no demon can stand against Him.

Do you believe that? I hope you believe that, because that, friend, is the basis, the undergirding thing for the missionary enterprise to understand: that our Lord has authority in the heavenlies. Angels serve Him. Demons quake before the Lord Jesus Christ. He has authority in Heaven and on Earth. What does that mean? It means that He has the right to say to every one of us, “Go to these people who live here on this earth.” He is Lord, and it means that His domain reaches to the darkest corner of the earth. The whole earth is to come under His sway. He is Lord over this earth. Christianity is not the Western religion, and, God help us, not the white man's religion. It transcends culture, creed, race, face, place, time. He is Lord in Heaven, and He is Lord in Earth. He is sovereign Lord.



### **C. The Dispersal of the Power**

Now, the description of it: it means authority. The domain of it: in Heaven and in Earth. I want you to think of the dispersal of this power. When did this power come upon the Church? He told them to go, but not to go until they had been endued with power from on high. In Acts chapter 1 and verse 8—and you might want to put it in the margin of your Bible—Jesus said, *“Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth”* (Acts 1:8). It is foolish and wicked to try to evangelize without this power. And, you will not have this power until the Holy Ghost is come. Luke chapter 24, verse 49: *“And, behold, I sent the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high”* (Luke 24:49). Now, He did not take this fledgling church and send them out to win the world until the Holy Spirit had come on the Day of Pentecost. He said, “You go to Jerusalem, and you wait, and you tarry until you be endued with power from on high.” And, on the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit of God came and baptized that infant church with power, with the authority—the *exousia* and the *dunamis*—of Almighty God.

And, when did this happen? Well, after our Lord ascended. Jesus went up. The Holy Spirit came down. The disciples went out. And, the lost came in. That is the New Testament pattern: the dispersal of that power.

Now, today, you and I don’t have to pray for the Holy Spirit to come. He came on the Day of Pentecost in great power. What we today are to do is to be filled with the Holy Spirit of God. And so, we must be filled with the Spirit of God in order to witness. That power has been given.

#### **1. Power to Enlighten**

It is power to enlighten your mind. You want to be a soul winner across the street or around the world? You need to know where to go. You need to know what to do. You need to know what to say. The Spirit of God will guide you.

#### **2. Power to Energize**

Power to enlighten. Power to energize. You need energy. You see, I can preach the gospel, but He, the Holy Spirit of God, must impart the gospel. I need more than mere words when I preach. And, it is the Holy Spirit of God that gives that unction and that gives that power, not only to enlighten, but to energize. I read somewhere where a London scientist said there is enough power in a cube of sugar to destroy all London. That’s atomic power in a cube of sugar. But, it’s got to be released. I think of the power in this congregation. Just

look around. Look at yourselves! The power is resident, inherent, but that power must be released in us.

You get these toys at Christmas, they say, “Batteries included.” Without the batteries they just don’t work. You have to go down to Walgreens to get the batteries, because many times they don’t come with batteries. But, friend, what good is any program that Bellevue has without the anointing, the power, of the Holy Spirit? There can be a program that’s very fine, just like a toy or an appliance, very fine, but it just won’t work without power.

### **3. Power to Encourage**

Power to enlighten. Power to energize. And, power to encourage. These early Christians faced persecution, but they received power.

#### **D. The Demand of the Power**

Now, I’ve talked to you about the description of the power, the domain of the power, the dispersal of the power. What is the demand of this when our Lord says, “All authority is given unto me”? Well, He probably said this to the 500 who were gathered there after His ascension. But, what He says to all, He says to each. And, our Lord has the right to stand right before you, sir—just you—and tell you to do it. I mean, this is a demand upon you. And, to fail to obey is high treason against Heaven’s King. I don’t care who you are. I don’t care how much money you may give. I don’t care how faithfully you attend. I don’t care how circumspectly you walk. I don’t care how eloquently you may teach. If you’re not in the Great Commission business of bringing souls to Jesus Christ, you, sir, you ma’am, are not right with God, amen? It’s a good place for an *amen* or an *oh me*. If you are not a part of this world missions enterprise, you are not right with God.

They were taking an offering for missions, and one man said, “Well, I don’t believe in missions.” The usher said, “Well, take some out then. It’s for the heathen.”

Now, let me tell you something. If this doesn’t interest you, you’re in rebellion against our Lord. He says, “All authority is given unto me. Go ye therefore.” “*All power.*” There’s no omission in the Great Commission.

## **II. We Are to Evangelize All Nations**

Now, not only are we to employ all power, but we are to evangelize all nations. Now, look at it again, if you will. Look, if you will, in verse 19: “*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*” (Matthew 28:19). Look at the word *teach* in verse 19: “*teach all nations.*” It literally means, “disciple all nations.” It literally means, “to make disciples of all nations.” It literally means, “to win

them to Jesus Christ.” The word *teach* is the main verb. It is followed by three participles here. But, the main verb is to disciple all nations. That is, to bring people to Jesus Christ.

All people without Christ are lost. I hope you believe that. If they don’t know the Lord Jesus Christ, I don’t care what their religion may be. You can call me bigoted if you want to, but Jesus Christ is the only way to Heaven. He is the only way that a man can be right with God. *“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”* (Acts 4:12). That’s Acts 4, verse 12. And, Jesus Christ Himself said, in John 14:6, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”* We are to evangelize all nations. Nobody is to be left out. Nobody is to be overlooked. They are lost without the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, you might want to get in an argument with me, and you say, “Pastor, you’re going to tell me that man who’s never heard of Jesus is going to die and go to Hell forever if he doesn’t get saved?” That’s just what I said, and that is true! You say, “Well, I don’t believe it.” Well, that’s your problem. But, our Lord says there’s one way to Heaven, and it is through Him. And, we are to take the gospel to every creature.

Let me tell you something. The great question is not, “Are they lost if they don’t hear?” The great question is, “Are we saved if we don’t tell?” You think about it. I mean, how can we say that we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, that He is our Lord and Savior, and we do not obey Him? Jesus said, “Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?” (Luke 6:46). You say, “Well, Pastor Rogers, I am not a very good talker.” You don’t have to be a good talker. Little is much when God is in it.

A preacher friend of mine said that his hobby is bass fishing. He said he was back in the back of one of these big department stores, like Target or K-Mart or something like that, and he met a man back there. He didn’t even know the man, never seen him before. They were just back there in the fishing tackle place, and he just said to this man, “What’s a good bass lure?” Well, he said that the man came alive. He began to talk to him about bass lures. He began to talk to him about rods and reels and lines and bass and fishing places. And, he kept talking to him, and he talked and talked and talked. And, he said, “I got my stuff, and that man followed me out of the store all the way to my car, and he was talking about bass and fishing and lures.” He said, “All I did, I just asked him what’s a good bass lure?” Now, it was obvious that man was full of bass fishing. And, what’s down in the well comes up in the bucket, isn’t that right?—what a man is full of.

You say, “Well, I have difficulty talking about Jesus.” You know why? Because you’ve got nothing in the well. You let Jesus Christ be a bright, burning reality to you—I mean, you get saved and full of the Holy Ghost—you’ll have to backslide to keep from witnessing. I’m telling you the truth, friends. If you don’t witness, it’s because you must not know the Lord

of glory. We are to evangelize all nations. You say, “You mean I’m to go across the ocean?” Why don’t you just go across the street? That’s the theme: “Across the Street and Around the World.” He’s going to call some to go around the world, but He calls every one of us to witness to those that we are around.

### **III. We Are to Edify All Believers**

Now, here’s the third thing I want you to see. We are to employ all power. We are to evangelize all nations. And, we are to edify all believers. Look in verse 20: “Teaching them...”—who? The believers, the ones that we’ve won to Christ—*“teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you”* (Matthew 28:20).

Now, we don’t just win a person to Christ and then forget him. We’re not finished yet. We’re to teach what Jesus commands, and we’re to begin with baptism. Look at it: *“baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”* (Matthew 28:19). You say, “Well, I don’t think the baptismal part is very important.” Oh, you don’t? Well, why do you think Jesus put it in there? I mean, who are you? Are you going to take the Word of God and just toss certain things out? You know, I hear people say, “Well, I just want to be a soul winner. I just don’t want to talk to them about getting baptized and getting into the church.” You don’t? Are you smarter than the Lord Jesus, who said, *“I will build my church”* (Matthew 16:18)? Jesus began His public ministry by being baptized. He commenced by being baptized Himself. He concluded it by commanding us to baptize others. Now, He only had a ministry of three years, approximately, and He commenced and concluded that ministry with an emphasis upon baptism.

Why is baptism so important? Does baptism save us? Absolutely not! It is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that saves. Water, whether a spoonful or a tankful, can’t take away sin. Why then are we baptized? Because He says, *“baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.”* Our Lord has commanded it.

Baptism is the way that you declare that you belong to Jesus Christ; you’re not ashamed of Jesus Christ. I wear a wedding ring. That’s my one piece of jewelry right there. That’s the only piece of jewelry I have right there: that little ring. Do you know why I wear that? I wear that to let people know I belong to that girl sitting up there in that choir. I love her with all of my heart. I’m not ashamed of her. I am glad to be known as the husband of Joyce. I am not ashamed of her. I am quite proud of her—in the good sense of the word *pride*—and I love her with all of my heart. And, when you get baptized, it is your way of saying, “I am not ashamed of Jesus Christ. I want everybody to know that I belong to Him.”

And, baptism is by immersion. That's the only kind of baptism there that is taught: water baptism in the New Testament. Why is it by immersion? Because it pictures the gospel of Christ. When you go under the water, the Bible says we are buried with Him by baptism. When you come up out of the water, the Bible says we are raised to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4). That baptistry is a watery grave. It pictures the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. That's what it pictures. And, every time a believer gets baptized, he says, "I believe that Jesus died. I believe He rose again. And, I believe when I got saved I died with Him. And, when I come up out of that water, it pictures that I have a brand new life." That's what it pictures. That's a liquid tomb. There's a funeral. The only mourner there is the devil. He hated to see you die.

Now, the water baptism is only a symbol of what saves you. The water on your skin can't take away the sin out of your heart. This ring doesn't make me married; it shows I'm married. It's a declaration. And, that's why you ought to be baptized as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, because He says, once we make them, we're to mark them. Once we make disciples, they are to be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

You say, "Well, why does it have to be by immersion? I just think I'd just like to baptize by sprinkling." Well, just find where sprinkling is ever taught in the Bible for baptism. When Jesus was baptized, He and the John the Baptist went down into the water. Jesus was baptized by John into Jordan. When the Ethiopian eunuch was baptized, the Bible says they went down into the water, and he came up out of the water. The very word *baptize*—*baptizein*—means, "to immerse"—"to immerse, to place under."

Well, you say, "Yeah, but now, Pastor Rogers, don't quibble"—"don't quibble. I mean, let's just put a little water on the head and call it baptism. Any old picture will do." Oh? Well, suppose you'd never met Joyce. You say, "Pastor, do you have a picture of your wife?" Yeah, I sure do. "Well, let me see it." And, I bring out a picture of a fire hydrant, or a racehorse, or a motorboat, or Niagara Falls. And, you say, "Is that Joyce?" I say, "Well, any old picture will do."

Now, let me tell you something, friend. If baptism doesn't picture the death, burial, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, what's the sense of it? What's the sense of it? It pictures salvation. It pictures the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Don't change what God has put down there in the Word of God. And, if you're not a baptized believer of the Lord Jesus Christ, you ought to get down this aisle, or some aisle some Sunday real soon, and say, "I want to make an appointment for my baptism. I have given my heart to Jesus Christ, and I want people to know that I am obeying Him." You're not being baptized in order to be saved, but because you have been saved you are to obey Him.

Listen. Listen to me, friend. We are to employ all power. We are to evangelize all nations. We are to edify all believers; teach them to observe all things whatsoever He has commanded us. What did He command us to do? He commanded us to go into all the world. Every time we get somebody saved we ought to say, “Now you’re a part of the Great Commission army. You are a baptized believer of the New Testament Church. And, now it is your responsibility to help us to reach everybody else.” You see, we’re not simply makers of disciples; we’re makers of disciple-makers. We are to teach.

That’s what making friends is all about. Any of you remember, “Making Friends Forever,” that program we have here in our church? We’re saying, not just get somebody saved, but get them saved, get them down the aisle, get them baptized, get them in a Sunday School class, and teach them to be a soul winner, to hear the call of God upon their life. Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. What did He command us to do? He commanded us to be soul winners. We’re to edify all believers.

#### **IV. We Are to Endure All Ages**

Now, listen to me. And, we are to endure all the ages. Look, if you will, at the last part of verse 20: *“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you:”*—now, watch this. Oh, this is sweet—*“and, lo...”*—that means, “pay attention”—*“lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world”* (Matthew 28:20). Now, that’s what the King James says, *“the end of the world,”* but that word *world* there may be translated “ages.” That is, “I’m with you through all of the ages.” These 2,000 years, the Lord Jesus Christ is still with us.

Now, notice this Great Commission. It is preceded by the promise of His power. It is followed by the promise of His presence. See, over here He says, “All power is given unto me. You go.” Then, He says over here, “And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” We have His power behind us; we have His Spirit within us; we have the task before us; and the Savior beside us. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! That’s what it’s all about. He says, “You go, and I am with you.”

You say, “Jesus is not real to me, pastor.” Are you a part of the Great Commission? Are you a witness? Are you a soul winner? Jesus will never be more real and near and dear to you than when you begin to obey Him. He says, “You go, and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age.” He’s not going to just wind you up and forget you. In safety, He’s with you. In danger, He’s with you. In success, He is with you. In failure, He is with you. You’re not going to win everybody. *A successful witness is sharing Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, and leaving the results with God.*

But, talking about results, I want to spend the last few moments of this message just helping you to get excited; and I'm so excited I can hardly keep it in, to tell you what is happening in our world today. According to those who are studying this, missiologists—listen to me—we in this day, in this age, right now are experiencing a greater harvest of souls, far greater than any that the apostles ever witnessed. Around the world this very moment there are massive victories taking place in the name of Jesus Christ. And, many Christians who sit in our churches on Sunday morning are unaware of it. Did you know that Christianity is growing three times faster than the world's population? Did you know that? Did you know that there are massive victories? Did you know that every day 178,000 Christians come into the kingdom, make a profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? Twenty-eight thousand of these are in China, Red China. Twenty thousand a day are coming to Christ in Africa. Thirty-five thousand a day are coming to the Lord Jesus in Latin America. Christianity is the world's fastest growing religion with a growth rate of 6.9. You compare that to the Muslim growth rate of 2.7, 2.2 for Hindus, and 1.7 for Buddhists. Listen to me. From the time of Christ when He gave this Great Commission up to the present time, more than 70 percent of that world evangelization has taken place since the year 1900. And 70 percent of that 70 percent has taken place since World War II. And, 70 percent of that 70 percent has taken place in the last 36 months. I'm telling you there is an explosion of people coming to the Lord Jesus Christ.

In 1900, Korea had few born-again Christians. Korea was looked upon as one of those lands that it is impossible to penetrate with the gospel of Jesus Christ. By 1986, about the first time I went over to Korea, the Korean population was 20 percent Christian. Today, it is conservatively estimated that in Korea 40 percent of those in South Korea are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ with more than 12.5 million believers.

Mongolia. We used to think of Mongolia as a place that could not be reached with the gospel of Jesus Christ. We have a young missionary out of this church right now, Stan Kirk, in Mongolia, and there's a revival among the Mongolians coming to Christ.

In 1950, missiologists could surface about one million believers in what we call today Red China—1950. The Bamboo Curtain went up. Communism came in. Everybody said, "What's going to happen to the church?" Remember, in 1950, there were one million. By 1980, they estimate more than 40 million. By 1992, more than 72 million. And, the Communists themselves are saying that by the year 2,000 there may be more than 100 million believers in China.

In India there are more than 85 million believers. There are 200 teams that are traveling across India today with a film called, "The Jesus Film." The title of the film in India

is, “The Man of Peace.” They’re showing that film, and they are reporting 100,000 decisions for Christ every month in India, people coming to Jesus Christ.

Jerry Rankin, who is the president of the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, has reported—our convention began in 1845, and we’ve been planting churches overseas—in the last six years the number of churches overseas has doubled; I mean, in the last six years—from 1845 up to six years ago, and then from six years to this time, that number of churches has doubled.

Dr. Rankin has estimated that there were 42,000 professions of faith among the Maasai tribe in Kenya. I’ve been to Kenya. I’ve been out there in those mud huts. I’ve been through those fields to see those tall beautiful people, the Maasai with their spears and their beads. Forty-two thousand of them have come to Christ. We have out of our church a young missionary, Bruce Schmidt and his wonderful wife there, Martha. They’ve been ministering among the Maasai. They’re saying now it looks like the entire tribe is going to come to Jesus Christ and be a Christian tribe.

God is on the march! Our International Mission Board reported this year, for the first time in the history of our convention, we had more than 300,000 baptisms overseas. I’m talking about Southern Baptist missionaries. And, Jerry Rankin said of those 300,000, that represents probably one million who’ve made a profession of faith in Christ who have not yet been baptized.

I picked up an article the other day. I was reading a religion report. I read about how an entire village in Russia came to the Lord Jesus Christ. A church from America sent 14,000 dollars over there to help the Russians in one of these areas of Russia, and a little village there. Two Southern Baptist missionaries, Larry Lindsey and Normal Little, went to these people in this little village and preached Christ, and asked, “How many of you would like to be a Christian? We’re going to invite you to come forward.” There were about 80 people in the village. All 80 of them came forward. They said, “You don’t understand. We’re talking about giving your hearts to Christ, being saved. Go back. We want to tell you one more time.” They told them again. They all came forward again. They said, “We want the Lord Jesus Christ.”

I was speaking to Dr. Bill Bright, one of the great Christian leaders in our world. He and I were on the phone this past week. He said, “Adrian, I’m so excited.” He said, “I’ve just gotten a report that in Modesto, California, in the last six months, 30,000 have been saved”—right here in the United States of America. Last week, my wife and I sat and watched Billy Graham preach the gospel around the world. I think many of you saw that thing. I mean, where more people are hearing the gospel at one time than any time in history: March 16 and 18, from San Juan, carried by satellite to 165 countries in 50 to 75 languages being



interpreted at the same time, and millions are being swept into the kingdom. Jesus said, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

We had the Romanians here last week, and Dr. Paul Negrut telling about what is happening there in Romania where once-communist dictator brutalized, that man Ceausescu brutalized, the Romanians. But now, there's a thriving work in Romania. And, I have preached there in the Second Baptist Church of Oradea, the largest Baptist church in all Europe. It is growing by leaps and bounds.

## **Conclusion**

Now, our Lord knew what He was about when He gave the Great Commission to the Church. And, our Lord says there's no omission in the Great Commission. All power, all nations, all commandments, always: *"And, lo, I am with you."* What a mighty God we serve!

# The Possibility of Revival

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** February 7, 1993

**Main Scripture Text:** Matthew 28:19–20

*“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”*

MATTHEW 28:19

## Outline

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- I. God Has Not Changed
- II. Men Have Not Changed
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Conclusion

## Introduction

Folks, I want you to take your Bible and turn to a very familiar passage of Scripture: Matthew chapter 28. And, when you've found it, just look up here. I want to speak to you tonight on something that is on my heart, and I trust tonight that the message, as we prepare our hearts for the Lord's Supper, will be one of encouragement. I think God's people need encouragement, and I don't know anything that can encourage more than the possibility—yes, the probability—of God doing a mighty, miraculous work in these last days in our world. I want to talk to you tonight about revival and the possibility of it—“The Possibility of Revival.”

Now, when we speak about revival, many people don't even know what we're talking about. Many of our young people have not even the faintest idea of what we mean when we say “revival.” They've never seen one. Few of them have ever heard of one. They may think a revival is an eight-day meeting in a church somewhere with a sign up front: “Revival Meeting.” That, my friend, may be getting ready for a revival, asking God for revival, but it takes more than nailing a sign up to have revival. Many people do not know what revival is, and many people who do know, when we speak of revival in these last days, merely give a sympathetic smile. They think that the gospel is wonderful for those who have it. But, very frankly, we have many Christians today who are living with a defeatist attitude. And, our favorite song is “Hold the Fort.” We are somehow in our sanctuary saying, “We want to last out and hold out until Jesus Christ gets here.” We've lost the spirit of militancy; we've lost the spirit of expectancy, and we really do not

expect God in these last days to do anything wonderful and supernatural.

But, in the scripture that I asked you to read, Matthew chapter 28, the Lord Jesus says at the end of that chapter, verses 19 and 20—He tells us to go and make disciples, and then He says this: *“and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”* (Matthew 28:20) Now, that doesn’t mean “to the furthest reaches of the world”; it literally means, “I am with you *to the very end of the age.*” Do you have it? He’s not talking about geography here; He’s talking about chronology, and He is saying, “I am with you to the end of the age.”

Now, if any generation needed revival, ours does. I have never seen such an explosion of sin as I’ve seen in the last several years. It seems as though the floodgates of iniquity and debauchery, lasciviousness and vileness, have just broken loose. It seems today that the public whipping boy is the Bible-believing Christian. It seems today that if you were to say anything about anybody’s race, or anybody’s sexual origin or sexual desires, or anything like that, that you’d be drawn and quartered. This particular woman, this owner of the professional baseball team—what’s her name? Schott—is that her name? I think so. She gave some ethnic slurs, some racial slurs, so all the owners of the baseball teams, they rose up and said, “You know, that’s bad for business. That’s not politically correct speech.” Now, if you think that I am holding out for racial slurs, you’re very wrong. I don’t think that’s right; I think that’s wrong. But, have you ever noticed that you can blaspheme God and nobody seems to care? You can take God’s name in vain—you can take the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and drag it through the muck and the slime of the sewer—and that’s fine.

You see, today can you blaspheme God and get away with it. You just can’t blaspheme man. You can’t say anything bad about man. You can say anything you want about God. What we have done is to humanize God and to deify man. And, we’ve come to a generation where there is no fear of God. The vileness, the filth, on television is unbelievable, and it’s very hard to find anything decent and worthwhile to watch as you turn on the television. Most of it is vile, and that which is not vile is banal and vapid and not worth watching. We have a generation today that is feeding on garbage.

And then, on top of that, we look at the churches today: the coldness of our hearts, our indifference—it’s indescribable. The world has a thing called the Super Bowl, and many churches just call off services on Sunday night because they say, “Well, you know, everybody’s going to be watching the game so we just won’t have services”—the people who believe that football is more important than Jesus; more excitement over a television program or a sports event than the destiny of souls. And, I wonder, as a pastor, I wonder if oceans of blood, and rivers of tears, and seas of sweat will be the price that a holy God will require of this sin-soaked nation. I wonder that. Yet, I believe with all of my heart and soul that revival is possible, and I personally believe it is

probable. And, I want to tell you why, and I want to encourage.

Now, you may say that we're living in the last days. And so, therefore, in the last days, you may get a "last days mentality," which is a defensive mentality, a lack of expectancy, just simply trying to hold out until Jesus Christ gets here. But, in the scripture that I gave you, our Lord told us to go and make disciples, and then He gave us a great promise. He said, "*Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the [age].*" (Matthew 28:20) And, in Acts the second chapter, the Bible says this: "*In the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh.*" (Acts 2:17) So, let me tell you why revival is possible—and, I believe, probable—in these last days.

## **I. God Has Not Changed**

Number one: God is still sufficient to send revival. Now, times have changed, but God has not changed. God is not old. God is not sick. God is not tired. God is still mighty to save, and God's grace is still sufficient. Now, we look at sin, and sin seems to be everywhere: in politics, in education, in entertainment, in the church. And, we say, "Because there's such sin we cannot have revival." My verse for you is Romans chapter 5 and verse 20. Listen to it: "*Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.*" (Romans 5:20) Amen? Listen. "*Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.*" (Romans 5:20) It is an insult to God Almighty to say we cannot have revival. God has not changed.

## **II. Men Have Not Changed**

You say, "Yes, God has not changed, but men have changed. Men have gotten more wicked." I beg to differ. Men are not more wicked today than they've ever been. Wickedness is more spread out today than it has ever been, and men have more to be wicked with than they've ever had. But, when you get right down to it, Adam was totally depraved, and you can't get worse than that. God has never really had anything but sinners to work with. And, I have made a study of the history of revival, and I have found out that God—the great mighty God whose grace is greater than our sin—has moved in the midst of great wickedness in times past. We think perhaps we're the only generation to know dark days. We think perhaps we're the only generation to live in the midst of such filth as we live in, but there have been other dark days.

For example, Elijah was a prophet of God. He lived in dark days. Elijah did not like the politics of his day. You may not like the politics of this day. But, let me tell you who was king when Elijah was a prophet of God. His name was Ahab. And, let me tell you who his first lady was. Her name was Jezebel. And, here's what the Bible says about Ahab and Jezebel in 1 Kings chapter 21 and verse 25: "*There was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his*

*wife stirred up*” (1 Kings 21:25)—none like Ahab. Here was a man who was the very paragon of evil. And yet, God called Elijah “the prophet.” Here was a man of God who knew the power of God, and Elijah the prophet said, “We’re going to have a contest to see which god is the true God”—“*and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God.*” (1 Kings 18:24)

Now, there were 450 prophets of Baal. The prophets of God were hiding in a cave. There was a man of God named Obadiah who was feeding the prophets of God. He was on Ahab’s payroll. He was a servant of the wicked king, but he loved God in his heart. And so, on the side he was taking care of the prophets of God, feeding them in the cave. And, he was out there foraging around, looking for grass to feed the cattle. That was his job—to try to find enough to feed the cattle. There was a drought in the land because God had sent judgment upon the land. And, Obadiah was out there looking for grass when he ought to have been praying for rain, like so many of us just trying to make do until our Lord comes back. And, Elijah, the man of God, proposed a contest. He said, “I’m going to let the prophets of Baal put an offering on an altar, a young bull, and I’m going to put a bull on an altar; and then, we’re going to pray to God. And, the god that answers by fire, let him be God.” And then, Elijah the prophet commanded that twelve barrels full of water be poured upon his sacrifice. The Bible says that the water ran down over the sacrifice and over the stones, over the wood that was under the sacrifice, and over the stone, and then filled up a trench that was round about the sacrifice.

The priests of Baal prayed. They went through their incantations. They cut themselves with stones and sharp knives. They cried out to Baal and said, “O Baal!” Baal was the false god of fertility. “O Baal, hear us!” But, that god could not answer. Then, Elijah prayed, “O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Jacob, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, that I am thy servant, that I’ve done all these things according to thy word.” Then, the Bible says that the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the sacrifice and the wood and the stones and licked up the water that was in the trench. (1 Kings 18:25–38)

Now, some would have said God could not do that because the wood was so wet. But, you see, a god that can’t burn wet wood is no good. That’s what Elijah is saying. What Elijah was going to prove is that whatever happened that day was not spontaneous combustion. Don’t try to tell me that everything has to be just right in order for God to work. The test that day was not fame, not figures, not finances, but fire. “*The God that [answers] by fire...*” (1 Kings 18:40) And, that was in the midst of unmitigated wickedness. God answered by fire, and it began a mighty revival. And, the people fell on their faces, and they said, “*The LORD, he is...God. the LORD, he is...God.*” (1 Kings 18:39) And, that’s what I desire today. But friend, those people who are like the people

of Elijah's day who were on the fence, Elijah said, "If God be God, serve Him; if Baal be god, serve him"—*"and the people answered...not a word."* (1 Kings 18:21) And, they never did answer a word until they saw something they could not explain apart from the power of God.

And, the blank-faced heathen out here, and the humanists and the unbelievers, they're watching; they're looking. They're looking at churches like Bellevue. They're looking at people like me and you and others, and they're saying, "Where is their God? Where is the power of God? Where is the fire of God?" If God did it on Mount Carmel, God can do it today.

Another revival in history was the revival at Nineveh. Nineveh was a city of about 650,000 people, not quite as big as our metropolitan area, according to historians. It was a city that was filled with debauchery. It was a city that was filled with licentiousness. It was a city filled with idolatry. They worshipped a god, the fish god. They were living in such wickedness, such cruelty, that God had said He was going to destroy Nineveh, He was going to blot them out, He was going to wipe them out. But, a preacher named Jonah, when God finally got him right, went and preached to Nineveh. And, that entire city, according to the Word of God, repented in sackcloth and ashes, and God sent a mighty, judgment-stopping, soul-saving, God-glorifying revival to a pagan city.

Now, question: If God could do that for Nineveh, can God do that for Memphis? Yes, He can. Yes, He can. And, the way the Ninevites were living was such that God was ready to destroy them. If God did that for Nineveh, cannot God do that for Memphis? Do you know the problem in Nineveh? It was not primarily with the Ninevites; it was primarily with Jonah. The problem in today is not primarily with the harvest; it is with the harvesters, with the reapers. The harvest is white. We've talked unto harvest. The fields are white unto harvest. That means, not that the grain is ripening—it's already past ripe and falling to the ground. And, our Lord taught us to pray, "*Pray...the Lord of...harvest, that he will send forth labourers into [the] harvest.*" (Matthew 9:38; Luke 10:2) God had far more difficulty with Jonah, getting Jonah to do what he ought to do, than He had with the Ninevites. The problem is not Memphis, Tennessee; it's in this room, friends. Now, the God that sent revival to Nineveh can send revival here.

Another illustration: On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit fell. Thousands were born again. And, that was the beginning of a revival where multiplied thousands came, 'til finally they had to say, "*[You] have filled [this city] with your doctrine*" (Acts 5:28) ; "*[you] have turned the world upside down.*" (Acts 17:6) It happened at Jerusalem. Well, you say, "Yes, we would expect revival at Jerusalem." I would say, to the contrary, if there were ever a place on earth when you would not expect revival, it would have been Jerusalem. Why?

Well, number one: They were what we call “gospel-hardened.” They had heard the preaching of all of the prophets. They were the counterpart of Memphis, Tennessee. They were the buckle on the Bible belt. They had heard it all. Number two: Not only that, but there was scandal in that city. The followers of the Lord Jesus Christ had failed Him. One of His chief followers had denied Him and sold Him for thirty pieces of silver. Another of His chief followers, a man named Peter, had cursed and sworn that he never even knew the Lord Jesus Christ. On top of all of that, there was never a city where Jesus Christ was more hated than Jerusalem. You say, “Why do you say that they hated Jesus in Jerusalem? How do you know that?” Well, they crucified Him there. I mean, they chose a common criminal over the Lord Jesus Christ. They, at Jerusalem, shouted for the blood of Jesus Christ. As far as I know, they’ve not yet done that in Memphis, Tennessee. I mean, here was a wicked, wicked, wicked, wicked city that had been hardened by the preaching of the Word of God rather than softened. And, they’d heard the prophets, and they’d stoned the prophets. And, Jesus wept over Jerusalem. And yet, God sent revival to Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit of God came down. The Holy Spirit of God came down. The disciples went out. The lost came in. And, there was a mighty, mighty revival.

If God sent revival on Mount Carmel, can’t He send revival here? If God sent revival to Nineveh, can He not send revival here? If God sent revival to Jerusalem, can He not send revival here? You say, “All of that was in the Bible times, though, pastor. We’re out of Bible times.” Well, go back to the Dark Ages, what we call “the Dark Ages.” In the Dark Ages in world history, there was a famine for the Word of God. The boys and girls in Bellevue’s Sunday school know far more of the Word of God than the priests of that day. So dark were the days that they literally were called “the Dark Ages.” And yet, God raised up some men. God raised up Luther. We had the Protestant Reformation. What some call the Protestant Reformation, in 1517, was really a mighty revival, and millions were born again. God raised up Calvin—John Calvin and others—and there came again a hunger of the Word of God and a knowledge of the Word of God. The course of history was changed. Wesley, founder of Methodism in the eighteenth century, began to preach in England. There was a complete breakdown of government and morals in France. It was about to overtake England. In England there was sin, debauchery, no Sunday school, a drunken, gambling clergy. The English slave trade was flourishing. And yet, Wesley, with a heart aflame, the power of God, with the righteousness and holiness, began to preach. God moved in, and there was a mighty, mighty revival.

I think, friend, of the revival under Dwight L. Moody in our country. I quoted Dwight L. Moody this morning. Moody was basically an unlettered, uneducated man, but God saved him. He began to preach here in the United States of America. We have the Moody Bible Institute as a tribute to that great man. Here was a man who was not a

philosopher. He did not know Greek. He did not know Hebrew. But, he knew God. They joked at the way he would murder the King's English. They said he was the only man living who could pronounce the word *Jerusalem* in two syllables. That's the way he preached. But Moody, one day, in Chicago issued a challenge. He said, "I want every infidel and every unbeliever to come to an auditorium. I want every atheist to come." Atheism was rampant. Five thousand atheists came. One man stood in front of all of them. Can you imagine preaching to a sanctuary about this size filled with atheists? And, one unlettered man stood up in front of them all and preached the gospel of Jesus Christ, and five hundred of them got saved in that service. Don't tell me, friend, that the power of God does not work. The problem is primarily with those of us in this room. It is primarily with the messengers.

In Wales, in 1904, revival came to Wales like an unexpected tornado because there were those who were praying, seeking God. And, God so moved in Wales that in six weeks twenty thousand were added to the churches. In some cities the revival was so strong that work ceased. The jails no longer operated. They didn't lock the jail doors any more because the people inside the jails and outside the jails were so right with God that all crime just ceased. People wouldn't even lock their doors. They would meet together to sing and praise God in the streets. There was very little preaching. It was marked primarily by prayer and singing and praise. And, one account of that revival I read said that the people were so changed that the mules who worked in the coal mines in Wales refused to work because they were unaccustomed to being treated so kindly. The bars were closed. One theater closed for lack of patrons. There was a universal, widespread, deeply felt move of God.

Again, I say, when I talk about that in this day and age, many of us don't even think that would ever happen so we don't pray for it. We don't expect it. We don't think it's possible. We're just hoping that we can save our children and our grandchildren 'til Jesus gets here. And, rather than singing "Onward, Christian Soldiers," we're singing "Hold the Fort."

### **III. Our Resources Have Not Changed**

What am I saying? I'm saying that God has not changed. I'm saying that mankind has not changed. And, I'm saying also that our resources have not changed. We do not need a new gospel for a new age. Do you know what the Bible says? The Bible says in 2 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 4 that "*the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.*" (2 Corinthians 10:4) What are our weapons? Well, first of all, the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul said, "[I'm] not ashamed of the gospel of Christ...it is the power of God unto salvation." (Romans 1:16) Now, what power does Satan have over against the power of God and salvation?



The gospel of Jesus Christ is one of our weapons. It is a part of God's arsenal. And, you know as I know that the word *power* that is used there is the word that we get our word *dynamite* from. It is the *dunamis* of God. *"It is the power of God."* (Romans 1:16)

Oh, the Word of God is so powerful! I was looking at this verse recently: Jeremiah 23 and verse 28. Here's a challenge that the prophet Jeremiah uttered: *"The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully"*—now, you've got two kinds of prophets: false prophets who simply dream up their own message. They're the source of their own inspiration. Then you have the man who has heard from God and has the Word of God. And then, God goes on to speak—*"What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD. Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?"* (Jeremiah 23:28–29) God's Word is like a fire that burns, like a rock that crushes. You say, "Men's hearts are hard as a rock." I say, God's Word is a hammer that will break the rock in pieces. It's the power of the Word of God.

Our weapons have not changed. There's the gospel. There's the Word of God. There is prayer. God does answer prayer. God said, *"Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not."* (Jeremiah 33:3) James has said—James chapter 5, verse 16—*"the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."* (James 5:16) The weapons of our warfare: the Holy Spirit of God. *"Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me."* (Acts 1:8)

## Conclusion

I've said all that to say this, folks: that God—God, God—is our only hope. Do you know what's happening in America? God is letting an alarm clock go off that is louder than any I've ever heard. I don't know whether you're just going to roll over and go back to sleep or not, but it's wakeup time. It's time to wake up. It's time to get up. It's time to dress up. It's time to fire up. It's time to speak up. It's time to look up. It's time to get serious with God as individuals, as Sunday school classes, as a church, as a denomination. I believe that revival is possible and probable, but not automatic.†